

Rarely have we ever marched into the unknown so ill-equ...

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There has been something strange taking place on Sky News over the last day or so. A succession of retired former generals and security chiefs, including a British former deputy chief of NATO and the former head of MI6, have been appearing in interviews that can be found on their X channel, all of them saying the same thing, which can, however, be broken down into three parts.

Firstly, this war in which we are now engaged makes no sense. There was no legal justification for starting it. There is no justification for pursuing it. And there is no known goal, and so, as a strategic mission, this is a profound mistake.

Secondly, there is no precedent for such a mission succeeding, and no reason to think this one will. Regime change from the air has not worked and will not work on this occasion, and there is no way in which a combined operational force that can take on Iran on the ground can be assembled without massive cost, financially and militarily, neither of which anyone is willing to incur.

Thirdly, there is a very real risk that Israel and the USA will lose this war, as will the UK, as a result of its collateral involvement. Iran has been preparing for war for a very long period of time. It has a very large stockpile of admittedly low-grade missiles available to it, plus an enormous capacity to manufacture drones. Israeli and Western defence forces have not reacted in the way that the precedent in Ukraine should have suggested to be necessary, which is to create cheap anti-drone defence mechanisms. The consequence is that Israel and the USA are much more likely to run out of weapons than Iran is, leaving Iran with the potential capability of controlling this region militarily, which is just about the last thing that anyone would wish, given the nature of the regime in that country and its apparent indifference to imposing suffering through loss of human life.

The conclusions appear to be consistent.

- \* No one should have started this war.
- \* No one knows how to end this war.

\* Iran was at the negotiating table before Trump ended all options of continuing that process, so suggesting that negotiation is now the way forward is a virtually meaningless gesture.

\* And, most particularly, we might lose, risking a fundamental change in the balance of power in the world.

You could dismiss all of this except for the quality of the people involved. These are serious talking heads with a massive amount of experience between them, all of whom appear to be scared witless by what is going on, the consequences of which they are obviously finding hard to imagine or embrace.

My suggestion is that we should share their fear. The West has let fascism govern its agenda because that is what Trump and Netanyahu are pursuing. Too many countries, including the UK, have obsequiously fallen in line behind these staggeringly incompetent leaders. We might pay an enormous price for this.

The need for a new political order in the West has never been greater. What those leading that new order might need to consider is just where countries like the UK stand within the new hierarchy of power that might well emerge very soon if, as now seems possible, US military hegemony ceases to be effective in international political economy. I am not sure that thinking has been done.

Rarely have we ever marched into the unknown so ill-equipped to manage the consequences.