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Israel isn't crazy, it's just MAD

Since before its inception, Israel has very deliberately, very rationally pursued a 'MAD strategy' toward its foes and allies alike, training them to accept its bad behavior at all times.



(Photo Credit: The Cradle)

During the night hours between 30 and 31 July, Israel targeted two top Resistance Axis officials for assassination, both unprecedented in seniority during this round of conflict.

First, top Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukr was **killed** in an Israeli air attack on his residential building in the densely populated Beirut suburb of Dahiyeh, leaving several civilians dead and over 70 injured.

The **second target**, at 2 am on 31 July, was Hamas political bureau leader Ismail Haniyeh – a central figure in ceasefire negotiations – who was in Tehran to attend the inauguration ceremony of Iran's incoming President Masoud Pezeshkian.

Within the course of a few hours, Israel managed to strike at three Resistance Axis members: Lebanon, Palestine, and Iran. In doing so, Tel Aviv violated a whole slew of international

laws, diplomatic conventions, and customary practices that prohibit political assassinations while glaringly violating the territorial integrity of two UN member states.

Since its war on Gaza, Israel has rapidly gained global pariah status, not just because of its live-streamed genocide that has killed at least 40,000 Palestinian civilians – 15,000 of them children – but also because of the unprecedented rulings and deliberations still underway at the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over Israel's war crimes.

Thus, Tel Aviv's incendiary actions last night beg the question, is Israel just crazy? Does it not see the global censure brewing, the boycotts expanding, its alliances dwindling, the social media rage, and its growing and glaring isolation?

Israel is all about the MAD

The simple answer is no. Successive Israeli governments have been entirely rational, depending on a single overriding strategy from which the state has not veered.

Recognizing its geographic, population, political, and economic shortcomings from the get-go, the Zionist project – very calculatingly – implemented something we can call the 'MAD strategy' to attain its objectives and then punch well above its geopolitical weight class.

A weird but effective strategy, MAD actually derives from [textbook deterrence theory](#):

Creating a threatening presence by having an aggressive reputation with the touch of madness will prevent your enemies from attacking you. They would not attack a person who takes his enemy with him if he falls.

This is the essence of Israel's strategy with friends and foes alike, and once understood, it is hard to unsee these tactics in all the state's dealings.

After the Palestinian resistance's 7 October military operation last year – and just as US President Joe Biden was en route to Tel Aviv to lend his support to Israel – the occupation army struck Gaza's Al-Shifa Hospital, killing hundreds of civilians seeking shelter and medical attention. The hit was by no accident. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu deliberately sought those optics. He wanted to corner the US president into displaying support for his policies, no matter how awful the atrocity.

This is a long-practiced Zionist tactic to *tame and groom* targets to *accept and expect* Israeli bad behavior.

Netanyahu also played this dangerous game with Russian President Vladimir Putin during the Syrian war. After every meeting with the powerful Russian head of state, the Israeli premier would launch hard strikes against Syria – again, to *tame and groom* the Russians to *accept and expect* Israeli bad behavior.

Today, Israel employs the full spectrum of its MAD strategy in its attacks on Palestinians in Gaza and across the West Bank – rape, murder, amputations, beheadings, torture – with impunity. Allies, foes, and global populations are expected to accept the images and data and be ready for even worse scenarios.

It is untrue that Tel Aviv acts irrationally. Implementing the MAD strategy is a rational decision for a small entity that needs to impose its oversized will on not only its neighbors but on global powers and international institutions, too.

MAD, before 1948

MAD is not a new Israeli strategy; its beginnings lie in the years preceding the state's establishment when Zionist militias bombed and killed the very British forces that had enabled Jewish immigration to Palestine and launched military operations to ethnically cleanse the country's indigenous population.

Israel instituted an offensive “threatening presence” right from its inception: terrorist acts by Jewish militias such as the Stern Gang and Irgun assassinating British Diplomats in Cairo in 1944; blowing up the King David Hotel in 1946; conducting the Deir Yassin massacre in 1947; followed by the Palestinian Nakba in 1948.

