

Beyond the exposed dispute between Europe and US at the Munich Security Conference

By ZHANG Yuan

SHANGHAI - The new U.S. administration, whose foreign policy is full of offensive colours, continues to create new and demanding problems for the world, which governments are tired of dealing with. Turbulence and disorder have brought about changes in the international situation, and a geopolitical orientation obsessed with territorial fervour is plunging the international political scene into an inevitable double challenge of trust and confidence. Some of America's traditional allies are being moved into the difficult paradox of how to get along with the superpower.

Although the recently concluded 61st Munich Security Conference was held under the theme of 'Peace through Dialogue', it revealed deep divisions among nations on the diplomatic playing field. As leaders discussed hot topics such as the Ukraine crisis, a permanent ceasefire and post-war reconstruction in Gaza, and the security and political development in Syria, it became clear that the close relationship between the United States and its traditional allies is being tested even more fiercely. The future of Europe's security architecture re-



mains ambiguous. Pessimistic observers have directly described the MSC, where the United States and European countries diverged on a number of major issues, as "a turning point" in the transatlantic relationship, and even more pessimistic views have directly described the U.S.-European rift as "the collapse of the transatlantic alliance".

Not only European countries, other U.S. allies also began to think the subsequent choice is to continue to depend on the United States, continue to consume the independence of the country; or take the initiative from the United States to take back their political and military dominance, but at the same time to bear a more enormous economic cost. Of course, more

and more small and medium-sized countries are increasingly aware of the importance of firmly maintaining national independence.

Whether it is the bloated superpowers, the paradoxically wavering U.S.-allied countries or the vast number of developing countries, they are all plagued by global peace deficits, security deficits, governance deficits and development deficits. In a security framework with increasing complexity, an international order that can protect the sovereign dignity of all countries and even the equal voice of all countries can only be one that upholds multilateralism. Real multilateralism is multipolarity that rejects inequality and spurns the barbaric law of the jungle.

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The construction of an equal and orderly world multipolarity and universal and inclusive economic globalization is the direction that must be adhered to in order to realize and build a fair world, and it meets the fundamental requirements of all humankind. As H.E. Wang Yi said in his keynote speech at the "China in the World" Session of the 61st Munich Security Conference, equal rights, equal opportunities and equal rules should become the universally accepted basic principles for building a multipolar world. In order to achieve an international order upholding equity and justice, multipolarization, inclusiveness and openness, equal exchanges between nations and common prosperity are indispensable.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Does Israel see the new Syria as prey?



From page 1 ▶ Israel feels greatly emboldened to advance its expansionist policies after it destroyed the Gaza Strip with the American-supplied fighter jets and 2,000-pound bombs. That is why Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, addressing the Knesset on December 23, 2024, said Israel's war in Gaza had offered opportunities to sign new peace accords with Arab nations and "dramatically change the face of" the Middle East.

UN Human Rights Office spokesman Thameen Al-Kheetan has said Israel plans to "double the population of settlers in the Occupied Golan Heights."

Regrettably, while Israel is unashamedly humiliating Syria, the secretary general of the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is urging the international community to take "urgent and decisive action" to stop the "blatant viola-

tions" in Syria.

Who is (P)GCC chief Jassem Albudaiwi imploring to stop Israel's misuse of the situation in Syria?

It is ironic to call on the international community to stop Israel's occupation of more Syrian lands or stop its attacks on the country's military sites while the Arab world, including the Persian Gulf Arab states, was not doing anything concrete to force the U.S. and other Western countries to stop shipment of arms to Israel in its nearly 16-month genocidal acts in Gaza.

As a politician Albudaiwi knows well that the only thing that the international community can do is either condemn Israel or table a resolution at the toothless UN General Assembly to ask Israel to end its illegal behavior in Syria or one or two countries submit a resolution at the UN Security Council against Israel which will surely face the American veto, as it happened repeatedly during Israel's war on the Gaza Strip.

The Arab world, which consists of 22 countries, has the tool to tame Israel. Its (P)GCC states can threaten the West with an oil boycott; other fellow Arab states can also threaten a boycott of goods from the West to force them to pressure Israel to stop its expansionist policies in Syria.

Seeing no action by the Arab world, Israel, with a greenlight from Washington, has started attempts to depopulate the occupied West Bank

from its native Palestinian people. Pernicious moves are underway to implement this project. The American Congress is seeking to approve a bill to change the name of the occupied West Bank to Judea and Samaria, and Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has advocated for the creation of a Jewish state that would encompass all Palestinian territories and neighboring Arab territories, including the Syrian capital of Damascus.

