

New York Times writer pretends to be very scared of Israel's Netanyahu



Thomas Friedman

by Conrad Black

New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, writing on Nov. 14, raised with concern the difference between the American and Israeli views of how Gaza should be governed after the presumably successful conclusion of Israel's current military activity there. This in itself need not raise a high state of alarm as the same veteran commentator opined that former President Trump's fictionalized collusion with Russia was as great an intrusion on and threat to American sovereignty as

the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001.

Mr. Friedman is given to eccentric flights of fearful hyperbole, as when he wrote about 25 years ago in his long-running column, that the problems of the Middle East would be resolved by ensuring that every man, woman and child in that part of the world had a laptop device connected to the Internet, an assertion that he commendably subsequently acknowledged was unrigorous.

His comments on Nov. 14 were much less exceptionable and raise a number of important points. He has long been highly critical of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and believes that Netanyahu's comments in the last 10 days that Israel would for some time have to be in a position to assure that Gaza remained entirely demilitarized constituted an unconditional rejection of a two-state option for the Israelis and the Palestinians. He even espoused the Trump Plan of 2020, named after a political leader he has demonized even more vitriolically and irrationally than Netanyahu, although he acknowledged that Netanyahu had worked with Trump on elaborating this plan and that it was unwisely rejected by the Palestine Authority when it was proposed.

With his remarkable ability to extrapolate from apparent temporary conditions at the speed of light to a dark and uncertain future, Tom Friedman concluded that we are now at a crossroads where if the United States does not insist on a timely reopening of the professed objective of the two-state solution and a Gaza that will be administered in the Palestinian interest and preferably by the Palestinian Authority, the same entity that blew up the Trump-Netanyahu plan of three years ago, then we will "become captives of Netanyahu's strategy which could take us all down with him." Friedman credits Biden with staking out a position of a post-Gaza War revival of the two-state solution that is the only possible durable settlement, which, if it is not embraced by a

reluctant Israeli government, will doom the Middle East to the permanent strife of “seven million Jews trying to govern five million Palestinians in perpetuity.”

There is no reason to imagine that Netanyahu has abandoned the Trump plan he helped formulate and welcomed just three years ago. However, having just been in Israel, Friedman should be aware of the fact that after the unspeakable outrages of Oct. 7 against Israel is not at this precise moment, as Israeli soldiers are fighting their way through Gaza and taking significant casualties, an opportune time to revive the prospects of a two-state solution.

What is really happening is nothing that forecloses desirable ultimate outcomes. Netanyahu is in no position to muse publicly about post-war conditions like Roosevelt during the Second World War or Nixon as he withdrew from Vietnam. While I am generally hesitant to impute motives to other people, the objective facts overwhelmingly indicate that President Biden is struggling creditably to bridge the gap that he himself helped create when he welcomed to the bosom of the Democratic Party the anti-American forces of militant wokeness that seized the pretext of the terrible death of George Floyd to unleash upon America in 2020 a summer of “peaceful protest” that caused billions of dollars of damage and the death of scores of people.

With a collapsed position in the polls, and the country angry about inflation, eight to 10 million illegal migrants, skyrocketing violent crime rates, the Green Terror and the horrifying debacle in Afghanistan, President Biden is trying to steer a course that does not alienate middle America without capitulating to the forces of nihilistic and racist Americophobia that have been gnawing at the bowels of the Democratic Party for some years. Joe Biden is not standing on the commanding heights of history bravely advocating a course of action that preserves the possibility of an Israeli-Palestinian solution.

He is standing in the vortex of negative polls three years into a failing presidency, preaching reconciliation in the midst of a war that the Israelis rightly see as one upon which the survival of the Jewish state and to a large extent the Jewish people depends, and Biden's reasoning has little to do with the Middle East but much to do with the retention of the support of the hate-filled lunatics who, thanks to the uneven genius of Biden's enablers and managers, now apparently provide over 20 per cent of the support of the severely compromised Democratic Party.

The most satisfactory deduction to be made from the apparent difference in view between the Israeli and U.S. governments is that both American political parties, responding to the consistent and unambiguous polling of the American public, support Israel's right to destroy the Hamas terrorists. When that has been achieved, it is a reasonable inference that in the same measure of the Palestinians, having had their terrorist capacity practically destroyed, would be more amenable to a two-state solution than they were three years ago and on many previous occasions, Israel, having achieved such an important improvement in the correlation of forces on the ground, might also be prepared to advance such a proposal from an enhanced position of strength.

Iran let it be known on Wednesday that the Iranian government had admonished Hamas that it would not actively join the war against Israel, and the Hezbollah leader, Hassan Nasrallah, has made it clear that he will not go beyond token gestures. Lest anyone imagine otherwise, Chinese President Xi left no doubt when he met with President Biden in San Francisco on Wednesday that China would do nothing to aggravate tensions in the Middle East.

Clearly the Hamas strategy was to stir up Muslim minorities in the West, assisted by moral-relativist useful idiots in the academic communities, to engage in large demonstrations and pressure their governments into equivocal treatment of satanic

terrorists and the civilized State of Israel, while the Muslim world engaged in clangorous sabre-rattling. American public opinion, the only nation apart from Israel whose popular opinion is of any account in this conflict, is clear that it will support retaliation in case of escalation of the war.

Among the largest American public demonstrations since the civil rights campaigns and Vietnam War protests came out in Washington last Saturday in favour of Israel. Hamas has no real supporters and Israel will make a useful example of it. The consequence will be the brightest prospects for peace in the Middle East since the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1918. Thomas Friedman will have to find something else to frighten his readers about; he's been doing that for many years.

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