

Israel is rogue, but Iran must demonstrate restraint



A CLOSER LOOK

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TASNEEM TAYEB

Israel and Iran have finally come out of the closet with their unquenchable thirst for might and prevalence over the region. These two equally obstinate countries are no longer fighting a shadow war, and this raises significant concern for multiple stakeholders, particularly the Palestinians, and the Sunni Arab states.

In Iran's defence, one could say that the country retaliated against Israel's attack on its consulate in Syria on April 1, which killed seven personnel of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), including two generals. It was Iran's way to send a strong message to Israel to stop its unprovoked attacks on Iranian sites in the region. On December 25 last year, an Israeli attack in Damascus resulted in the provocative assassination of high-ranking Iranian general Sayyed Razi Mousavi. Unfortunately, the US was lacking in condemning this reckless act by Israel. In view of the recurrence of Israel's unprovoked attacks, Iran was left with no other option but to showcase its military capabilities.

Unfortunately, there is nothing one could say in Israel's defence, except these callous acts are being orchestrated by a government headed by a power-hungry leader, without the support of the Israeli citizens who regularly brave Israeli military violence to take to the streets demanding Netanyahu's resignation and an immediate end to the bloody conflict in the region.

It is to Iran's credit that the nation has downplayed the retaliatory attack by Israel on its key defence and

from the Suez Canal—one of the major income sources of Egypt—the country is feeling the pinch. The Arab countries would preferably want to avoid a scenario where decades of hard work resulting in their economic growth would be reversed.

At the same time, the Arab nations would not want to be in a position where they would have to "officially" side with Israel against a Muslim state, given its history of human rights abuses and war crimes against the Palestinians. The ongoing genocide in Gaza—now in its seventh month—has made it even more unpalatable for the Arab nations to openly side with Israel. However, there would always be the US attempts to mould them into compliance.

For the US, a full-blown conflict in the Middle East—as a result of Israeli recklessness—would make it difficult for it to continue its "iron-clad" support for its biggest ally. Already, the US military aid to Israel has been questioned, even at the domestic level, with increased pressure on the Biden administration due to the killing of civilians in Gaza.

For the Palestinians, a conflict between Israel and Iran essentially means a distraction from Israeli atrocities in Palestinian territories. Iran also does not seem to want a conflict with Israel, for now, considering its muted response to the latest Israeli attack on Isfahan. One of the probable reasons is their readiness to counter more extensive attacks from Israel and its mighty ally, the US. Iran, as of yet, has not started making nuclear weapons, as

region through re-establishment of relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. In the wake of Gaza genocide, Saudi Arabia has already softened its stance towards Iran. In fact, the China-brokered Saudi-Iran deal has been seen as a turning point in the reintegration of Iran into the greater region—albeit slowly.

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So, despite so many quarters not wanting conflict escalation between Israel and Iran, why is the former doing everything it can to spread the fire?

For one, expanding the attacks beyond Gaza would enable Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to stay in power to sustain his political career. The Gaza genocide has become highly unpopular among the people, and Netanyahu has lost support at home and abroad. In addition, given the multiple corruption charges facing Netanyahu and his massive unpopularity among the people, it is obvious that the moment the Gaza war ends and Netanyahu steps down, it will be his journey to prison and a timely demise of his political career.

Secondly, if one has monitored the developments in the US, one

As I watched the tiny Moon devour the blazing Sun



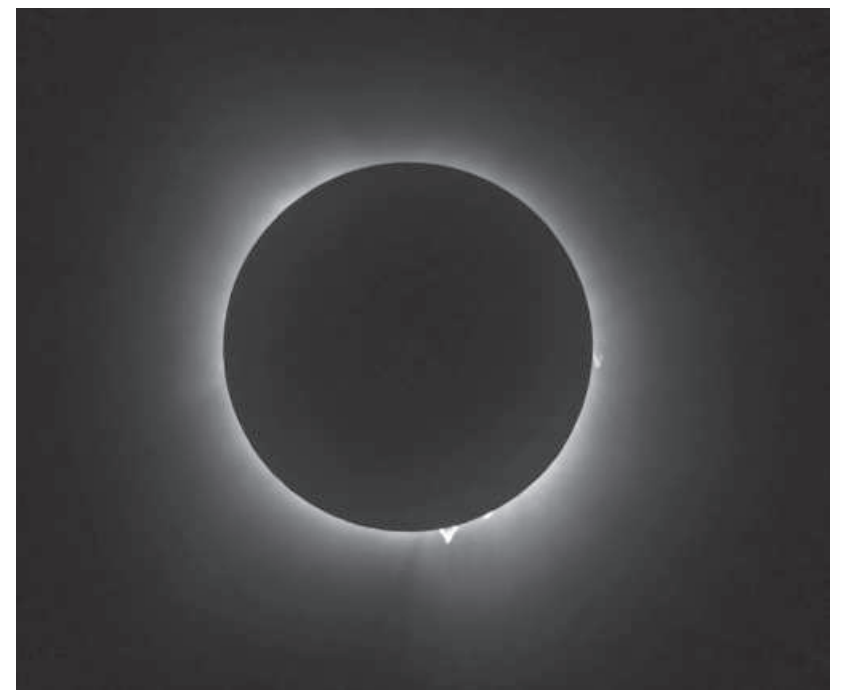
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QUAMRUL HAIDER

