

Exhausting Non-Options

"Americans can always be trusted to do the right thing, once all other options have been exhausted."

This Churchillian gem has so often been quoted that it now sounds like a cliché. Nevertheless, it was starkly on display in Afghanistan for the two decades of its occupation. The US bombed; installed and changed regimes; raised a new army; hosted dialogues in Doha; arm-twisted Pakistan; and bankrolled its enemy. One day it took the only sensible course that was obvious right from the day-one: packed the bags and hit the road home. The Taliban on the other hand gave only one other choice – reconciliation – and after it was spurned fell back to their tried and tested recipe; armed resistance.

It seems that on Kashmir, after sending infiltrators in 1965, stumbling into wars, and climbing the Kargil Heights, we still have some more tricks up our sleeves and have therefore pended the inevitable: making a policy with long term objectives; working out a strategy; and creating a steering mechanism – as we did for the nuclear acquisition.

On Palestine, we do have a policy – talk, talk, and no walk.

As the war in Gaza started, we plausibly assumed that like many earlier rounds it would peter out in days or weeks. When it didn't, we had to rationalise our continued inaction. Now that the human rights organisations were involved, Israel must be getting a bad name. Since the matter had reached the International Court of Justice, South Africa was the right country to get the rogue state sentenced as an apartheid entity. Who better than a Pakistan born Karim Khan to get Netanyahu prosecuted to be a war criminal in the ICC. The UNO was of course the right forum to declare Israel a pariah state. And indeed, with the world opinion in our favour nothing needed to be done that could bailout the rascal in the dock. When none of that brought the genocide to an end, our policy left us no recourse but to moan and groan that no was doing anything about it.

As we were running out of options to keep us out of the firing line; to our great delight Trump landed on the throne in Washington. Known for his love for deals and sycophants, he was the right man to do business with. India being our twin did a favour and attacked us – providing the US and Pakistan the opportunity we were waiting for. Trump cannot blow enough of his trumpets to have saved the humanity from a holocaust and we wisely down play the effectiveness of our conventional and unconventional deterrence – but unwisely nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize a man guilty of preventing us from exploiting the advantage that we claimed we had on the battlefield and saved Israel as it was being pummelled by Iran. It disappointed Mearsheimer a professor of strategy who rightly believes that anyone who has an edge must milk it dry. The peace flotilla offered a flicker of hope but only did slightly better than the 7th fleet that never made it to the shores of East Pakistan that was soon to become Bangladesh.

Suffering from hubris we ignored the price of free lunches and the hazards of American friendship. Pay time came only a few days back.

OIC is a scam; Umma an illusion; and the leadership of Muslim countries a farce. Gathering around Trump to put our seal on the fate of the Palestinians was still a show of servility hard to beat by any mafia alleging loyalty to its boss. No argument to plead that the document they were shown was not the same that was announced as the peace deal could white wash our culpability. Those who remained irrelevant in the two years struggle of the Gazans were not going to count for more than a fig leaf for whatever the Godfather had in mind. Hamas on the other hand knew what it was all about and brilliantly passed the buck to Trump who in a state of shock, asked Netanyahu to cease all military action. He did not, but whenever he would, the latest after the hostages were returned, it will be resumed with much more ferocity. Trump, I believe has already approved six billion dollars in military aid to Israel for the next phase.

One has often been asked if there was any “practical” way to change this paradigm! The problem is that those who intend to act – like Hezbollah, Houthis, and Iran – don’t wait to be told; they know what to do. The others may be offered a range of choices – from sub-conventional all the way to the Samson Option – would invariably find a reason nothing can be done. *This she could not and that he would not and so she died* – Emily Dickson

Yes, the Gazans are dying but only once مجھے کیا برا تھا مرنا اگر ایک بار ہوتا۔ Cowards like us die a thousand death – every time one of them does.

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