

How Trump is destroying the international order



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The most dangerous aspect of the shifting landscape of US foreign policy is not just the expansion of its warmongering tendencies, but the exposure of the fragility of the global leadership it claims to have absolute power over.

In the moments when the maps of the world shake, the danger of war is not only in the missiles, but in the minds that run them, in the language that justifies them, and in the level of political and moral consciousness among those who sit in the rooms where the decisions are made. Donald J Trump — who is supposed to be driving the most powerful military machine in the world — was allegedly “shocked,” at Iran’s retaliation, and is now dramatically weighing on escalating the war in Iran, while also pushing for diplomacy. Trump’s unpredictability indicates an aversion to analyse facts that will minimise the heavy casualties and costs of warfare on his own people and the international community.

Trump treats war as if it is a show of force to determine which countries’ futures can be controlled from a fortified operations’ room. But history teaches us that wars, especially in areas saturated with complexity, enmities and fragile balances, do not go according to the wishes of those who ignite them. When Trump reportedly admits that he did not anticipate the targeting of other Gulf nations, the question is not only about the efficiency of the administration, but about the ability of this leadership to understand the nature of the world it deals with.

In the midst of talking about a wider war, casualties, mutual targeting and a global energy crisis, the US President suddenly moves on to talk about another country, Cuba, its weather,

and then utters “friendly takeover,” and states, “I can do whatever I want with it.” Trump’s repeated utterances of words like “takeover,” is not an expression of a momentary emotion nor is it an indicator of one man’s instability. It is a clear pattern of thinking expanded from the historical, imperialist mindset ingrained in US governance. But the logic of naked force is no longer just a mental background of politics. It has become direct discourse, based on which the fate of the world is intertwined.

Trump’s arrogant language reflects contempt for the idea of international

administration is trying to calm markets and public opinion by promoting secret diplomatic contacts aimed at stopping the escalation. When the statements of the authority become externally and internally questioned, and when the official discourse appears as a tool to calm investors, not to describe reality as it is — we become faced with a management that does not have a clear strategy. The Trump administration’s “management” of its country and foreign policy, is of impressions, manufacturing temporary narratives to sustain itself.

However, the real price of all

politically and psychologically. The US President seems more preoccupied with mocking and bullying his opponents in degrading personal attacks, than facing questions about the explosive situation in the Middle East and its mechanisms, including its impact on the US.

We are witnessing one of the harshest aspects of contemporary political leadership: the transformation of the highest position in the state into an escape from accountability. Donald Trump has depicted the death of US military personnel as, “part of war.” We are not only witnessing a lack of sympathy, but a breakdown in the moral

question: is there really a real strategy governing the US’ behaviour, or has war become a series of improvisations and attempts to take attention away from internal governance failure that unfolds day after day? Many indications suggest that we are seeing an authority that is trying to cover up its inability to perform, and hide its absence of vision with more shocking statements, using the verbal chaos as a veil over the actual chaos.

The world is not managed by the logic of improvised comments, as major crises cannot withstand this level of lightness. The Middle East is not the scene for electoral messaging. Cuba is not a geopolitical joke. Oil markets are not just a screen that can be deceived forever, and the lives of soldiers and civilians are not a minor detail in the bigger picture. When the tendency to produce verbal shock value results in military decisions, the danger becomes doubled, because war is not only the result of a conflict of interests, but also the result of personal ego and a desire to impose muscle power at any cost.

The most dangerous thing in the shifting landscape of US governance is not just the expansion of its warmongering tendencies, but the exposure of the fragility of the global leadership it claims to have absolute power over. Wars can sometimes be contained, and crises may find their exits after a high cost, but the real disaster begins when the decision-making itself becomes a source of chaos, and when the leader of a superpower experiments with the boundaries of his authority. At that point, the world witnesses a defect that makes all its entities — allies, opponents, markets and people — prisoners of the mood of one individual who does not seem to be fully aware of the war he launched, nor where it can end. If we continue to see more of the current pattern, the danger threatens not only one region, but the entire international order, because in this case the world becomes hostage to volatile decisions and political whims that may at every moment, open a new door to a greater disaster.

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US President Trump said he was “shocked” at Iran’s retaliation, as if experts never warned against military misadventures in the Middle East.

PHOTO: AFP

law, a disregard for the sovereignty of other nations, and a disregard for the consequences of any new forms of reckless leadership. When powerful nations begin to believe the myth of their absolute power, they enter the phase of regression. Every force that imagines that it can open additional fronts while it is unable to manage the existing front, reveals a growing separation between discourse and reality.