The Great American Solar Eclipse of 2024 that swept across a vast swath of North America on April 8 has come and gone. Along the path of totality, this astronomical phenomenon mesmerised about 3.2 crore people. The first city to experience totality was Mazatlán, on Mexico's Pacific Coast, and the last to see were sky-gazers living along the Atlantic Coast of Newfoundland, Canada. In the United States, the path of totality traversed diagonally from Texas in the south to Maine in the north.

Across civilisations, solar eclipses have been a powerful source of myths, legends, and superstitions. This celestial event, where the Moon obscures the Sun, plunging day into darkness, fascinated humanity and inspired awe, fear, and wonder. They interpreted solar eclipses through the lens of their worldview, creating a rich tapestry of stories and beliefs.

In Hindu mythology, eclipses are caused by the demon Rahu swallowing the Sun, while in ancient



Totality With solar prominences (in pink) and corona during the Great American Solar Eclipse on April 8, 2024.

PHOTO: SHEEHAN HAIDER AHMED

During the ephemeral darkness, the air became chilly, a few stars appeared, Jupiter and Venus stood out as bright points on the opposite sides of the eclipsed Sun, small flocks of birds darted across the sky and orange light glowed on the distant horizon. Time seemed to have stopped during the four minutes of totality.

China, a celestial dragon was thought to lurch on the Sun during an eclipse. According to Korean folklore, solar eclipses occur when mythical dogs try to steal the Sun. To the ancient Greeks, a solar eclipse signalled the beginning of disasters and destruction.

Fear of solar eclipses still exists today. Many people around the world see eclipses as evil omens that bring death, catastrophes and devastation. In many cultures, including Bangladesh, it is believed that solar eclipses can be a danger to pregnant women and their unborn children. Hence, they are advised to stay indoors.

There is no scientific evidence supporting the myths and superstitions associated with solar eclipses. In fact, there are ample demonstrable theories to debunk such claims. Nevertheless, anyone watching a solar eclipse must protect his/her eyes with special goggles.

Because I live in a town far away from the path of the eclipse, I was lackadaisical about the Great American Solar Eclipse until my son convinced me that I should not miss out on viewing this once-in-a-lifetime astronomical spectacle,

an infrequent cosmic confluence caused by a delicate dance between the Moon, the Sun, and the Earth. To see the full glory of the total solar eclipse, we chose to go to Houlton in Maine, a small logging town of roughly 6,000 pressed between rolling potato fields and the border with Canada. It is the last town in the US to experience totality.

Accordingly, two days before the eclipse, we drove to New Hampshire, where my son lives. Hotel rooms in Houlton were sold out or listed at astronomical prices. Having no alternative, we decided to be day trippers. On a normal day, the driving time from his apartment to Houlton, which is over 587 kilometres away, is 4.5 hours. However, anticipating heavy traffic on the day of the eclipse, we started very early in the morning so as to reach Houlton ahead of the onset of the eclipse. Indeed, because of gridlock along the long, lonely stretch of the highway, the driving time was eight hours.

About 30,000 visitors came to Houlton to watch the eclipse. On the day of the eclipse, the car park at the town's central square was full to the brim, mostly with out-of-state licence plates. Not sure whether the glaring neon signs of the stores in the square would be turned off during totality, we parked our car in a nearby children's playground, eight kilometres northwest in the village of Littleton.

Bolstered by a fortuitous day of cloudless sky, the Moon slid into perfect alignment with the Sun at the predicted time of 14:37. When the Moon began to pass the Sun, people put on their eclipse glasses with heads tilted upward, watching as more and more of the Sun disappeared behind the Moon. As the Sun became crescent-shaped, light gradually faded, became dimmer and morphed into an eerie, dusky, muted twilight.

