

# Israel-a US outpost in the Middle East

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER

ISRAEL was artificially carved out by imperialist powers, more than half a century ago, on Palestinian land. No such country, which has been carved out artificially on someone else's land, can ever live in peace and security. At the time of its creation more than a million Palestinians were thrown out of the land where they had lived for centuries. They are living, ever since, as refugees. The Zionists massacred hundreds of Palestinians just before Israel came into existence. One cannot forget what happened in the village of Dare Yasin.

Violence has never ceased ever since. Israel, controlled by Zionists, has enacted several Dare Yasin since it came into existence. Since it is backed by Western imperialist powers, particularly USA, Israel has assumed license to kill and maim anyone who even talks of the rights of Palestinians. Israel has defied all UN resolutions from day one. It drove out Palestinians even

the Palestinians of their freedom to move around in their own territory despite strong opposition from various countries and by the UN. This is because the US has always supported Israel, right or wrong.

Israel, one can say without any hesitation, is an American imperialist outpost in the Middle East, as through it, the US wants to keep its unrelenting control over the oil in that region. For the US oil is the thing. The US has friendly relations with all the Arab regimes in the region, but the support of the rulers does not mean support of the peoples of these countries. From the Iranian experience it knows very well that it is the people and not the rulers' support, which is important.

The Shah of Iran was armed to the teeth by the US and he supported its interests faithfully, but the people of Iran overthrew him and the US couldn't do a thing. It couldn't offer even refuge to the Shah. Thus the US has learnt a lesson the hard way. Most of the rulers are highly unpopular and the

about Bush's repeated reference to freedom and democracy. Let alone democracy and freedom, US has no respect for people's lives, otherwise it would not have supported Israel in its blatant aggression in Lebanon. When it was killing civilians in South Lebanon and destroying all civilian structures, week after week, Bush ordered expeditious supply of intelligent bombs when Israel's

children. And yet the US is bent upon supporting Israel in the name of finishing Hezbollah once and for all.

If Hezbollah is a terrorist organisation, Israel and its supporters, are of the same genre. If killing innocent civilians is terrorism how can Israel escape the same description? Hezbollah hijacked two soldiers from Israeli territory, but Israel has entered into

army and the Israel retaliation was out of all proportions and has completely destroyed South Lebanon. Western countries are not condemning Israel for its war crimes, or even if they are, they equate it with Hezbollah's hijacking of two Israeli soldiers.

America was not interested in a ceasefire, arguing that it is better to let Israel finish Hezbollah once for all. So much destruction and

tated killing of innocent civilians will create many more 'terrorists', and US 'war against terrorism' is not going to succeed. Instead, it will further intensify. The more you attack innocent people, the more 'terrorists' you create. Osama and his al-Qaeda are not born terrorists. They are responding to US acts of aggression in the Middle East.

Not by destroying Hezbollah, but by finding a political solution,

This will only add to its insecurity.

Israel has the right to exist only when it recognises others' right to exist. If it continues to forcefully occupy Palestinian territory, and kill indiscriminately, it will not find peace for its people. If it wants to ensure peace and security for its people it will have to co-exist in peace with its neighbours, particularly the Palestinians. It should resolve all its problems through dialogue with the Palestinian and vacate territories occupied by it in the war of 1967.

Wisdom requires that peace be established through peaceful negotiations. Force has never succeeded in establishing peace at any time in the world. The Israeli aggression in Lebanon, for sure, is going to aggravate the problem in the Middle East several fold. But the irony of it is that the more powerful you become, the less wise you tend to be. It is the arrogance of power, which makes the powerful think it is going to finish off its enemy. But its use of force only results in multiplying the number of enemies.

One is reminded of Gandhi, here, who married non-violence with truth and inner discipline. Violence and falsehood go together, and truth and non-violence are solemnly wedded together. One wishes Israel, and its master USA, realise this simple, but profound, truth of Gandhian theory of non-violence. Gandhi's non-violent agitation succeeded in driving out the most powerful British from India. One wishes this truth dawn upon Israel and Palestinians and they engage in peaceful dialogue for solving the problem.

