

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Renaud Girard, Senior Reporter and International Columnist at *Le Figaro*

Before we go to questions, I would like to talk about Sudan for a few minutes. This is a terrible conflict, nobody cares about it in America, few people care about it in Europe. I understand that the Emirates are more on the side of Hemedti of the Security Border Forces, but can the Emirates and Europe do something to stop this war in Sudan?

Mohammed Baharoon, Director General of the Dubai Public Policy Research Center (b'huth)

First of all, I do not think that the UAE is on the side of Hemedti, the UAE has had good relationships with all the different parties, including the previous Prime Minister Hamdok. Its view is that we need the political, not just the military, elements and it was working with them all to complete the transition period. The UAE would lose from this war because it has invested so much in Sudan, with both of them. Sudan is also in the middle between Egypt and Ethiopia, another tension that has to be considered. Sudan can bleed on Somalia and others and we are operating five forts in the Red Sea. It is not in our best interests for this conflict to continue for a single day more.

However, what I have seen in all the international efforts to bring the parties together, there was one party that never showed up and we have to ask why Burhan did not show up. He did not show up in Jeddah, in Kenya or in Geneva, so what does he want? What can Europe do? I think we need to establish the rules again and Europe and the West has always said that we need to emphasize a rule-based order, so we have to ask where the rules are over there and if they have changed, we need to send a notice to everyone that the rules have changed and ask for the new ones. If they have not changed, which means the sanctity of human life, it is the impact of humanitarian aspects, it is that the conflict is there. This is not an existential conflict of identity, these are all Sudanese, they are all Sunnis, it is political. I think Europe has really been forthcoming in that.

Renaud Girard

Marc, are you optimistic about Lebanon, do you think we will have a new Lebanese President in January?

Marc Hecker, Deputy Director of Ifri, Editor-in-Chief of *Politique Étrangère*, and Research Fellow at the Security Studies Center, Ifri

At least we have an approximate idea about what has to be done. There is a framework of reference, and almost all the actors refer to Resolution 1701, even the Israelis who say that if it

is properly applied, it will be fine. It will be a stress test for the Europeans, among others, because they have to prove they can deliver on the Lebanese issue, including in terms of money because the Lebanese army needs funds and actually needs to be reinforced. In terms of military presence, I mentioned the UNIFIL Blue Helmets before. If you change the mandate and make it more robust, maybe this time it might work. Again, let us try to be a bit optimistic.

I just wanted to add one thing about Iran that I forgot earlier. When you look at the statements produced by Germany, France and the UK over the past months, it is actually pretty sad and illustrates our powerlessness. Basically, the statements say ‘we condemn Iran for advancing its nuclear program and urge Iran to reverse this process’, and then there are the same kinds of statements a few months later. How can we be better, more effective and more coherent?

I think we should prepare for some kinds of scenarios, maybe a limited military operation on Iranian nuclear facilities, not necessarily an open war but a limited series of strikes. I agree with Volker: war has its own grammar. You know when it starts but you never know when it will end. Another scenario that we should prepare is a potential annexation of at least part of the West Bank. Donald Trump made a recent statement about his 2020 “deal of the century,” which by the way included a Palestinian state. It was not the Palestinian state that Palestinians, Arab and European countries expected: Jerusalem was not the capital, it was a series of small territories linked by bridges and tunnels. This deal was obviously rejected at the time by the Palestinians, as well as the Israeli settlers. Now Trump is saying that there may be other options. It means that he does not rule out annexation and if that happens, the question is what the Europeans would do. Would they produce another statement like the ones I mentioned, or can they be more robust and have more teeth?

Renaud Girard

I am not sure that our new High Representative for Foreign Affairs in the European Union knows a lot about the Middle East and I do not think it is her priority because, of course, she is totally focused on Ukraine-Russia.