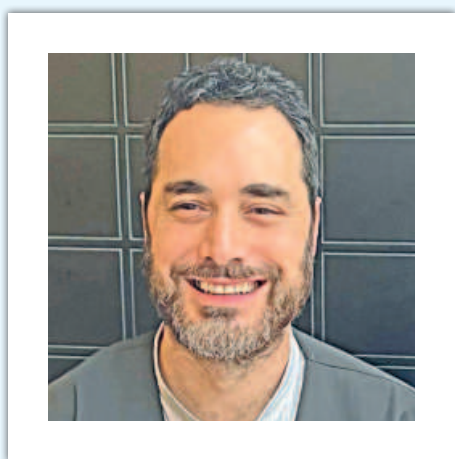
At the same time, the US

this confusion is not paid in press conferences or in screens, but on the ground, in the bodies of soldiers, in cities at risk, in diplomatic missions that turn into targets, and in human lives that pay the cost of reckless wars. Reports about the perils of US soldiers, and the targeting of embassies, hotels and allied countries, confirm that the issue is no longer just a containable crisis, but has become an explosive reality that expands the field — both

sense of responsibility. A democratic leader does not run away from difficult questions. A democratic leader does not underestimate death. A democratic leader faces results, recognises the cost, and respects people’s right to know the truth.

The landscape drawn by Trump’s recent actions is that of a troubled capital, a confused leadership, and a foreign policy that moves reactively. From there arises a fundamental

‘US and Israel’s aggression is a sign of desperation’



Dr Bashir Saade, lecturer at University of Sterling and author of “Hizbollah and the Politics of Remembrance,” speaks to Ramisa Rob, Geopolitical Insights Editor of The Daily Star about Israeli operations in Lebanon and Middle East, and what strategic victory means for the US and Israel against Iran and Hezbollah.

Can you explain how the geopolitical dynamics changed in the Middle East since October 7, 2023?

There have been major transformations in the rules of the game. The Lebanese government is allied with the US, and has been indirectly bidding for Israel, and pushing to demilitarise Hezbollah. When the US and Israel decided to act on Iran — which was planned for years — it strategically coincided with an Israeli intervention in Lebanon against Hezbollah. The ground invasion in Lebanon, and possibility of boots on the ground in Iran, is most important to follow, in order to understand how this will unfold.

On the internal political front, the US-allied Lebanese government is currently asking for the start of negotiations of peace with Israel, including normalising

relations with Israel. Very expectedly, Israel has refused to negotiate for peace with Lebanon. Israel never wanted peace, as it doesn’t suit Israel’s interests.

Since October 7, the US and Israel have decided that the resistance coalition has to be neutralised or eliminated. It is not viable for the US and particularly Israel to have the resistance coalition exist as a political actor. In politics, you either negotiate and recognise the other as an existing actor and try to compromise, or you reach a point where you decide that taking them out with force as such, would have a better outcome. For the US and Israel, the idea is clearly to create some kind of a ground for regime change in Iran, as we’re seeing with targeted killings, so that there is no entity such as the Revolutionary Guard anymore. The regime change entails a US-friendly government in Iran.

Is a US-aligned government a possibility in Iran after this war?

History shows that most regimes, groups, and political actors don’t only survive when they have equal power to the attacking force. They survive through asymmetric means. It is true that Iran and Hezbollah are no match for the US and Israeli army and their technological, military capabilities. But they can fight wars that exhaust Israel and US’ capabilities. So that is what both Iran and Lebanon are continuing to bet on. They are also betting on the paralysis of the world economy, to the Gulf countries, which make up the most important region for wealth accumulation for the world economy. It’s not just because of oil and gas, but also financial markets. Most of the US currency is actually Gulf money. This is why the current war, as labelled by many commentators, is a war of attrition, that bleeds the enemy as much as possible till the enemy feels that they cannot “afford” this anymore.

How long is war on all fronts, sustainable for the US and Israel and Hezbollah and Iran?

There’s talks that Israel is considering the usage of nuclear weapons in Iran, which would be a disaster. Israel is desperate. Iran is huge in land mass and the killing

of leaders and top officials cannot lead to quick change. Hezbollah is in a different situation of course, but as long as there is someone hiding behind a mountain or valley in the south of Lebanon, it’s hard to fully eliminate them. Israel is trying to occupy the south of Lebanon; it may succeed, but it is facing fierce resistance. One of the issues with the wars that the US and Israel are waging in the region — even in Gaza with Hamas — is that eliminating resistance groups is not practical. Their enemy is an ideological one, fighting against injustice, occupation and Israel’s machinations which have broken their families. People are not going to go away. If someone is killed in a family, his son will fight, or his cousin will fight — and so on. When the US and Israel become aggressive, it’s a sign of weakness that they’re not succeeding in hitting where they hope to. Even in Gaza, the narrative is that Hamas is decimated. Hamas’ leadership may be gone, but Hamas still exists underground. Their idea as a resistance faction continues to survive. Total destruction of the Gaza Strip has been achieved but is there really a strategic victory for Israel? Something similar may happen to Lebanon. Israel wants to transform the south and parts of Beirut into a new Gaza and colonise.