It is really shameful, though not surprising, that the entire Islamic world is silent on what is going on in Lebanon. Only Jordan opened its mouth for the first time after the attack on Qana. This attack had caused outrage throughout the world, and Israeli aggression is increasingly becoming indefensible, even for the USA.

It is equally painful that the Indian Government, which claims to be an inheritor of Nehruvian legacy, is keeping silent. It is more concerned about the nuclear pact with America than with the killings of innocent civilians in Lebanon. Manmohan Singh's Government is not even embarrassed at such

blatant aggression by Israel in Lebanon. Nehruvian legacy of nonalignment demands that it should condemn Israel, and demand immediate ceasefire failing which India should withdraw its ambassador from Tel Aviv. The Left has demanded that India should suspend purchasing arms from Israel. Though not sufficient, but even if this much is done it will be some measure of solidarity with the people of Palestine. The saving grace is that the Indian Parliament has passed a resolution condemning Israeli bombing on Qana.

Also, it has been once again proved that the UN is as impotent as the League of Nations had become at the time of the First World War. It is not values, but interests, that dominate the world body. The US has never cared for the UN. It attacked Iraq despite the UN opposing the war. The veto power is most undemocratic, and the five most powerful nations are privileged over all other nations. The majority decision in UN General Assembly has absolutely no meaning at all. The whole world is on one side and the five powers on the other.

No wonder then that the UN is not able to play any role in restraining Israel. Even if it adopts any resolution by a majority in the Security Council, it will be vetoed by America. Be it dictatorship, or democracy, it works only in favour of the powerful. One is reminded of Socrates' observation that it is the mighty that after all decide what is justice. All these years of 'progress' has made no difference to what Socrates said. In other words it is always might that is right.

Our civilised world is still in the stage of 'clash', as Huntington will love to describe it, rather than cooperation on values. Interests dominate over values, and so the more powerful you are, the greater is your ability to realise your interests by dominating the weak. We slide into barbarism if our interests are hurt. The dominant is always just and the weak is the terrorist.

The author is with the Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai.



from Eastern Jerusalem, which was to be part of a Palestinian state as per the UN resolution.

It also captured territories in West Bank, Golan Heights and Gaza, in the 1967 war, and despite UN resolutions never vacated them. It also further cut off, in pieces, Palestinian territories by constructing a wall and depriving

people are boiling with anger against them for supporting US interests in the Middle East. US knows well that Israel is the only reliable power for guarding the US interest in the region as not only the rulers of Israel, but also its people, are with the US.

What is worse, there is no democracy in any of these countries in the region, so much

stock was depleted.

Thus US is all for Israel's war of destruction in South Lebanon just because two Israeli soldiers were hijacked by Hezbollah. How can one equate the hijacking of two soldiers with the killing of more than 1000 people, all civilians, in South Lebanon? Just two days ago Israel bombed a village in which 53 people were killed, 34 of who were

Palestinian territory several times and killed its citizens. Recently, before its aggression against Lebanon, Israel killed a Palestinian family of five in Gaza. This crime of Israel was underplayed by the US and world media.

It is this act of murder by the Israeli Army, which angered Hezbollah, and in retaliation, it hijacked two soldiers of the Israeli

mayhem by Israel has not succeeded in harming Hezbollah, or demoralising it, so far. How can the killing of civilians, and the destruction of Lebanon, destroy Hezbollah? What have those innocent civilians got to do with what Hezbollah has done?

It does not require much intellectual exercise to understand that such blatant and premedi-

can one end terrorism in the world. Everyone knows very well that peace must precede justice, and it is the gross injustices, which create violence. Violence in the world cannot be ended without justice being done to the people of Palestine. Even Israel's sense of insecurity is not going to end as long as it wants to solve its problem of insecurity by use of blatant force.

## Disarming Afghan militias: Problems and prospects

BERYL ANAND

AN enduring legacy of Afghanistan's quarter century of conflict, has been the emergence of power structures based on the personal authority of commanders, backed by illegal armed groups. These structures continue to pose a principal challenge, at the local level, to the Afghan government. Disarming these militias has become an important aspect of providing security to the people in the NATO controlled territories. President Hamid Karzai, way back in 2004, underlined the threat posed by these private militias and considered them as the greatest danger, even more than the Taliban insurgency, and called for their disarmament.

