

Arab and Israeli civilisation gaining ground against Iran

By Conrad Black

Perhaps my perception from North America of European official attitudes is incomplete, but a reasonably thorough hunt around the internet has given me the impression that almost none of the governments in Western Europe recognise that the current conflict in Gaza is something drastically different from previous disputes in which Israel has been involved with its neighbours.



Netanyahu said Israel would destroy Iranian nuclear military capacity. Anybody listening? (Photo by Kent Nishimura/Getty Images)

Never before, not even at the birth of Israel in 1948, have Israel's enemies behaved with the deliberate savagery displayed by Hamas in its invasion of Israel on October 7th. This is not a border skirmish with an Arab neighbour, of which there have been so many over the years. This was an outright terrorist attack with no pretence of being able actually to defeat Israel or occupy Israeli territory for more than a few

hours, and while it was conducted by Arabs, it was ordered and supplied by Iran.

The fundamental reality of Israeli-Arab affairs is that once the Arabs' ancient foes, the Persians, and to some extent the Turks, have focused on intruding in Arab affairs and to some extent intimidating the Arab powers, Israel immediately became a logical ally of the Arabs.

For reasons that would require a good deal of analysis to explain, a number of the Western European countries have convinced themselves that they have some logical bond with the Arab world. This fiction is especially prominent in England where folkloric figures like T. E. Lawrence, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, and Gertrude Bell have been ostentatious Arab supporters, but in fact the only experience Britain had with the Arabs was in the interwar years with the Palestine Mandate, which was declared before it came into existence and the territory was wrested from the Ottomans to be destined to be a "homeland for the Jewish people" at the same time that the rights of the local Arabs would not be "compromised."

Apart from that and Britain's one-sided relations with Egypt in respect of the Sudan and the Suez Canal, Britain had no particular vocation of dealing with the Arabs. The French did and the Mediterranean coast of Algeria was deemed to be a province of France itself for over a century prior to the treaty granting Algeria independence in 1962. The French enthusiasm for the Arabs came well after the extensive difficulties in pacifying North Africa even after World War I in Morocco and the bloody war in Algeria (approximately a million dead) and was chiefly inspired by General de Gaulle's ambition to exploit positions where he could exert political leverage opposite both the Russians and the Anglo-Saxons. This led him to unsuccessful attempts to tilt the balance of power between Israel and its Arab neighbours, to meddle in the Vietnam and Biafran wars, and even to attempt to promote the secession of Québec from Canada.

The Arab powers never had any great affection for the Palestinians, who were in fact simply the Arabs that coexisted, however uneasily, with the Jews in the territory bordered by Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. But they made a prodigious issue of the status of the Palestinians largely to distract the Arab masses from the misgovernment most of them were receiving from their leaders.

Once the political circumstances changed and the Palestinians overplayed their hand by rejecting Israeli offers of statehood, the Arab powers have effectively bolted at the menace of an aggressive Iran, and despite the usual formalistic gestures, the conduct of Egypt and Saudi Arabia in particular reveal that those governments are scarcely less enthusiastic about the destruction of the Hamas terrorist capability that Israel itself is.

There has been almost no recognition anywhere that I can detect of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's statement before the United States Congress two weeks ago that Israel would under unstated conditions, destroy the Iranian nuclear military capacity.

What has been underway since October is war between Iran and Israel in which the Arabs are neutral. It is inconceivable that any European country could have a natural preference for Iran over Israel on the issue of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state.

Much of official Europe is in a condition of officially endorsed obtuseness that, in the name of avoiding a more general war in the Middle East, masquerades as an affected neutrality between, as Netanyahu accurately stated before the US Congress, "civilisation and barbarism."

For a long time, Europe deluded itself with the notion that it had a good deal of influence on the Palestinians. It is much clearer now than it was for many years that the Palestinians

under Arafat did not want peace because then they would merely be leaders of another dusty little obscure country, rather than among the principal political personalities in the world. The Palestine Liberation Organization became a graft-ridden barnacle retarding the quest it was supposedly leading for a Palestinian state.

It will be impossible to agree peace terms with people who do not want an agreement and as long as Iran foots the bill and Hamas and Hezbollah and the Houthis are happy to be cannon-fodder in the pursuit of Iranian imperialism against the Arabs, there will be no road to peace except the utter extermination of the Palestinian terrorist apparatus and the visitation upon Iran of the war that it has so long inflicted upon Israel with almost no direct retaliation.

The Israelis destroyed the main oil refinery of Yemen recently and they could easily do the same to Iran in addition to Iran's nuclear military capability. Iran appears to have unleashed Hamas upon Israel to try to prevent the signing of the long-awaited peace agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

It is often almost indiscernible, but even in the Middle East, the forces of civilisation, Arab and Israeli, are gaining ground and the harder the blows landed on Iran and its terrorist puppets are, the sooner peace will come at last to that tormented region. It is disappointing and aberrant that the legendary chancelleries of Europe are having such difficulty appreciating that fact.

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