

## Whither the Board of Peace!

“Everyone and his dog have been invited” — so taunted David Hurst; the editor in chief of The Middle East Eye, and a remarkably insightful commentator on the Region. Everyone and his aunt and uncle I know are dead set against the BOP. Born to be the devil’s advocate, I had thus no choice but to root for it. Just a question to all the Trump’s critics: “where were you when Israel was pummelling the Palestinians for two years?”

Masses all over the globe were indeed incensed. They mobilised and protested. I don’t remember what the International Court of Justice did but the ICC sentenced Netanyahu as a war criminal. The UN must have done its usual rounds and the OIC twiddled its thumbs. Many powerful countries like China, Russia, and Turkey made all the right noises and we tweeted once a week. None of that made an iota of difference on the ground. Some of the Arab neighbours in fact were partners in the crime. Iran, Hezbollah and Houthis punched above their weight but the US backed nexus was way too mighty. The only one who provided some relief was the much-derided Mr. Trump: not because he was the president of the world’s most powerful country (his predecessors could not prevent Tel Aviv even from building more settlements), but because he’s a maverick. Of course, there is plenty still to be done.

If the BOP thing is his Trumpian way to finish what he started, I may not know; but the arguments against it are outrightly outlandish. That he intends to sidestep the universally accepted norms is the most pathetic – as if they ever worked except for vested interest. The Rule Based Order that some of us are grieving over was dead on arrival. Like it or not; for the Palestinians, the juggling acrobat provides one glimmer of hope. The rest of us who never stood up to be counted have no business to pick holes in an enterprise that’s so full of them. The chances of Trump pulling it off with his chosen circus might not be very bright but for the Gazans it’s the only game in town. Come to think of it, there might be an odd silver lining.

First time around, unlike his predecessors, Trump did not start a new war. On the other hand, he set the ball rolling to end the longest one in the US history – twenty years and counting. Obama, once our favourite man at the helm, a Nobel Peace Laureate to boot, sparked or provoked many a criminal enterprise; dismantling Syria and Libya, to quote just two. No idea how many wars Trump actually stopped but he is one man who can launch a missile and recall it while it was still on its way to the doomsday. His gimmicks are now legend but also mystifying. Unable to decode Venezuela, I can only think it was a choreographed business. And that brings me to the key question: how come that a good number of countries – some very likely to throw spanner in the works – have joined his bandwagon!

I’m sure some did to be seen on Trump’s right side. If they do not know the cost of such Faustian deals – far more than a billion dollar in gate money – they deserve the fate foretold by Kissinger. Then there is a group that might have believed that If not on the table one would be on the menu. We’re of course familiar with one or two who fatuously claim to be simply balancing in the emerging bipolar era. They too would be served their just deserts

since the master craftsman knows how to tilt the scales in his favour. Striking the right bargain with India after playing Pakistan as the red herring was one of the oldest swindle that did us in. There must still be a few honourable exceptions. Unable to help the Gazans on their own, they might find it possible if part of the gang. Even if they failed, at least they would have tried. Much better than the fence sitters who found Saadi's second best option more convenient:

به دریا منافع بی شمار است گر خواهی سلامت بر کنار است (the river is full of treasures but if you want to stay safe, don't take a plunge).

Asad Durrani

Lt Gen ®

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