



Modern Israel is a product of cut-throat territorial expansionist policy of right-wing revisionist and militant Zionism. FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

Israel: A US project gone rouge



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The United States has been one of the biggest architects in the development of Israel as a nation-state in the post-70s world. Billions of dollars of US funding are earmarked for building and strengthening Israel's state capabilities. America's unequivocal support for the occupying state's right to self-defence at any cost is not shocking. But on the brink of a regional war with other state actors and militant proxy groups in the Middle East, and acceleration into a deeper and longer conflict, the US needs to ask if it has produced its version of Frankenstein, an aggressor state armed to the teeth, which will eventually put US interests at risk.

What is farcical about the US' humanitarian claims is that on the one hand, the administration is complicit in inflicting harm, and on the other, it is slapping a band-aid on the wound by sending humanitarian aid to Gaza, a drop in the ocean considering the massacre that has been perpetrated in the past few weeks. The US has supported colonisation and dictatorial state actors in its diplomatic past, but what is novel about its position in this conflict is its unique relationship with Israel. There is a vocal, powerful, and corporate Zionist constituency that advocates for Israel. As Noam Chomsky points out, Israel destroyed the prospect of secular Arab nationalism in the Middle East. It also combatted Soviet influences in the region and became a conduit to resources in the region for the US. Since then the alliance has been intact.

This current exchange between the US and Israel is a compelling case of how the US has become a puppet state, not only bending to Israel's disproportionate mawkish reaction that no goals for self-defence can justify, but also lacking the moral courage to publicly tell Israel that it is committing war crimes. Such blind fanatic support for war crimes is dubious if we do not see that modern Israel is an extension of a White-supremacist empire. Even though Jewish population expelled from the non-European nations has found a home in Israel, the White European Ashkenazis have historically benefited over the Mizrahis, Jewish diaspora in the Middle East and North Africa, and Jewish population of other races such as the Ethiopian Jews, who were forcefully sterilised.

The "human exchange" rate is too high, and it is tragic when total elimination of people is the central goal of a nation's national security strategy. Netanyahu's realpolitik logic is simple: one victory makes the next victory easier. The military might and expropriative ability of Israel are reflections of the European genius in developing a strong nation-state that needs to be feared. It is difficult to fathom Israel as the only democracy in the Middle East, when currently it is the strongest

occupying force in the world, with its roots embedded in depletion, expulsion, and erasure of people. Pre-1948 Palestine had a vibrant social mosaic where groups coexisted regardless of faith backgrounds with viable councils and diverse representations, although there were intra- and intercommunal skirmishes between Christian, Jewish and Muslim groups. But this system of coexistence could not withstand militant Zionism, which ultimately produced modern Israel.

While the trauma and horror of the Holocaust cannot be denied, Palestinians should not have to pay for Europe's mass atrocities, and its barbarism and failure to protect its Jewish citizens. Modern Israel is a product of the cut-throat territorial expansionist policy of right-wing revisionist and militant Zionism, which sustains by hijacking the tenets of peace espoused in Judaism. Prior to the recent spate of mass mutilation and defilement of Gaza's geography, only 35 percent of Israelis believed in the viability of a two-state solution. Israel is internally divided, and the ideological schisms have become more prominent under the right-wing Likud government. According to *The Times of Israel*, a significant size of the Israeli population intended to leave the country following the judicial overhaul that gives the Knesset power to override judicial rulings. To prove its legitimacy to the Israeli public, along with Zionist sympathisers around the world, the government is doubling down on its public display of power.

It is a shame to compare Hamas' October 7 attack with the Holocaust, an organised European pogrom that was meticulously staged over years and inflicted tragedy of unspeakable proportions on Jewish families. When Gamal Abdel Nasser, president of Egypt during the six-day Arab-Israeli war in 1967, closed the straits of Tiran, that too invoked the memories of the Holocaust in Israelis, which became Israel's excuse for a pre-emptive strike. A similar line of reasoning has been used by the state throughout its history to justify aggression. The state has always found a pretext to widen the scope of war in invoking the memories of the Holocaust and weaponising trauma to inflict more trauma. Manufacturing the truth and producing alternate realities are also critical to the sustenance of the settler-colonial state, and we are witnessing the outcome of bending to an apartheid state.

