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If it strikes you as foolish, consider how well the serious people's ideas have turned out in the Mideast.



Israelis in Tel Aviv celebrate the cease-fire agreement. JACK GUEZ/ AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



DECLARATIONS

Trump's Big Beautiful Gaza Peace Plan

Give it to him. Give him your applause. Sometimes pessimism reaches a point of moral error. Sometimes hope is the only realistic approach.

So give it to President Trump, whose White House has produced the first progress in the Mideast since the grave crisis of Oct. 7 began. He announced Wednesday with typically Trumpian words. He called it, "a big, big day, a beautiful day, potentially one of the great days ever in civilization."

Israel and Hamas have agreed to the first phase of a peace plan to end the Gaza war. It is a 20-point plan so a lot could go wrong, but the

first phase includes a cease-fire, Israeli troop withdrawal to an agreedon line and the freeing of the remaining hostages held by Hamas. Gaza will be governed by a Palestinian committee overseen by a marvelously named "Board of Peace," chaired, marvelously, by Donald Trump.

When word broke in Gaza on Wednesday, they danced in the streets and chanted; they were still cheering on Thursday. In Israel they went to Hostage Square and sang.

Here any reliable pundit would counsel caution—it could all fall apart, joy may be premature. All true. But I'll take my joy premature, bartender. If it turns out progress was illusory we will at least have reacquainted ourselves with what optimism in the Mideast feels like—it feels energetic, like something that can get you through the next day.

Sometimes you have to break away from heavy, sodden reality and go straight into joyful idiocy.

I like the Barnum & Bailey aspect of the Trump administration. Other things I don't—chaos, vengeance, lack of thought about the deeper meaning of things. But I like the circuslike color. It's human, and government doesn't always seem human.

I think world leaders are still so shocked by Mr. Trump as a phenomenon that they overjudge his support, and that contributes to his power with them. He walks into the room at some Group of 20 meeting and he's so outsize, he literally fills the doorway—big suit, big man, big tie, big hair, glower; he doesn't even try to set his face in a smile. They look at him and think: That's 70% of the American people. He doesn't have that kind of support and they know it, but they can't help thinking of him that way.

Why would a sleek and prowling operator like Bibi Netanyahu accept a deal? Because Mr. Trump scares him, because Mr. Trump is as big an animal as he is. Bigger. The president is aware of and careful with but not afraid of Bibi's most reliable supporters in the U.S. Bibi has long thought that he essentially controlled and held all the loyalty of the biggest group of pro-Israeli Americans—evangelical Christians. But Mr. Trump, unlike his modern predecessors, has hooks into them and loyalty from them more than Bibi does, and would use it against him. Bibi respects this, being an animal.

Mr. Netanyahu was increasingly boxed in. Both of America's great political parties are splitting over Israel, no longer in unified support. Democrats are besieged by the young and progressive, Republicans experiencing a pushing away from Israel on the right.

Bibi has a genius for politics and has lasted a long time. He's been prime minister 17 years off and on since 1996. He knows how to survive.

As for Hamas, they are terrorists whom everyone hates but their own like-minded fanatics and young dopes in the West. They're halfdead, their money lines less stable, their leadership gone. Time to show a little magnanimity! *Of course we'll free the hostages, we hate sadism!*

But I want to pay tribute to the wonderful creative insanity Donald Trump can display on the international front. At moments when the Mideast is blowing up, American presidents always begin to ape the language, preoccupations and granular knowledge of the regional experts, some of whom follow from White House to White House. It's always into the weeds with them. *The settler issue may complicate the loan-guarantee schedule if the '67 lines are even retrievable*. It was all opaque and meaningless and meant to be.

That isn't what Mr. Trump did in this crisis. He looked at the whole complicated picture, the long history, the writing etched on the stones of the oldest archeological sites, and said: That's fabulous beachfront property going to waste. We can build a luxury resort with hotels, casinos, beaches, a slide for the kids, decorous bordellos with golden stairways. Actually, what he said, in February, was that Gaza could be "the Riviera of the Middle East" because it's on the Mediterranean and has "the best weather." He then posted on social media an AI-generated video showing a "Trump Gaza" tower.

A few days later I saw a friend who knows his foreign affairs and he said, "Do you believe the idiocy of this guy?" And I surprised him: "I kind of liked it. I think I love it."

Because it was absurdist it changed the picture you have in your head. It was a reorienting thought. The world knows it's ridiculous and yet—yeah, that land would come cheap, it could be a gold mine! It was so Trumpian, he thinks everything can be a big building with his name on it, but in his insane way he was saying: Imagine it differently. And for a second you did. The region is full of greedy grasping men on all sides, they feel more secure in their palaces when their people are employed, and an 18-year-old boy on the street would think, "I'd like to not live in a sand hole but wear a tuxedo in a casino with girls in sequins walking by." Can't we rely on simple human vice for progress anymore?

Here is something the world needs more of. It comes from the old parable of the prisoners in the cell. It has many variations.

A handful of prisoners are chained to a wall in a room and only one of them can see through the window high up. Instead of saying the truth—there's nothing out there, just air—he describes for his cellmates beautiful scenes: people strolling on the street, a pretty girl, the sun is shining. He dies, a new prisoner is dragged in and put in his chains, he can see the window, they ask what's outside today. He almost speaks, looks at them, realizes everything. He has a job: Give them something to live for. He looks out the window and says "There's a parade, and a great princess is walking by in all her finery . . ."

It isn't bad to give people something to live for.

I close with the special force of the idiotic idea. Sometimes in life you're an idiot. You make the investment based on insufficient data because you got a feeling in your gut. You marry the guy you met three days ago. Sometimes you go broke and tell your funny story about the importance of due diligence to young investors. Sometimes you tell your story about the Elvis Chapel in Vegas on your 38th anniversary as your grandchildren eat chocolate cake.

It isn't the worst thing to have a good story to tell. And some do end well.

By Peggy Noonan

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