The only way to deal with such an enemy for the US and Israel is through political compromise, which they don’t wish to do as Hezbollah and the Iranian regime are some of the only ones in the world rejecting US and Israel’s colonial efforts.

Hezbollah and Iran are in it for existential reasons so they will fight until everybody is dead. They don’t care. They’re waiting to die as the martyrdom culture is very strong. From what’s happening recently, it does seem to me that the US is reconsidering. For the war in Lebanon, it’s possible that it would last longer than the one in Iran. The more you corner an arrogant enemy, like the US and Israel, they start using other means of destruction. Israel starts bombing civilian infrastructure. The main doctrine that Israel operates on — which is different to the US — is really spreading terror by calling their enemies “terrorists.” The idea

in Lebanon is to create a complete state of disarray, displacement of the people within the country, spreading mayhem and chaos. The strategy here is that spreading terror will lead to a change of heart. It’s partly working, as many Lebanese people are saying, “We know that Israel is a monster, so why should we poke that monster anymore when we’re suffering?” That sort of mentality is dexterously engineered by Israel.

Now, we’re in the last war, really. Maybe it will lead to a partial neutralisation of the resistance coalition. It is set to be a long war, unless something tactically new happens in the next few weeks that would change the rules of the game from existence and survival for Iran and Hezbollah. But there’s a fundamental issue with what the US and Israel view as strategic victory. There’s always been a resistance against Israel historically. There will always be resistance against any form of injustice, even if neutralised now.

What do you make of the “narrative victory” that Trump is trying to paint?

Half of this war is media warfare. There’s been fake reports that Netanyahu died, and fake videos of him, in general. He was alive but he entertained mystery during that period when the false reports were emerging. All of this creates psychological warfare — what we call “psyop.” Essentially, you spread news that will change the way the war is happening, such as one party saying we’ve conquered this part of the area, so the opponent has to shift their plans. Using misinformation to change military strategy is another expertise of Israel, for decades. Iranians are also trying to do the same. But it’s also commentators, influencers and the general public in social media who participate in the large-scale spread of misinformation about the trajectory of the war. Today, we are all involved in warfare with every single video we consume, like, or share. Take Trump’s catchy declarations and slogans for example. They don’t need to mirror any form of reality. But the danger is that they become reality because people start thinking in a certain way.

What about the role of intelligence? There has been a continuity of antagonism

towards Iran in what we call the “deep state,” of the US, across all governments. The intelligence community, I think, are in agreement with Trump over this war. In the case of Hezbollah, it’s even more simple. Hezbollah will always be a US enemy as they attacked US interests in the 80s, and the US never forgets. There’s a documentary on the CIA chasing Hezbollah fighters for years, until the CIA and Mossad killed one of them, Imad Mughniyeh in 2008. This is the mentality of the US and Israeli intelligence community: to chase with force until beating them.

The assassination of leaders is done by intelligence and as we are seeing, Mossad and CIA work relentlessly to penetrate all the resistance groups. But targeting leaders or civilian structures simply does not solve the problem. The resistance will continue in cycles. At some point, if Israel wants to compromise, they have to completely rethink what they’re doing in the region as a political project, which they are not willing to do.

Do you think this war would be a wake-up call for the international community?

There is really no international community anymore. Europe is spineless. The US is captured by radical, pro-Zionist thinking. Meanwhile, the rest of the world — Russia and China, for example — is waiting to see how the empire of the US will slowly crumble. There never was an international system holding it all together. We’re in a more turbulent phase, where Russia has been bogged down in a war in its backyard, and China is in economic warfare with the US. So the Middle East is really the place where the battle is happening, because a project like Israel is a strong, destabilising force that the US empire can use to maintain its stronghold. Israel can be a ruthless criminal willing to do anything, for their survival. Maybe Israeli leaders think if they kill everybody, they can live in peace. But no project historically has survived on a mountain of injustice. Every project like Israel has ended up collapsing. Can we name one tyrant in the history of humanity that didn’t fall eventually?