But instead of receiving punishment for their crimes, Zionists were rewarded with a UN vote that formalized the state of Israel in 1947. The bad behavior had reaped extraordinary rewards, so why quit the strategy?

The bulk of the early Zionist terror militias later formed the Israeli army. The politician who ordered the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians was named the “father of Israel” and became the country's first prime minister. Other militia leaders rose to that rank in quick succession – Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Rabin, Yitzhak Shamir – some of them winning Nobel peace prizes. Again, bad behavior paid off.

After Israel's creation, a series of wars with Arab neighbors in 1956, 1967, 1973, and 1982 rewarded Israel with further territorial gains, more settlements, and a bigger seat at the international table. A steady stream of Israeli military and intelligence aggressions was launched on a region that spanned an area 250 times Israel's size, covering Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, the UAE, Tunisia, Egypt, and Uganda.

All this was only possible through full spectrum western diplomatic, economic, military, and media support, which went to great pains to cover Israel's audacious, illegal provocations, instead redirecting the narrative to Israeli peace process efforts, its ‘democracy,’ its ‘disciplined & advanced,’ and invincible ‘moral’ army protecting the ‘Jewish promised land.’ In short, by helping Tel Aviv “groom and tame” global opinion, Israel's western allies set the

stage for the international community to *accept and expect* Israeli bad behavior as an essential western ‘outpost of civilization.’

Taking off the MAD gloves

Then came the Palestinian resistance operation on 7 October, during which Israel witnessed the entire collapse of its deterrence status within hours.

To stem the hemorrhaging, Israel needed to escalate from active *threatening presence* to *touch of madness*.

That meant no more red lines and no more masks. The unhinged, Talmud-inspired, religious-extremist, genocidal diatribes spilling onto TV screens from a broad range of Israeli officials and influencers can only be seen as deliberate. The occupation state has a tight censorship grip on military details. But it saw no cause to stem the flow of incriminating, racist rants from its own officials.

For the layman or the average western news consumer, this ‘new’ Israeli behavior is surprising and erratic, and suggests Israelis are somehow being irrational. For strategic thinkers, this was just another escalation in Israel’s time-worn MAD strategy, intended to groom populations into tolerating ever-worsening behaviors and shocking them into inaction.

"MAD" STRATEGY STEP	TEXTBOOK DESCRIPTION "33 Strategies of war"	ISRAELI CORRESPONDING ACTION
A-Reverse Intimidation.	"First, people are more likely to attack you if they see you as weak or vulnerable. Second, they cannot know for sure that you're weak; they depend on the signs you give out, through your behavior both present and past."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As western policy started to fail in Syria, Israel launched its "battle between wars" strategy by hitting occasionally, but repetitively, targets in Syria. Israel's accurately calculated that the Russians and Iranians preferred to absorb these occasional hits over opening a new front. In this, Israel showed strength signs as a reverse intimidation to its failure in Syria.
B- Reverse the threat.	"Hit them where you sense they may be vulnerable, and make it hurt"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most vulnerable were definitely Gaza's civilians. Nothing hurts the Palestinian Resistance more than seeing its people being slaughtered and subjected to famine.
C- Seem Irrational & unpredictable.	"You are not acting out emotionally; that is a sign of weakness. You are simply hinting that you are a little irrational and that your next move could be almost anything."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enacting the Israeli army's Hannibal Doctrine that allows the sacrifice of captured Israelis, is a sign of not acting out emotionally. Attacking the "Evangelical Hospital" at the same time that Biden, the president of the predominantly "evangelical" USA, was on his way to support Israel (unpredictable sign).
D- Establish a frightening reputation.	"This reputation can be for any number of things: being difficult, stubborn, violent, ruthlessly efficient.. you must build your reputation carefully, allowing no inconsistencies. Any holes in this kind of image will make it worthless."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kill international press/humanitarian cadres "en masse". Annihilate population centers. Shoot for mass exodus. Disrespect international bodies like the International Court of Justice genocide case. Use starvation as a weapon of war.
E- Play on people's natural paranoia.	"Instead of threatening your opponents openly, you take action that is indirect and designed to make them think."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occasionally expanding the front with Lebanon towards deeper areas, then stopping. Mobilizing the army north as if a big attack is imminent on Hezbollah, or south as if towards Rafah. Telling civilians in Gaza to move south, then center, then north, and vice versa...
F-Surprise with a bold maneuver.	"The best way to hide your weakness and to bluff your enemies into giving up their attack is to take some unexpected, bold, risky action."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On April 1st, Israel surprised the world by attacking the Iranian embassy in Damascus and killing top generals and civilians. This attack on diplomatically protected "sovereign land" of a threshold nuclear state, is undoubtedly a bold move.