These militias pose a threat to good governance, especially towards extending the rule of law and the writ of the central government in the provinces. They continue to prowl, unnumbered by any respect for the law. They have links with the terrorists, insurgents, drug traffickers and other criminal groups. In provinces, they have control over the local population and are also responsible

for killing civilians, aid workers, election officials and potential voters. Without concrete efforts to reduce their influence, it would be difficult to strengthen civil administration and the rule of law in Afghanistan.

Several initiatives were attempted to curb their dominance. Organised militias were disarmed, under the Bonn Agreement of 2001, resulting in all heavy weapons, along with significant quantities of small arms and ammunition, either brought under government control or destroyed. In 2003, Heavy Weapons Cantonment (HWC) programme was carried out to collect artillery, tanks and other heavy weapons from armed factions. Under this nationwide programme, arms belonging to armed factions were collected and stored at special government-run cantonment sites. Later in October 2004, UN-backed Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme, designed to help reduce the strength of the myriad armed factions, began at pilot level in Afghanistan. The first phase of DDR that targeted combatants belonging to semi-formal military units, existing outside the Afghan

National Army, ended in July 2005.

The Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) is an important programme under Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme (ANBP). Funded under the United Nations Development Programme by an international consortium of donors including Japan, Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States and the Netherlands, the DIAG has three phases: The first allows the commanders to disarm voluntarily. This was accomplished in the run-up to the parliamentary elections in September 2005. Retaining links with illegal armed groups were grounds for disqualification for potential candidates. The second phase involves asking local commanders to surrender their weapons. This program depends heavily on cooperation from the law enforcement agencies because they have to help the DIAG officials locate arms caches and their owners. The subsequent DIAG scheme focused its attention instead on the irregular armed groups that surround various strongmen, who often terrorize and extort the local population based on their strength of arms.

Regrettably, many Afghans are

skeptical that DIAG would succeed in disarming the population. With no remuneration, the warlords are unwilling to surrender their weapons. The DIAG program pledges to help those who are disarmed to find jobs in the private sector, but unfortunately, the Afghan economy is unable to accommodate them in large numbers.

Karzai has always tried to bring the warlords on board and explained the need for accommodation rather than confrontation. It has been alleged that warlords accused of violations and killings, occupy prominent positions in the current political establishment and even enjoy Karzai's confidence. Given the close ties between militia commanders and the government, collecting weapons is a difficult task. The official defense and police institutions also retain uncomfortably close ties with the illegal groups.

The international community also bears some responsibility for the problem as it has provided political cover to many former warlords, who turned politicians. Besides, the ongoing Taliban led insurgency is bringing more arms into Afghanistan every day and is a major obstacle to disarmament.

The Afghanistan Compact, released on 31 January 2006, stresses that the process must be government-led and backed by strong international support. The objective to complete DIAG by the end of 2007 requires strong leadership and political resolve at all levels, reinforced by stronger governance and law enforcement. It will be important to ensure that those communities that rid themselves of armed groups benefit from enhanced access to basic services and enhanced development opportunities. To maintain effective security, the Afghan police have to be properly trained and the Afghan National Army should be rid of defectors having multiple loyalties. The task, as of now, lies with the NATO, which is in control over Southern Afghanistan, to disarm the militia and extend the rule of law to these territories.

By arrangement with IPCS, New Delhi.

The author is, Research Officer, IPCS.



A US Special Force soldier negotiating with a local militia

## Ramifications of Indo-US nuke deal

SAZZAD REZA BASUNIA

LEBANON is suffering with death and destruction unleashed by the Israeli war machine. US weapons are wiping Lebanon out mercilessly. Children are struck down on streets, ruthlessly, like discarded dolls. The Bush administration is supplying more precise weapons to its client-Israel, to colour Lebanon more deeply with Lebanese blood. The equation of the war is very easy, i.e., 2 equals to 22 lac. This absurd equation has been possible only because of US' all out blind support to Israel, and this has proved the UN, EU and the OIC as ineffective in stopping the mayhem.

