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Craig Murray:

Netanyahu Plays Chicken

Israel plans to humiliate Iran and its allies to an extent that a full-on regional war, in which the United States will fight alongside them, becomes inevitable.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressing a joint session of U.S. Congress on July 24. (C-Span screen shot)

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is desperate to keep war simmering along and to draw the U.S. closer and closer to him. At the same time he cannot send ground forces into South Lebanon where they will take massive casualties.

Israel can assassinate, it can employ indiscriminate terrorism and it can bombard from the air, and it has done all these things against Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Iran. But Israel cannot destroy Hamas or Hezbollah, cannot get back its hostages from Gaza and cannot make Northern Israel safe for its colonialists.

Nothing Israel is doing in any way advances those declared objectives and in fact makes all of them increasingly unlikely ever to be attained.

But as U.S. President Joe Biden and his vice president, Kamala Harris, accept and reinforce every single escalation and every single illegality, Israel's stranglehold on its Western vassal politicians gets ever stronger.

Those have now all (including both U.K. Labour and Conservative ministers) supported illegality well beyond the stage where there is any going back. They have now to hope that they will be "justified" by military victory.

The Iraq war shows that however illegal the war, if you win you get to write — or at least interpret — the rules of international law. I wish I could come up with good counter-examples. "Justice" is visited only upon losers.



A U.S. Marine inspecting a roadside scene near Haditha, Iraq, where five unarmed civilians were killed on Nov. 19, 2005. (Unknown U.S. Marines and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service via the Washington Post, Wikimedia Commons, Public domain)

But the problem for Netanyahu, former British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, current Prime Minister Keir Starmer, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, et al., is that just what victory looks like, nobody seems in the least clear.

We appear to be locked into a hideous distortion of existentialism, where the killing of Arabs of any age and sex is in itself the path of virtue and a reason for living.

Israel's TikTok army of child-killers, rapists and lingerie-flaunters will take heavy casualties if it advances into Lebanon. It is currently launching intense air attacks, but it cannot destroy Hezbollah that way, not even were it to triple the colossal amount of explosive it has dropped on Gaza.

Netanyahu's strategy of assassinations and deadly stunts appears to be an attempt to goad Hezbollah out of their own territory into a suicidal advance into Israel. But Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah is not falling for it.

It is worth stressing that, contrary to the propaganda, in the last year Israel has hit Lebanon with five missiles for every one sent by Hezbollah.

Meantime the United Kingdom's claims to respect international law are exposed as an utter sham as it failed to vote for the UNGA Resolution giving effect to the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion on Israel's occupation of Palestinian Territory.

[See: *On the World's Call for Israel to End Its Occupation*]

The ICJ's ruling that the occupation is itself an illegal act, and that states must do nothing which can assist Israel to maintain it, sets out a clear legal status quo which the U.K. is equally clearly breaking.

When the ICJ decision came out on July 19, the U.K. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office statement was as follows:

"We have received the Advisory Opinion issued by the International Court of Justice on Friday 19 July and are considering it carefully before responding. The UK respects the independence of the ICJ."

The promised response has never come; unless you take the failure to vote at the U.N. General Assembly for the implementation of the ICJ ruling as the response.

The decision to suspend 8 percent of arms export licenses for Israel was framed not in terms of this ICJ ruling — which logically can only require the cessation of all arms sales to Israel — but more broadly in terms of unspecified possible breaches of international humanitarian law.

In its "explanation of vote" at the U.N. General Assembly, the U.K. deliberately ignored a key tenet of the ICJ Opinion. The U.K. stated:

"... our abstention reflects our unwavering determination to focus on efforts to bring about a peaceful and negotiated two-state solution... ;"

This ignores the ICJ ruling that Israel must leave the occupied territories before any negotiations. An occupied people cannot negotiate with, in effect, a gun held at their head. That is explicitly why the ICJ did not accept that the Oslo Accords alienated any Palestinian rights in international law.

The U.K. is still — directly contrary to the ICJ — attempting to maintain that Palestine's right not to be occupied was signed away at Oslo.

British military flights, weapons supplies and intelligence cooperation with the Israel occupation continue unabated. Starmer's total support for Israel is now a fixed part of the governing landscape, as the failure to condemn the terrorist device attacks on Lebanon makes clear.

The U.S. and U.K. are now hopelessly yoked to a Netanyahu nihilist strategy of which the primary aim is to retain his own power and immunity from prosecution by permanent conflict, of a kind which makes his allies ever more complicit and which will rope them into active military support.

That requires constant Israeli aggression against an axis of resistance that has so far refused to be provoked into major conflict. Israel's plan is to humiliate Iran and its allies to an extent that a full-on regional war becomes inevitable, in which the United States will fight alongside them — and very probably the Sunni Arab regimes too, I am extremely sorry to say.

This is plainly madness that is entirely against the interests of the Western powers themselves. But their politicians, including very directly Biden and Starmer, are so compromised by Zionist-lobby money that there appears to be no escape, short of popular revolt in the West.

The West is bound to Israel by the simple, unalloyed mechanism of cash paid to politicians. That is the truth.

Craig Murray is an author, broadcaster and human rights activist. He was British ambassador to Uzbekistan from August 2002 to October 2004 and rector of the University of Dundee from 2007 to 2010. His coverage is entirely dependent on reader support. Subscriptions to keep this blog going are gratefully received.

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