A Response to Thomas Friedman


Dear Mr. Friedman-

I am disappointed, I truly am. I agree with you that it is time for the Obama administration to make certain changes to their approach on bringing peace to the Middle East, but to give up? In your opinion, we are watching the rerun of the same tired story, wasting efforts on two peoples so obsessed with conflict that our struggle is bound to be futile. Mr. Friedman, I hope you will forgive me when I say that you are wrong. This is not the same tired story: this is the beginning of a new story.

When in history has an American president made the amelioration of the Israeli-Arab conflict a priority within the first months of his presidency? Granted, it has been a rough few months, but it has opened the forum for groups like J Street, and other moderate voices stifled during the years of Bush and Intifada. And it has only been a few months. The Israelis and Palestinians are indeed defensive and distrustful, but they are above all tired of conflict, and moreover unable to free themselves from its grasp without American help.

Your approach, Mr. Friedman, strikes me not only as off the mark in terms of analysis, but also as dangerous in terms of implications. If you disagree with the premise that ending this conflict is important not only for the sake of the people of Israel and Palestine but also for the sake of world peace, security and American interests, then so be it. But having read your work in the past, I do not think that you would disagree with such a premise. Thus it is truly disappointing, and surprising, hearing you tell Obama and his administration to give up, to go home.

Do I believe that Obama’s push for peace is going perfectly? Of course not, but that should lead to a rethinking of strategy, perhaps a decision to shift focus from the settlements, or to push forward with Syrian-Israeli peace talks as a first step. It should not lead to giving up. Things are not going well now, Mr. Friedman, but what we need, as thinkers, human beings, and American constituents, is not cynicism, but hope, and creative, thoughtful alternatives.