The Embattled Gaza

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I wrote about Gaza before, and I informed my Korean readers about the internal Palestinian tensions that lead to street fighting every once in a while. In this article, I touch on one of the amazing tactics in Palestinian politics that is meant to overcome internal problems. It is the tactic of attacking the Israelis.

Tension arises among the Palestinians because of several factors among of which is the sharp differences on how to deal with the Palestinian question. Fatah thinks that negotiations are the best method to regain Palestinian rights, while Hamas, on the contrary, believes that the Israelis understand only the language of force. In between, there are assorted positions. These contradictory positions have been causing quarreling and fighting over the last forty years, and at so many times, Palestinian universities got involved in these squabbles. As tension grew on campus, some students would get into the streets and start stoning the Israelis. As the Israeli soldiers started shooting, all students turn against them, and temporarily put aside their internal problems,

This tactic is being applied now in Gaza. Due to the lack of wisdom, and to the chauvinist approach to problems, Hamas found it-self involved into fierce internal fighting that has been consuming its morale and material well-being. Its leadership has realized that it has been adopting the wrong tactics that provided a sort of justification for armed internal conflicts; and instead of backing or withdrawing from the battle-field, it decided to wage continuous rocket attacks on Israel. Missiles started to whistle over Israeli settlements in the areas adjacent to Gaza.

Here we aren't talking about sophisticated missiles, but about primitive instruments that are made by blacksmiths. Due to occupation and strictly closed or monitored borders, the Palestinians don't have the chance to import technology or receive technological experience that would enable them to improve their military means. The range of the best model of these missiles is about 20 km, and its load is about 10 kg of traditional explosives that are locally prepared. Besides, the missiles have a very poor accuracy to the extent that they sometimes hit Palestinians places.

The power of these missiles is drawn from the hyper-sensitivity of the Israelis to their own security. The Israelis are crazy about their own security, and consider it as the corner-stone of the continuity of the state. Israel was mainly established due to the hard insecure life of the Jews in Europe, and it would become a self defeating effort if that insecurity remains with them in the Middle East. This explains why the Israelis always have excessive response to low gear Palestinian resistance such as stone throwing.

Hamas made the right calculations: the Israeli response will be imminent and ruthless if the missiles are launched. Exactly that what happened. Immediately, the Israelis started the air raids killing in the last ten days about 50 Palestinians. The Palestinian internal fighting stopped, and armed gangsters disappeared.

Arithmetically, for Hamas that is a gain. Palestinian internal fighting is bloodier than the Israeli attacks. Morale wise, the people of Palestine suffer the shame of internal fighting, but feel the pride of the confrontation against the Israelis. The killed in the squabbles are down-graded, but the killed by the Israelis are up-graded to be martyrs. Internal fighting

leads to fragmentation and demoralization, but confrontation with the Israelis leads to unity and morale up-lifting.

I talked to Hamas leaders in Gaza and they told me that they are in a better situation now although the losses have been high. They say that Israel targets only Hamas and Jihad members, but still that is an acceptable price compared to that of the internal fighting. They told me that the time of Israeli attacks is a time of relaxation.

The same expression of relaxation was expressed by leaders of Palestinian organizations other than Fatah. Some of these leaders say that the Israeli attacks are a strong factor behind the calm in Gaza, and re-arranging the political and organizational relations. They say that if the losses are a must, we better lose in the battle-field against the enemy.

Apparently, Fatah is the only Palestinian organization that is unhappy about this development. Missile launching has been criticized by Fatah leaders including Abbass who is the president of the Palestinian authority. They say that this weapon is ineffective, and cause very little harm to the Israelis. The Price that the Palestinians pay is very high, and Hamas should stop this primitive parade. Anyhow, Fatah has withdrawn its fighters from the streets of Gaza, and the checkpoints disappeared. This is the conclusion that Hamas actually needed.

Fatah isn't very much concerned about ending the internal fighting because it has a long history in shooting at their Palestinian rivals. Fatah looks at itself as the godfather of the Palestinian cause, and believes that those who oppose its own policies should be rebutted.

Regardless of the different evaluations of Hamas decision to attack Israelis targets, one can conclude that this decision has contributed, at least temporarily, in stopping that publicly condemned internal bloodshed.

Talks on the regional level have been going on for a certain kind of ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinian resistance movement, but, so far, there is no breakthrough. Hamas says that the ceasefire should be mutual, but Israel insists that terrorism should come to an end. This is the old story of ceasefires, and keeps renewing itself.