

from our response to September 11 and the successive two decades of wars waged in the name of counterterrorism.

If we are going to be honest with our friends in Israel, then we need to admit that we often failed to see beyond our fury and that we made mistakes by not understanding what came next after the invasion of Afghanistan and the decapitation of our enemy. We had a day-one strategy, but we did not have a day-two strategy, and we paid a horrible price.

After al-Qaida fled and the Taliban government collapsed, we spent 20 years trying to “win” without a clear idea of what “winning” was, how it would be accomplished, or how that was actually linked to making America safer.

Now, let me be clear. The challenge Israel faces from Hamas is different in really important ways from the al-Qaida threat to the United States, and the lessons of America’s global counterterrorism campaign do not neatly map onto Israel’s current crisis. For one, the physical proximity of the threat is meaningful. Hamas does not operate from a safe distance. It exists right next door, in Gaza.

America had no experience in or with Afghanistan before the invasion—not so for Israel and Gaza. They know each other. They have an intimate history, and that history impacts the effectiveness of the fight to come.

Another key distinction is the disposition of the enemy. Hamas is not hiding in caves in the Tora Bora. They are both a military and a political entity. They live in a tightly packed corridor that is home to more than 2 million people. Many of them have nothing to do with Hamas.

So there is no perfect comparison between Afghanistan and Gaza, but there are enough similarities that we should be confident in sharing with our friends in Israel the lessons that we learned, the mistakes we made—mistakes that Israel could avoid.

The first of those mistakes was lacking a realistic conception of success. In Afghanistan, we set about the total and complete elimination of “ungoverned space” and “terrorist safe havens”; but after 20 years of fighting, of raids, of targeted strikes, we finally came to terms with a really harsh reality: Our tactics were often producing more terrorists and insurgents than they were eliminating. We were far too cavalier about civilian casualties and the humanitarian cost of our pursuit of the Taliban, and it ended up simply making the Taliban stronger.

Today, Israeli leaders talk about totally eliminating every last Hamas fighter. It is an understandable objective, given the terror that Hamas rained down on Israel. But is it realistic? Can the Israeli military destroy an entire movement—not just a terrorist organization or an armed group but a political entity that administers territory? Is there a risk of our fate in

Afghanistan—creating more terrorists than we eliminated—repeating in Gaza?

Another mistake we made in Afghanistan was believing that every proposal we put down on paper could, through the sheer force of American will, become a reality on the ground. We drew up a viable plan to replace the Taliban’s kleptocratic theocracy with corruption-free parliamentary democracy. But Afghanistan was not a fit for that plan, and our plan, which looked good on a PowerPoint, was destined to fail.

What was an achievable outcome that we eventually, 20 years later, settled on was eliminating al-Qaida’s ability to attack the United States and creating the political conditions on the ground in Afghanistan so that al-Qaida would never again be granted safe harbor. But, of course, that outcome didn’t need to take 20 years. It was likely available to the United States much earlier in the conflict.

If Israel does mount a ground invasion, the question is, of course: What comes next?

Hamas administers Gaza. So if Hamas is eliminated, who takes their place? Does Israel reoccupy Gaza in the long run and run Gaza directly? That would seem like a recipe for perpetual conflict. Or does Israel imagine that the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority could step up and administer Gaza? I won’t go into a full analysis, but there are very few Middle East watchers who bet that that is a long-term, viable arrangement.

Some Israeli leaders suggest that the question of the future status of Gaza is a matter to be addressed after Israel has “won the war.” But what we learned in Afghanistan is that the very concept of “winning” is meaningless if it is not built around the conditions of a sustainable peace.

And what is the realistic possibility of building a post-Hamas governing structure in Gaza, particularly when the only immediate alternative would seem to be a renewed and indefinite occupation?

If there isn’t a satisfactory answer to these questions, then the military planning is incomplete.

But, make no mistake, America is going to support Israel in its time of need, with funding, with weapons, with whatever they need.

But I raise these questions only because there are important lessons that can be drawn—not perfect parallels but important lessons that can be drawn—from both our successes and our failures.