The crowd that had gathered in the park grew quiet, except for a few eclipse-watchers who shrieked, "Oh my god, it's so dark now... oh my god!" During the ephemeral darkness, the air became chilly, a few stars appeared, Jupiter and Venus stood out as bright points on the opposite sides of the eclipsed Sun, small flocks of birds darted across the sky and orange light glowed on the distant horizon. Time seemed to have stopped during the four minutes of totality.

Just before totality, sunlight streaming over the craters and valleys of the lunar surface broke up into dazzling jewel-like points known as Bailey's beads. After about 30 seconds, some of the beads merged together, creating a glistening effect resembling a diamond ring. The spectacular display of totality was adorned with solar prominences that are flickering reddish dots in locations around the Moon's outline. After a minute, totality ended and the Sun was gradually becoming luminous. Later around 16:15, the Moon and the Sun parted ways, each again tracing their own separate path in the sky.

Clearly, this cosmic event delivered on the hype leading up to it with clockwork precision. More importantly, we could see all phases of the eclipse with naked eyes. The longest phase was the partial eclipse that lasted for about 90 minutes.

Finally, totality may have been fleeting, but the sense of amazement and the euphoria of sharing the experience with my son will be long-lasting. It was indeed a sight to behold, a surreal moment, a moment for reverence that left me dumbfounded with my breath held in awe. I am so happy I listened to my son and accompanied him to Houlton. The magical experience was worth the 16-hour round trip.



PHOTO: REUTERS

An anti-Israel billboard with a picture of Iranian missiles is seen on a street in Tehran, Iran on April 19, 2024.

nuclear site in Isfahan, comparing the quadcopters to "toys." Had Iran wanted, it could have chosen to respond again. It can be safely concluded that Israel was behind the April 19 quadcopter attack on Iran, given the former's tendency to frequently use these—their usage has been especially extensive in the ongoing war in Gaza.

While things are quiet on the Iranian front for now, one more Israeli misadventure could plunge the entire region into a full-fledged war. The limited-scale operations have already pushed it to the brink. This would not only unleash a bloodbath in the region, but would also significantly hurt the economic progress the region has made over the decades.

The Black Sea situation has already made global trade more expensive and uncertain, weakening the global supply chain, while raising the costs of doing business. As ships are being rerouted, it has also started hurting the countries in the region. Take the case of Egypt, for example. It is already struggling with high inflation and currency shortage; in fact, many of the countries in the region are. As shipping companies begin rerouting

recently noted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), even though the country does have the materials. At the same time, in its last quarterly report, the IAEA

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disclosed that since the end of 2023, Iran has slowed the pace of its 60 percent uranium enrichment. The country is perhaps now eyeing creating a stronger acceptance in the

would notice how the pressure on the Biden administration to condition military aid to Israel has turned into calls for sending more aid in the pretext of helping boost its self-defence capabilities. Could Israel have perhaps intentionally goaded Iran to retaliate in order to help the Biden administration justify pumping more war arsenal into the Israeli ammunition inventory? Most likely.

There has been an interesting development in the US within a week of Iranian retaliation against Israel. The US House of Representatives approved \$26 billion as emergency assistance to Israel, which includes around \$14 billion in unconditional military aid. This will undoubtedly increase Israel's capability to launch more attacks on Gaza, southern Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, Iran, and any other country that it lays its eyes on.

It remains to be seen what Israel does with its replenished weapons inventory. But whatever Israel does, Iran should take the moral high ground by refraining from retaliation, thus creating more acceptance for its maturity in handling crisis situations and saving the region from a long-lasting bloody war.

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e-Tender Notice

e-Tender are invited in The National e-Gp system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by the Executive Engineer, RHD, Munshiganj Road Division, Munshiganj for the procurement of

SL No	Tender ID # & Package No	e-Tender Description	Last Selling Date & Time	Closing Date & Time	Opening Date & Time
1	975221, 39/e-GP/Mundiv/2023-2024	Construction of Island Extension, Lane Levelling & Existing Island casting work at Bhanga Toll Plaza at Ch. 36+500 Km of "Jatir Pita Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Mohasarak" (N-8 Expressway) Road Under Munshiganj Road Division, During the Year 2023-2024.	12-05-2024 17:00	13-05-2024 13:30	13-05-2024 13:30

1. The above tenders are online tenders. Where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-Gp portal and no Offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-Gp system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

2. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National E-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks Branch.

3. Further information and guidelines are available in the National E-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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