Apparently, after the end of Cold War the threat for the US-led NATO had disappeared, and it formulated all kinds of absurd theories, e.g., "collision of civilizations", "the human rights above the sovereignty", "humanitarian intervention", "no national boundaries for the internal affairs" etc, to decriminalise their unjust external intervention, aggression and invasion.

With changes in the geo-strategic situation in the world's most influential areas as well as the unbalanced development of power centers and the constant readjustment of their relations among each other, and particularly, the rise of China, Japan, EU, ASEAN, India etc., it is expected that after 10 to 15 years the multi-polar world configuration will begin to develop three core areas, namely, America, Europe and Asia and five power centers, which are, the US, EU, Japan, China and Russia.

However, since independence, India-Pakistan tensions regarding Kashmir have been influenced particularly by the policies of Russia, the US, and China, and in turn, have affected India's relationships with those countries. But during this unipolar era, especially after 9/11, recent years have witnessed a great change in India-US bilateral relations, in spite of their many differences.

It is said that working together for the maintenance of peace, security, and economic growth has allowed India and the US to move in one direction. But there are perhaps three reasons for this tie up. First, offsetting Chinese power. Vying of US military with China in the Pacific will define the twenty-first century, and China will be a more formidable adversary than Russia ever was. Secondly, countervailing axis-of-evil countries in Asia and consolidating India as a friendly country, which is a part of the United States designs of global partnership. Finally, consolidating

control over energy sources of Asia for future security.

In its relation with the US India seeks its interests in the following cases. One, India's dream to become an influential player in international politics, and one of the engines of growth of world economy. Two, minimise Chinese threat. Three, resolve the Kashmir issue and get opportunity in the proposed Indo-Pakistani-Iranian gas pipeline project up to its satisfaction. And four, India's quest for permanent UN Security Council

the US, beyond anti-Western paranoia, and establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel, an important and dependable ally of the US in the Middle East, and assurance from Israel for the supply of high technology weapons, like Arrow missiles.

India's first IAEA vote against Iran last September was because of US' insistence and India's interest in choosing nuclear cooperation with Washington over hydrocarbons from Iran.

But the US has been seeking to

but does not have any evidence. North-eastern states of India are stricken with conflict between tribal people and settlers that may compell some of the troublemakers to take shelter in Bangladesh just as Bangladeshi criminals do in India. But, in reality, Bangladesh has no interest in creating disorder. Two, the BSF push-in and indiscriminate killings in the border areas. It is reported that every year over 20 Bangladeshis are killed by the BSF. Three, the river-linking



membership.

Recently, the US House of Representatives has given initial approval to a landmark civilian nuclear cooperation accord with India. It is expected that this Indo-US nuke deal will become reality soon. India has become something more than a 'major non-NATO ally' of the US. It is noted that the nuclear agreement, initiated during Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to the United States in July 2005, and finalised during President Bush's visit to India in March 2006, is exceptional as it has been concluded with a country which has not signed the NPT, (and US law prohibits entering into agreements with countries that have not signed the NPT), and which refuses to follow the guidelines of the IAEA.

Moreover, India's new foreign policy is to strengthen relations with prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles in any part of the world. Strategic partnership, by and large, happens between two equals. The US does not want, and cannot afford, to have India as an adversary. The US is interested in Indian markets as a major consumer for US companies. For its own interest the US is not sincere enough to see the end to the longstanding India-Pakistan rivalry. The US has sold sophisticated weapons to Pakistan, which had earlier been used against India.

However, India is not friendly enough with its neighbours. Let alone Pakistan, three reasons could be given with reference to Bangladesh. One, India always accuses Bangladesh of harbouring anti-Indian elements,

project which is an infringement of international laws. Moreover, in addition, better Indo-US relation is being perceived as a threat to the Chinese scheme of things in Asia, which may further affect India-Pakistan relations.

But in the present situation of world order, regional co-operation is thriving because of its long lasting benefits. If India feels happy to think itself as a client country of the US, like Israel, that will obviously be unfortunate for this region. It will not only affect India's own sustainable economic and political development, it will also become a catalyst for disturbance in this region, which will make it a very lucrative market for US arms business.

The author is an MBA Student, Khulna University.