

Gaza War Ends. Will Biden Get a Nobel?

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Israel's Damascus strike on April 1 will go down in the corpus of literature on war and diplomacy as an act of high-intensity deception. Iran wouldn't have expected a cowardly attack using stealth fighters on its diplomatic compound.

Israel's *a priori* national deception practices provided no clues. But the [asymmetry in the aura of secrecy](#) makes the Iranian retaliation rather challenging. [Speculations are rife](#).

Israel seems confident about its counter-deception system. The Israeli Defence Forces Chief of Staff Herzl Halevi stressed on Sunday that Israel knows "how to handle Iran." He said,

"We are prepared for this; we have good defensive systems and know how to act forcefully against Iran in both near and distant places. We are **operating in cooperation with the USA and strategic partners in the region**." [Emphasis added.]

The bit about the USA is disconcerting because the bazaar gossip is that Americans quietly assured the Iranians that they had no clue about Israel's Damascus attack, leave alone a role in it. But the deployment of F-35 jets for such a mission wasn't a coincidence, after all.

The Biden Administration routinely gives assurances to Russians whenever Ukrainians strike deep inside Russian territory with Americans or Brits providing satellite intelligence, logistics, weaponry — and increasingly with NATO countries' military personnel controlling the operations.

Russia's dilemma is similar to what Iran faces. The big question, *prima facie*, would have four parts:

1. To what extent were Americans in the loop?
2. Going forward, will the US go the whole hog in an election year to kickstart another Middle Eastern war?
3. Is this any longer an exclusive affair between Iran and the Axis of Resistance on one side and Israel on the other side?
4. What are the US motivations if it indeed conveyed any assurance to Tehran?

In the commentariat, there is a delusional opinion that in the action-reaction syndrome involving Israel and Iran, President Biden will keep the US out of any direct intervention because the American public opinion militates against another war after Iraq and Afghanistan. But in reality, that is rarely the case.

Since the storm clouds on the horizon presage a world war, an analogy from the 1940s would be appropriate. President Franklin Roosevelt took on his own the audacious decision to participate in World War II by developing an initiative that was consistent with the legal prohibition against the granting of credit, satisfactory to military leadership, and acceptable to an American public that generally resisted involving the US in the European conflict.

Now, the “Globalists” who dominate the US establishment, including Biden himself, also know that World War II eventually restored (“fixed”) the American economy. During World War II, 17 million new civilian jobs were created, industrial productivity increased by 96 percent, and corporate profits after taxes doubled.

The government expenditures helped bring about the business recovery in the US economy that had eluded FDR’s New Deal. That analogy also holds good today. Indeed, American politicians of all stripes harken back to those halcyon days to make a case for their agendas even today. And they include Biden himself, who is fond of comparing himself in broad historical strokes with FDR.

Equally, there is a common belief today, which is not without basis, that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has contrived to draw the US into the conflict situation in the Middle East. But didn’t Winston Churchill do exactly the same, calculating that the US’ entry in the continental war with Germany would decisively tilt the balance of forces?

Churchill apparently said — rather, he claimed so in his not-so-honest history of the war — that for the first time in a long time he slept easy, secure in the knowledge that with the US in the war, victory was inevitable.

Suffice to say, the probability cannot be ruled out that we are overplaying the chill in [Biden’s equations with Netanyahu](#). On the other hand, all this would imply at the very least that Iran has a massive challenge in crafting a proportionate response to the Israeli aggression. The retaliation has to be symbolic and substantive, cogent and convincing and above all, reasonable and rational. Most important, it should not trigger a world war — Iran most certainly does not want a war.

But every cloud has a silver lining, too. The mitigating factor in the grim situation is that on Sunday, Israel withdrew its ground forces from Khan Younis marking the end of so-called high-intensity conflict. At one stroke, the matrix has changed.

The Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant unilaterally announced victory claiming that Hamas has “stopped functioning as a military organisation throughout the Gaza Strip.” Which, of course, flies in the face of reality, as at least six Hamas battalions are reportedly hiding, still functional, including its leaders who are surrounded by about 130 hostages.

Call it what you will, but this is a significant climbdown by Israel with much unfinished business remaining still, as it were: release of all the hostages; return of residents back home in the south and north; a set-up to administer Gaza Strip where Hamas remains the de facto leadership enjoying massive popular backing.

Gen. Halevi put a brave face on it, asserting this does not signal the end of war but only, “we’re fighting this war differently ... Senior Hamas officials are still in hiding. We will get to them sooner or later... We have plans and we will act when we decide.”

This unceremonious end to Israel’s Gaza war after six months is almost certainly linked to the reported progress in the negotiations in Cairo over the release of hostages. Well, Israel’s score card is not entirely empty! Besides, the Damascus strike can be deemed a parting kick at the Quds Force of Iran’s elite IRGC at the operational level in both Iraq and Syria.

But then, Tehran has a noble tradition of eyeing martyrdom as the ultimate victory for its generals. Indeed, [Gen. Mohammad Reza Zahedi](#) didn’t attain martyrdom in vain. This needs explaining.

No matter what Gen. Halevi says about living to fight another day, there is the bigger picture, in which a truce-hostage deal is finally taking shape, which creates an entirely new dynamic all around — most significantly, in Israeli domestic politics that would give impetus to new thinking.

Israel is traditionally quick to adapt to alien circumstances. For the second time, Israel is retrenching from Gaza and this time around, with its reputation as the Middle East’s cat whiskers severely damaged. What emerges is also that Israel can no longer take for granted seamless American support.

The prominent Israeli commentator David Horowitz [wrote](#) with biting sarcasm, “Is this how the war ends? Not with a bang, or even a whimper...” But if an inconclusive war can still produce peace as its outcome, it must be welcomed — and Iran will have no doubts on that score. Quintessentially, [Hamas’ victory is Iran’s sweet revenge, too](#). It makes a direct Iranian retaliation against Israel seem lacking in elan, somewhat old-fashioned and redundant.

That said, at the end of the day, as hours are ticking away, nothing is certain until a truce and hostage release deal is through. The [pendulum keeps swinging](#) from one end to the other by the hour.

If peace doves get released tied to the purse strings of wealthy Arab states, the biggest winner might yet be Biden. Unlike Barack Obama, he worked hard to earn it. All the guile in his tool kit as politician has been in display. It is no small feat to try to manipulate Netanyahu. An election victory in November, possibly holding a Nobel as his trophy, isn’t a far-fetched thought.

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