The power of the colonial force can be understood through the sheer number of people it can rule and crush, and the insurmountable scope of Zionist colonisation can be apprehended from the creation of a Messianic dreamland to the making of a hard nation-state as it continues to expand on its exclusionary principles. The

standards of international law are mere aspirations that help the global community to vocalise what is right or wrong, but in Israel's example, since the inception of the state with borders, its leaders have broken laws without remorse or repercussions. There is mounting tension between Israel and the United Nations after UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres made a comment about Israel's violation of international humanitarian law. This reflects how the UN does not have much clout over state-actors like Israel that have, throughout history, remained uncommitted to the calls for peace. In all this quagmire of different sides, there is no talk about the Palestinian prisoners locked up in Israeli jails without due process for years and decades.

Israeli historian Ilan Pappé mentions that the only way to challenge deafening narratives is to find roots of justice in knowledge. But even after being illuminated by such knowledge, the current world order that sanitises Israel's decades-long atrocities, can only be indicted in the court of public opinion, and cannot be challenged substantially enough to stop the loss of lives. The continuous erasure is a part of a larger project of setting up a Jewish majority state, as Pappé reiterates, "You wanted as much of Palestine as possible with as few Palestinians as possible."

Incremental elimination has been a part of the decades-long national project since right-wing revisionist Zionism, also part of the British idea and enterprise of bartering the world's lands, is in the germ of the founding of the nation. Other strands of organised Zionism faded on the cusp of Nazism and growing pan-Arab hostility. Some visible mechanisms of slow incremental erasure include everyday systemic discrimination of Palestinians at checkpoints, and withholding building permits for Palestinians, which gives way to regular property demolition exercises and normalises the multi-faceted exclusionary politics of giving bare minimum. The Israeli government also withholds the Palestinian Authority's (PA) customs revenue, which curtails the quasi-state entity's ability to pay public sector employees, further marring any little credibility PA holds in Palestinian public opinion.

The current enemy that Israel is fighting was once empowered by them as the state sought for division within the Palestinian leadership through Hamas counteracting Fatah, as admitted by top Israeli officials.

Scanning the global mortality landscape from weeks-long invasion that has caused deaths and casualties beyond recognition and any form of justification, it may be difficult for the world to continue to empathise with the mayhem of October 7. The genocide in Gaza fuelled by state-sponsored aggression continues to stretch beyond the recent loss experienced by Israel. We must learn lessons from the failures of the war on terror with more state-sponsored terror. Using violence is the weakest way of projecting power for a settler-colonial project, because there is always a blowback.

Why the government can't control commodity prices



Mostafa Shabui is the Bogura correspondent at The Daily Star.

MOSTAFA SHABUI

People wandering from shop to shop at kitchen markets is nothing new; what is new, however, is these very people failing to find that cheap deal. If one visits five to 10 vendors, whether it be the ones selling rice, onion or brinjal, they will find the exact prices, no room for negotiation. At a time when prices of essentials are sky-high, such deals mean more savings for the children, more food on the table, and more room to breathe. So now, how will these unfortunate individuals make ends meet?

The situation was not like this even some years ago. Not all shopkeepers sold their items at the same price; bargaining would do wonders, bringing per kilo prices down a few taka. So, what changed? An ugly atmosphere has developed in retail markets, including those in the villages, thanks to syndicates, which have formed everywhere for the sake of profits.

On September 14, the commerce

market.

In the past few years, many large food-processing companies that previously focused on luxury goods have ventured into the food-grain business, which is well known to the government. These corporations have started establishing their mills, factories and warehouses at the district level, investing a lot of money. Their investments and capacity are so high that they can buy all the paddy and rice grown in the districts in mere months.

Very soon, they will control the prices of our main food items—such as paddy-rice, potatoes, and maize. As a result, farmers will not get a fair price for their crops, and consumers will never be freed from high prices.

