

Heed, O Israel

I suspect that a lot has happened between the time I first wrote this column and today as you're reading it. In my opinion, the argument will go something like this: a couple of missiles on Tel Aviv last week and another one this morning leave Israel no choice but to retaliate; particularly since the Israeli elections are less than a month away. Not responding, or responding feebly will signal weakness, while a major response will risk escalation and possibly a flare-up on other fronts. My hunch is that it'll be a "Let's teach them a lesson they will not forget" kind of response. Not sure who should be taught a lesson, but anyhow I expect that it will be a vicious round with a lot of casualties (and we all know on which side they'll mostly be), lots of leveling of structures, major damage to infrastructure; in short, nothing we have not seen before. I pray I am wrong.

But will it be so? Will it be a *déjà-vu* round? Ironically, I hope so, simply because from the looks of it, things could deteriorate rapidly and become much worse. As someone commented after today's missile: "No more flying toothpicks," referring to the aimless rockets or rather firecrackers that Hamas previously "launched" on Israel. It is no secret that Gaza now has firing power with more precision that analysts believe is a strategic shift in the military equation and rules of engagement. For one, the expected Israeli casualties will not be shock, fret, and bleeding noses. I dare add "no more pre-emptive quick strikes either." Those days are gone. Also, who's to guarantee that the northern borders will not flare up as well? The situation there is so tense that even a mistake could blow things up into mayhem. And if the northern front with Lebanon flares up, I assure you, Gaza will seem like a picnic to Israel.

Deterrence coupled with considerations of casualties are normally the reasons that wars do not erupt. Only a fool would commence a war with no guarantee of results. As powerful as it is, Israel, I believe, is in a precarious situation best described as "damned if you do, and damned if you don't." Good luck next prime minister of Israel!

It is time for the warmongers to step aside and the rational people to step in. As much as both sides would like the other side to disappear, this fantasy will never be realized. In all honesty, I cannot blame the Palestinians for not trying to negotiate a peace settlement. They tried for more than two decades, and I am convinced that Israel is to blame for the failed talks. In fact, I seriously doubt whether Israel ever had any intention to create a lasting peace. With the ramifications of the war on Syria starting to be felt, which I may add are not in Israel's favor, it is now more than ever in Israel's interest to make peace with the Palestinians. Heed, O Israel!

Sani Meo
Publisher



Palestine Marathon 2019 held in Bethlehem.
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