Israel's actions in MAD terms

Netanyahu and Co are not mad men; all their cruel MAD moves are well-studied and coldly premeditated. Their main aim is to reach a state, genially summarized by strategy master Sun-Tzu in the 4th century BC:

When opponents are unwilling to fight with you, it is because they think it is contrary to their interests or because you have misled them into thinking so.

Counter MAD: the Resistance treatment

Since 1948, few have genuinely stepped up to counter Israel's MAD strategy. In MAD terms, the textbook definition of a counter would be: "standing up to the madman and denying him victory." But Israel's much stronger allies have, to date, been unprepared to risk the relationship and its perceived benefits, while Israel's regional foes lost their wars or were unable to impose solutions.

But the status quo shifted with the inception of West Asia's Axis of Resistance, an alliance of state and non-state actors that include Iran, Syria, Lebanon's Hezbollah, Palestine's Hamas, Yemen's Ansarallah, Iraq's Hashd al-Shabi, and others.

Over decades, this axis has carefully decimated the *threatening* power projection of Israel and, importantly, has implemented the practice of retaliating in kind, when possible. Some notable milestones:

Operation Accountability: As Israel was striking civilian villages in Lebanon in 1993, Hezbollah retaliated with new missiles against Israeli civilian targets. This counter forced Israel to accept a first-of-its-kind informal agreement to minimize civilian targeting.

Operation Grapes of Wrath: On a grander scale than the 1993 clashes, a formal agreement was struck in 1996, clearly stating that targeting civilians is a red line in conflict.

2000 withdrawal from Lebanon: After 18 years of attrition warfare in Lebanon, Israel was forced to withdraw from Arab land without any conditions. On the momentous occasion, Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah delivered his famous, fiery speech declaring Israel "weaker than a spider's web," basically challenging all the foundational premises of Israel and its military power projection from atop Lebanon's border with the occupation state.

The 2006 War: Following a border incident, Israel retries its luck by initiating a large-scale war on Lebanon but fails to achieve its targets. This time, the 33-day war was terminated by a UN security resolution that stated that neither civilian nor military attacks were permitted.

Operation Al-Aqsa Flood: On 7 October 2023, Hamas breached the most sophisticated wall that Israel ever built to control its Gaza border. This time, power projection, even inside Israel, was shattered, forcing Tel Aviv into declaring an unwinnable war, weakening internal

security, draining its military assets, and destroying its economy. Israel was forced to go over and beyond its MAD strategy and has become an international pariah.

Operation True Promise: For the first time ever, Iran launches multiple drone and ballistic missile strikes on Israel in direct retaliation for Tel Aviv's strikes against the Iranian consulate in Damascus. During the 13–14 April 2024 retaliatory strikes, Iran faced the air defense of Israel, the US, UK, and France but managed to penetrate and hit its three intended targets.

Yemen's naval blockade: In response to Israel's brutal military assault on Gaza, Yemen's armed forces launched a sustained campaign to halt the transit of all Israel-bound and -linked shipping in Asian waterways. Given that Israel obtains over 80 percent of its imports via sea, the Yemeni operations have delivered a gut blow to Israel's economy, disabled its vital Eilat Port entirely, and driven up insurance costs for Israel.

In short, Israel's MAD strategy can be defeated by friends or foes alike. One has to stare MAD in the face, hunker down, and fight back. The more Israel is countered, the more crazy it looks.

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