On Feb. 26, Axios revealed it had obtained a copy of an internal memo that House Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Rep. Brian Mast has instructed committee staff to refer to the West Bank by its Hebrew name Judea and Samaria.

Also, Turkey, which is the chief supporter of the current Syrian rulers, has just condemned Israel's moves in Syria. Even when the Israeli army was committing genocide in Gaza, it was facilitating oil from the Republic of Azerbaijan to Israel.

Given the nascent ruling system in Syria, impotence by fellow Arab countries and Turkey, Israel is eying Syria as a delicious prey.

Additionally, war criminal Netanyahu feels more comfortable for his expansionist policies as he has a key backer in the White House - Donald Trump - who recognized the occupied Syrian Golan Heights as part of Israel in his first presidency in March 2019 in violation of international law.

the conflict, rather than provide a lasting resolution.

Khallaf's comments, reported by Egyptian media, were in response to journalist inquiries about governance proposals for Gaza, including a recent suggestion that Egypt temporarily administers the region.

Egypt's stance also responded to a plan proposed by Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid, who suggested to the United States that Egypt take control of Gaza for 15 years in exchange for the cancellation of its \$155 billion foreign debt.

Gaza ceasefire talks break down

From page 1 ▶ Earlier, the Hamas movement issued a press release stating that it had "blocked the enemy's false justifications" and that "the Zionist regime had no choice" but to begin negotiations for the second phase.

Hamas accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government of trying to backtrack and obstruct the agreement, warning that such actions would only worsen the suffering of captives and their families.

The movement reaffirmed that the only way to secure the release of Israeli captives in Gaza is through

negotiations and by adhering to the ceasefire framework.

In the statement, Hamas reiterated its full commitment to the ceasefire agreement in all its details and expressed readiness to engage in second-phase negotiations.

Egypt also rejected Israeli proposals to take control of Gaza, affirming that the governance of Gaza is the exclusive right of the Palestinian people.

Egyptian Foreign Ministry spokesman Tamim Khallaf emphasized the strong connection between Gaza and the West Bank, in-

cluding East al-Quds (Jerusalem), stating that they are all part of Palestinian territory representing an independent Palestinian state.

He stressed that Gaza must remain under full Palestinian sovereignty and administration, emphasizing Egypt's rejection of any proposals that undermine its or the Arab world's established positions.

The official reiterated that the core issue of the conflict is the Israeli occupation, which must end with the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

The spokesman also warned that half-measures would only prolong

Resistance community won't give up national principles

From page 1 ▶ What the spoiled boys in the American embassy in Beirut ignore is that the imperialist policy towards Lebanon falls within the context of an expansionist plan whose features have been drawn and whose goals have been determined in Washington.

The same hostile strategy that threatens Syria, Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, and even West Asia in general.

However, the people of Lebanon cannot remain in their rear trenches, committed to silence and disgraceful submission!

The enemy, given its military and technological superiority, is capable of committing malicious acts. But these acts cannot go on forever.

Nevertheless, the resistance community has not and will not give up its ideological, moral, and national principles because it is well aware that the enemy is waging an existential war targeting its origin, identity, and sociocultural roots.

"We have paid a dear price and made sacrifices for the sake of our country and our pride," MP Sayyed Hassan Fadlallah, a member of the Loyalty to the Resistance parliamentary bloc, said in a speech during the funeral of dozens of Hezbollah martyrs in Aita al-Shaab.

Whether the American embassy in Beirut is unaware of this or downplays it, Hezbollah has succeeded in standing firm in the face of an unprecedented US-led Israeli aggression and has

successfully prevented a large-scale occupation of Lebanon.

Hezbollah paralyzed life in northern occupied Palestinian lands during the war on Gaza and robbed the colonial settlers of the feeling of personal and collective security.

Despite the intimidation and threats, the resistance community, especially the residents of the border villages, who are now directly exposed to daily hostilities, are more determined to expel the occupiers sooner or later.

If the entire world were to be convinced that the "empire of savagery and genocide" could defeat them, the history of their ancestors tells how they confronted the challenges throughout history.

Lebanon will ask Saudi Arabia to resume \$3-billion grant to army

Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun will ask Saudi Arabia to reactivate a \$3-billion aid package to the Lebanese army in his visit to the kingdom next week, Aoun said in an interview with Asharq television broadcast on Friday.