We had to invade Afghanistan. We had to take out the Taliban. It was the only way to square the moral universe. Israel must strike at Hamas. Israel must destroy their military capabilities. It is the only way to restore the balance of the moral universe. But supporting Israel also means helping them learn from our successes and our failures and to not reflexively repeat the

same mistakes we made 20 years ago. Friends support friends, but friends also level with friends.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

#### ISRAEL

Mr. YOUNG. Madam President, throughout their history, the children of Israel have known persecution and sorrow. They have lived in exile and enslavement. They have faced bigotry and violence. Entire nations and civilizations have sought to extinguish them and vanished, but the Jewish people remain, and, against all odds, millions of their descendants gathered together in the Holy Land and founded a nation.

Today, Israel is a vibrant democracy in the Middle East and a strong ally of the United States of America. Many people of faith would say the existence and perseverance of the State of Israel is itself evidence of divine providence.

Yet, even today—even today—Israel faces existential threats. On October 7, Hamas terrorists carried out the worst attack on the Jewish people since the Holocaust: the slaughter of 1,400 people; the decapitation of babies; the execution of grandmothers; and the taking of nearly 200 hostages, including children, women, seniors, and American citizens. Thirty Americans were among the murdered—30 Americans. Many of our fellow citizens have friends and family in Israel.

Regardless of our faith, we are all, I know, heartbroken for the loss and sickened—sickened—by the cruelty. And, on behalf of the Hoosiers I represent, I want to express my deepest condolences to the people of Israel as they mourn and pray and bury the dead.

As it has since its founding, against alliances of far larger nations and armies, this country, which is four times smaller than Indiana, will defend itself, and America will be here for Israel and support its right to confront this violence, this barbarism. We will do this because our values are the same: dedication to liberty and order, to tolerance, and to human dignity.

Make no mistake, the days ahead will be difficult. As Members of this body know too well, Israel is still under threat, and the risk of additional fronts opening up is real.

Over the past several days, I have been heartened by the strong bipartisan support in the U.S. Senate for the people of Israel. During this time of peril, this body cannot succumb to isolationism. We cannot abandon Israel any more than we can abandon our friends in Ukraine or Taiwan. On urgent matters of national security, we are stronger when we stand together, and in the difficult days ahead, we will work to support the people of Israel. I know we will continue that spirit.

Relatedly, I call on the Biden administration to consult and closely work with this Congress to quickly fulfill—

quickly fulfill—any urgent Israeli requests for assistance and do all we can to fully support Israel.

Now, colleagues, the Constitution of the United States lays out our responsibilities. Congress—Congress—has an important constitutional role in determining how the United States will respond to any additional acts of aggression.

As we support and stand with our allies, we also must be crystal clear about what has happened. The attacks on the people of Israel orchestrated by Hamas were barbaric, depraved—they were evil. Long supported by the Iranian regime, Hamas's stated mission is to destroy the Jewish people.

That is right—at the core of Hamas burns an age-old sickness: anti-Semitism. It was the twisted inspiration for their massacre. This broken thinking, this horrific ideology liberates not a single life; instead, tragically, it will cost only more, including those of innocent Palestinian civilians.

For the past 15 years, many peace-keeping Palestinians in Gaza have had their lives upended and exploited by the Hamas terrorist group. We acknowledge their suffering. We hope for change.

Those in our media, on our college campuses, or even those serving in government who ascribe the actions of Hamas to anything else other than hatred; those who are so quick to decry injustices elsewhere but place murder and rape in some sort of perspective; those who provide context for savagery; those who sigh that both sides are equally guilty—to all of you, I say you are providing cover for monsters.

The world view of Hamas must be added to the rollcall of evil ideologies that failed to destroy the Jewish people. And that is why we must stand with Israel. That is why. But that alone is not enough. You see, the murder of thousands of Jews brought reminders of the Holocaust and echoes of Russian pogroms and so many centuries of trials and tragedies. So we must also stand vigilant against and always oppose anti-Semitism wherever it appears, whatever movement it is attached to, whatever banner it marches underneath.

In these difficult days, we echo the old prayer sung across synagogues to the Jewish people:

May God have mercy on them and remove them from distress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption, now, speedily, and soon.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## EDUCATION

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, we have an issue in Louisiana—I wouldn't call it a problem—that I would like to talk about. Perhaps some of our sister States can learn from our struggles in my State. And the issue is education. I can't think of a more important subject. That is the future of my State. I think it is true in many other States.

