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## Netanyahu's Law of Unintended Consequences



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The Law of Unintended Consequences establishes that actions can have effects that are unanticipated or unintended. This is something that Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu should have remembered before launching an offensive against Hamas that has cost so far more than 31,184 lives –most of them innocent women and children– without achieving his objective.

Recently, after having passed the 150-day mark of the war, the Israeli columnist Gideon Levy asked the questions that every Israeli should be asking themselves: “Are we better off now than on October 6, 2023? Are we stronger? Safer? Do we have greater deterrence? Are we more popular? Prouder of ourselves? Are we more united? Better in any way?” Levy's answer to all these questions is: “unequivocally no.”

More than 11,500 children have been killed. And yet, the Israel Defense Forces continue to be supplied with arms, while pitifully scant food is provided for almost two million Palestinians, trapped in an inferno that not even Dante could have imagined. How can we become so morally blind that we are unable to see the tragic absurdity of this situation?

Who is profiting from this situation? Only the forces of evil and destruction. Despite pressure from Israeli families to stop the war and bring the hostages home, Netanyahu has shown his unwillingness to hear the advice and pressure from his main ally and has decided to continue the attacks on Gazans despite increasing international pressure and condemnation. The cost of this policy has been enormous.

At the beginning of the conflict, Israel had widespread international support, but this support has quickly eroded because most of the world sees that what is happening in Gaza as a humanitarian nightmare.

As Thomas L. Frieman (not exactly a friend of Hamas) has written, “I don’t think Israelis or the Biden administration fully appreciate the rage that is bubbling up around the world, fueled by social media and TV footage, over the deaths of so many thousands of Palestinians civilians, particularly children, with U.S.-supplied weapons in Israel’s war in Gaza. Hamas has much to answer for in triggering this human tragedy, but Israel and the U.S. are seen as driving events now and getting most of the blame.”

This doesn’t faze Netanyahu, whose own political survival rests on the continuation of the war, a course of action that will certainly affect President Biden’s political future. Only now, after several months of unceasing attacks on civilians, homes and infrastructure, have President Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris been vocal on the Palestinians’ urgent need for food and medical care, needs that are totally unsatisfied.

Undaunted, Netanyahu mocks international criticism for his actions. “Reports this week that Israel plans to build a further 3,476 settler homes in Maale Adumin, Efrat, and Kedar fly in the face of international law,” said in a statement Volker Türk, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights responding to the Israeli government latest settlement expansion plans.

Türk also said that Israel is violating the Fourth Geneva Convention by “effectively transferring civilian population of Israel to the occupied territory while displacing the Palestinian population from their land. Such transfers amount to a war crime that may engage the individual responsibility of those involved.”

The U.N. report also says that the policies of the current Israeli government appear aligned, to an unprecedented extent, with the goals of the Israeli settler movement to expand long-term control over the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and to steadily integrate this occupied

territory into the state of Israel. “The West Bank is already in crisis. Yet, settler violence and settlement-related violations have reached shocking levels, and risk eliminating any practical possibility of establishing a viable Palestinian state,” said Türk.

Alon Pinkas, an Israeli diplomat and writer, wrote recently in Haaretz about the ongoing conflict in Gaza, “...what do we expect from our leaders? To set a course for the nation, based on moral clarity. To display the ability to set priorities, define choices, highlight opportunities and persuade you, the people, that the benefits outweigh the risks, that the pros outnumber the cons, that the future holds promise and that this will all be done with utmost responsibility, care, caution and seriousness. I leave it to you to decide whether this is the case.” Based on these criteria, Netanyahu has been a resounding failure.

Netanyahu has repeatedly declared his intention to totally eliminate Hamas. He has gained, instead, increasing condemnation for his policies and widespread and renewed demands for a two-state solution to the conflict.

*Dr. Cesar Chelala is a co-winner of the 1979 Overseas Press Club of America award for the article “Missing or Disappeared in Argentina: The Desperate Search for Thousands of Abducted Victims.”*

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