Aoun, who was serving as commander of Lebanon's army before he was elected president on January 9, is set to meet with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Monday in his first trip abroad, Anadolu reported.

He told Asharq he would ask Riyadh "if it is possible to reactivate the grant" halted in 2016, after Lebanon failed to condemn attacks on Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran.

The Lebanese army, which has long been under-equipped, has reeled under Lebanon's crushing

financial crisis since 2019.

"I hope and I await from Saudi Arabia - and especially the Crown Prince - to correct the relationship in the interests of both countries," Aoun said, adding he hoped for strengthened economic and political ties. Lebanon faces a huge reconstruction bill following a year of Israeli strikes on the country, but Lebanese officials and diplomats say foreign support - including from the Persian Gulf Arab states - is contingent on Beirut enacting long-awaited financial reforms.

Aoun said Lebanon was committed to those reforms but hoped that the reconstruction aid in turn would come "step by step" to allow for rebuilding so that Lebanese displaced from destroyed villages in the south could return home.

Yemen will 'intervene militarily' if Israel resumes Gaza onslaught, Houthi warns

The leader of the Ansarullah resistance movement has warned that the Yemeni armed forces will intervene across various military fronts in support of the Palestinians in Gaza in case Israel resumes its onslaught against the besieged coastal sliver.

On Thursday evening, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi specifically mentioned that Tel Aviv, one of Israel's most populous cities and a major economic center, will be a primary target for these retaliatory strikes, Press TV reported.

"If war resumes in Gaza, Yemen will intervene

militarily, striking the entirety of the Israeli-occupied territories. Tel Aviv will be a primary target," Houthi said in a televised speech broadcast from the Yemeni capital, Sanaa.

He added, "Yemen is constantly monitoring the implementation of the Gaza ceasefire agreement and is witnessing the extent to which the Zionist enemy is shirking its obligations."

Houthi noted that Israel is drawing on the support of the United States to infringe upon agreements.

Israel lobbies US to keep Russian bases in a 'weak' Syria, sources say

Israel is lobbying the United States to keep Syria weak and decentralized, including by letting Russia keep its military bases there to counter Turkey's growing influence in the country, four sources familiar with the efforts said.

Turkey's often fraught ties with Israel have come under severe strain during the Gaza war and Israeli officials have told Washington that Syria's new Islamist rulers, who are backed by Ankara, pose a threat to Israel, the sources said, Reuters reported.

The lobbying points to a concerted Israeli campaign to influence US policy at a critical juncture for Syria, as the Islamists who ousted Bashar al-Assad try to stabilize the fractured state and get Washington to lift punishing sanctions.

Israel communicated its views to top US officials during meetings in Washington in February and subsequent meetings in Israel with US Congressional representatives, three US sources and another person familiar with the contacts said.

The main points were also circulated to some senior US officials in an Israeli "white paper", two of the sources said.

All the sources spoke on condition of anonymity due to diplomatic sensitivities.

"Israel's big fear is that Turkey comes in and protects this new Syrian Islamist order, which

then ends up being a base for Hamas and other militants," said Aron Lund, a fellow at US-based think-tank Century International.

The US State Department and National Security Council did not provide a response to questions for this story. The office of Israel's prime minister and the foreign ministries in Syria and Turkey did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

It was not clear to what extent US President Donald Trump's administration is considering adopting Israel's proposals, the sources said. It has said little about Syria, leaving uncertainty over both the future of the sanctions and whether US forces deployed in the northeast will remain.

Lund said Israel had a good chance of influencing US thinking, describing the new administration as wildly pro-Israeli. "Syria is barely even on Trump's radar now. It's low priority, and there's a policy void to fill," he said.

Israel has publicly declared its mistrust of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the Islamist faction that led the campaign that toppled Assad and which emerged from a group that was affiliated to al Qaeda until it cut ties in 2016.

Now, Israel is deeply concerned about Turkey's role as a close ally of Syria's new rulers, three US sources said, describing the messages delivered by Israeli officials.



US President Donald Trump and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky clashed during an angry meeting at the White House on Friday. Trump rebuked his Ukrainian counterpart, telling him to be more "thankful" for US support and accusing him of "gambling with World War Three" by not going along with ceasefire plans led by Washington. It came a week after Zelensky said Trump was "living in a disinformation space" created by Russia, with the US leader accusing Zelensky of being a "dictator".