I believe that Louisiana's future can be better than its present or its past, but the key to determining whether that is going to be the case or not is education—and I am talking specifically about elementary and secondary education—because that is what counts. In my State, it is not the price of oil; it is not what the unemployment rate is; it is not who the United States Senator is; it is not who the Governor is; it is education, pre-K through 12.

It is frustrating, I know. You know, Americans can do extraordinary things. We can unravel the human genome. We can take a diseased human heart and replace it with a brandnew one and make that thing beat. We can send a person to the Moon. But we in America struggle and we in Louisiana struggle to teach our children how to read and write and do basic math when we have 18 years to do it. I am not blaming anyone. We all share the frustration. And it is not just Louisiana; it is all across America. I understand that.

But decades ago in Louisiana, we made a decision. In fact, it was during my first job in government. I was working as legal counsel to a brandnew, reform Governor in Louisiana. He decided, and the people of Louisiana agreed with him—we all agreed on two things: No. 1, every child can learn. Now, it takes some a little bit longer. Kids mature at different times. But every child can learn. The second thing we agreed on was this: That which is measured gets done. That which is measured gets done.

We decided to implement, 30 years ago, standards for our elementary and secondary schools. One of those standards was and I think still is—that is the subject of my remarks today; I hope it still is—a graduation exam. We call it our Graduation Exit Examination 21, G-E-E. So if I say "G-E-E" or "GEE," I am talking about our graduation exam.

We said we are going to get serious about kids. We can't have our children graduate if they can't read their diploma, and so we are going to test them. The test is not terribly rigorous. It is four subjects. It is English, it is math, it is science, and it is social studies. We grade those exams—and you don't have to pass all four. You have to pass English and math and then either social studies or science. So, really, three out of four.

There are five different grades: advanced, mastery, basic, approaching basic, and unsatisfactory. Let me tell you what that really means: A, B, C, D, and F.

You only have to make a D on your graduation examination. You only have to make a D to pass—not an A, not a B, not a C, a D. So you take four exams. You have to make a D on English, a D on math, and at least a D on either social studies or science. If you don't pass, we will give you another chance, but you have to pass to get a diploma.

Now our Board of Elementary and Secondary Education—we call it BESE—which governs elementary and secondary education in Louisiana, has decided to take us back to the Dark Ages. By a one-vote margin, supported, quite frankly, by my Governor, who is lameduck—he will be leaving soon—he makes three appointments to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. Everybody in America is entitled to their opinion, but I think my Governor and his team are wrong on this. They are going to send us back to the Dark Ages.

Here is the new rule: You have to pass the Graduate Exit Examination in the way I just described—unless you fail. Then you have to go to your teacher, and he or she can give you an extra-points project. Come on. Come on. Who are we kidding here?

Now, why do some want to do this? It is not the kids who want to do this; it is the adults, because not only do we grade our kids, we grade our schools, and if schools have kids who don't pass the GEE, the Graduate Exit Examination, it counts against the grade of the school. So this is all coming from the adults. They are putting themselves first, and they are not putting the kids first.

This is a massive step backward. This is an announcement to the rest of America that Louisiana has given up, that our kids are not smart enough, they are not good enough, even when we give them second or third chances, to be able to get a D on the Graduate Exit Examination, and as a result, we have to give them a special extra-points project so they can get a diploma that is not really a diploma.

The people behind this ought to hide their head in a bag. Our kids are better than that. Every one of my kids in Louisiana can learn. Sometimes they need a little bit longer. But it is not going to do them any good to give them a diploma that they can't read. It is not going to do them any good to give them a diploma that the rest of America and, frankly, the world is going to look at and go: That is not really a high school diploma because we know you failed the exam. You just got an extra-points project so the adults wouldn't look bad.

I am embarrassed by this.

This isn't the only problem we have in elementary and secondary education. I will give you one other statistic. Seventy percent of our high schools are graded A or B. Forty percent of the schools below that are graded A or B. Seventy percent of my high schools in Louisiana are not A or B