On October 16, AHM Shafiquzzaman, director general of the DNCRP, said, "Corporate organisations have held the egg market hostage." Several food control officials, on condition of anonymity,

control officials in Bogura Sadar upazila seized 2,000 tonnes of paddy from the under-construction auto rice mill of Tanveer Food Limited, a sister concern of Meghna Group, for hoarding.

Similarly, on January 19 this year, the Bogura Food Control Office filed a case against ACI and a local food warehouse in Sherpur upazila for illegally storing 4,510 tonnes of rice and paddy. The case statement stated, "According to the Control of Essential Commodities Act, 1956, no trader can store more than one tonne of food grain without having a storing licence from the government or government agencies. The ACI Foods Limited (rice unit) stored this sum of rice and paddy without such a licence." During this episode, the officials said seizing food from large companies is very difficult, as they are very powerful.

The brokers I spoke to said that the farmers had sold all the potatoes to middlemen, who were making profits of Tk 500-600 per sack. Even though the government had ordered the sale of potatoes at Tk 26-27 per kilo in the cold storage area, it is not possible, because all potatoes now land in the hands of these middlemen.

So, what can be done? Firstly, legislation should be made in a way so that all types of traders are listed.



Right now, there is no direct contact between consumers and farmers. Numerous small and large corporations, brokers, and middlemen have come in between the two groups. FILE PHOTO: STAR

ministry fixed the prices of potatoes, onions, and eggs in the retail market. Each egg from the poultry farm has been priced at Tk 12, a kilo of potatoes at Tk 35-36, and Bangladeshi onions at Tk 64-65 per kilo.

Since fixing the prices, the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection (DNCRP) and other government agencies have been monitoring the market daily for over a month. Raids have been frequent at small retailers and large business establishments. Many companies have been significantly fined, while small traders have been charged and jailed. Even eggs are being imported to stabilise the market. According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), in the 2022-23 fiscal year, more potatoes were grown than the national demand. But all this has brought no good news; prices have no sign of going down.

Now the question is whether the government wants to control the

Right now, there is no direct contact between consumers and farmers. Numerous small and large corporations, brokers, and middlemen have come in between the two groups. These entities need to be driven out of this space to revive producer-consumer relationships.

said big companies are collecting aromatic rice from local markets. After packing it, they sell one kilo of Chingura rice for Tk 150 to 180, when the production cost is less than Tk 70.

On December 23 last year, food

Traders will automatically report to the local administration how much they are buying, stocking, and selling on a daily basis. Next, the government should have accurate information about food production and the actual demand, so that it can understand in advance about the potential increase in prices and how much food needs to be imported to stabilise the market.

Right now, there is no direct contact between consumers and farmers. Numerous small and large corporations, brokers, and middlemen have come in between the two groups. These entities need to be driven out of this space to revive producer-consumer relationships.

If such measures are taken, coupled with strict monitoring and enforcement of the law, there is hope of getting back to the markets of the past, where bargaining brought respite and groceries didn't weigh on your whole life.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Half of a chess set

6 Treaties

11 Be patient for

12 Boise's state

13 Doorstep shape

14 Juliet's love

15 Wife of Zeus

17 Poker prize

18 Speedy part of a highway

22 Snowman in "Frozen"

23 Bellyached

27 Reef material

29 Greek marketplace

30 Roma's nation

32 Barber's focus

33 Stretch out

35 Sense of self

38 Wild guess

39 Work of fiction

41 Of the Vatican

45 Because of

46 Select group

47 Sipping aid

48 Wintry weather

DOWN

1 Fido's foot

2 Stunned wonder

3 Gum mass

4 Dusk

5 Girder material

6 Voracious fish

7 Fuss

8 Scout's base

9 Vincent Van

32 Barber's focus

10 Chimney

16 Unrefined

18 Center points

19 Heaps

20 Mystery writer

21 Pool game

24 Ark builder

25 Lake near Buffalo

26 "Dog-gone!"

28 Stays under the radar

31 Termite's kin

34 Stares in shock

35 Finishes

36 Foot ailment

37 Finished

40 Greek vowel

42 Diner dessert

43 Chowd down

44 Permit

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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ELIOT INLET
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ORE NEATNIK
FED GARDEN
WARM
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GOURMET ADO
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ADEPT OF AGE
DUKES NADER
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