

Dark urges propel Netanyahu's 'endless war'

Sophocles, the ancient Greek tragedian, once said, "Trace out most human acts, you'll find them base" (from Plutarch's "Morals").

If Sophocles had examined the acts of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, he would have felt that "base" was not nearly a strong enough word.

On Aug. 10, Netanyahu instructed the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) to capture Gaza City in the Palestinian territory of Gaza as quickly as possible, instead of offering any vision for an end to the war or for postwar reconstruction in the territory. That is despite the fact that the war has already left more than 60,000 people dead in Gaza.

The hostages still in the hands of the Islamist group Hamas remain in jeopardy. Moreover, an average of 28 children have died per day in the territory due to starvation and Israel's bombardments. I can only feel terror at the inner thoughts of Netanyahu, who has observed this situation with indifference.

If this politician has darkness deep in his heart and knows the dark truth may be revealed once he halts the war, it wouldn't be surprising if he were seeking an "endless war."

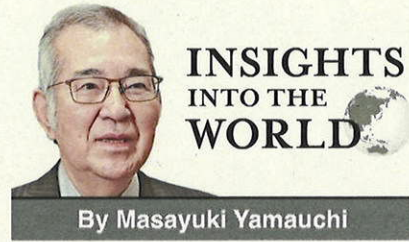
Netanyahu has significantly reduced the military threat to Israel from the north by more or less subduing Lebanon's Shiite group Hezbollah and eliminating the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' influence in Syria, dealing a blow to the military capabilities of anti-Israeli factions in the country.

Were a normal politician in this situation, he would see a perfect opportunity for building a peaceful order in the Middle East favorable to his country, namely by quickly handling the problem in Gaza, southwest of Israel. However, a return to peace would almost certainly end Netanyahu's political life, as it would lead to the resumption of the long-running trial against him for alleged corruption and an investigation into Israel's failure to prevent the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks by Hamas, in which the group took its hostages.

Netanyahu's coalition government, which includes far-right religious parties, is pulverizing Gaza in the name of exterminating Hamas, and repeatedly attacking Syria, which is further destabilizing the Middle East. At the heart of this darkness is settler colonialism, which aims to expel the Palestinian population and expand the

Jewish state.

"Heart of Darkness" is the title of a novel by British writer Joseph Conrad. While his work examines the darkness that drove Western powers to shamelessly expand their colonies, as well as how the local people were discriminated against and oppressed, it does more than just that. Conrad sought to find the very heart of Westerners' darkness. He sought to explore the depths of a darkness that people



INSIGHTS INTO THE WORLD

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cannot fully dispel.

Ex-PM: 'Strategic disaster'

In May, Ehud Barak, who previously served as Israel's prime minister and as the IDF's chief of general staff, warned that "full elimination" of Hamas, which is embedded among the more than 2 million residents of Gaza, was not a practical goal and that Israel's reinvasion of Gaza would end as a "strategic disaster."

He added that the lives of Israeli hostages remain in danger, and that many more Gazans will lose their lives. He also strongly criticized Netanyahu for acting "based on personal — not national — interests."

It seems that there are two more urges lurking in Netanyahu's "heart of darkness." One is a desire to establish lines of interest outside Israel's borders and create occupied or buffer zones in

the name of bolstering the country's security. This is tied to a vision for a "Greater Israel."

In fact, Netanyahu has demanded that Syria's interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa demilitarize the entire region south of Damascus. He envisages a northern security perimeter for Israel that is significantly further north, achieved by connecting Syria's demilitarized area and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. In the southwest, he aims to expand by eliminating Hamas and creating a new administrative entity in the Gaza Strip that is part of Israel.

In addition, Israel is going ahead with plans to expand settlements — illegal under international law — in the West Bank, located west of the Jordan River. This is meant to bury the very idea of a Palestinian state, and can be described as part of Israel's plans to redraw its security perimeter.

The second urge, lurking deep in the darkness of the current Israeli government, comprises ruthless discrimination against and hatred of Arab people. The Netanyahu administration is pursuing a policy of settler colonialism that is extreme even compared to previous administrations. This policy is the basis for the cruel and discriminatory treatment of Palestinians, who, infant and adult alike, are being forced into a harsh fate.

What is more, there are signs that Netanyahu is driven by a desire to leave his name in the history books as a "contributor" to land transformation in Gaza and the expulsion of the Palestinians from their territory. This reminds me of the men described by ancient Greek poet Pindar as "too eager in states for office, or to head a faction." "Morals" quoted Pindar as warning that these men are "a manifest sorrow" for their country.

In the other direction, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Washington's Middle East special envoy Steve Witkoff held five meetings over nine weeks from this spring. According to a British newspaper, they were close to an agreement on post-sanctions economic cooperation worth a trillion dollars, in line with a deal backed by U.S. President Donald Trump. Such bilateral collaboration was aimed at boosting the Iranian economy and reviving U.S. industries.

Nevertheless, in June, Israel launched surprise airstrikes on Iran's key nuclear development facilities. Araghchi said Netanyahu, who was unhappy that a new chapter in history would be

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opened between Iran and the United States, destroyed Iran's nuclear facilities and killed nuclear scientists as he suspected Iran was diverting highly enriched uranium for nuclear weapons.

An aimless path

When Trump saw Israel's air attack, he seemed to take it as a golden opportunity, and agreed to Netanyahu's request that the United States drop bunker-buster bombs on Iran, including on its Fordow nuclear facility, built deep underground.

Trump justified U.S. involvement in the offensive against Iran by saying it was aimed at pressuring Tehran into a ceasefire with Israel. He even demanded Iran's "unconditional surrender." Hearing this particular expression, some Japanese assumed that the U.S. president was imagining a scenario for Iran similar to Japan's trajectory from its "unconditional acceptance" of the Potsdam Declaration to its postwar democratization.

When he was explaining U.S. pressure on Iran for a ceasefire, Trump cited Japan's surrender in the immediate wake of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In this moment, he revealed the rhetoric he usually keeps hidden in

his "heart of darkness." It was only natural that Japan, alone among the Group of Seven nations, called Israel's offensive against Iran "regrettable."

The United States and Israel were wrong if they thought Iran would give in quickly. They should remember how Astyages, a king of the ancient kingdom of Media, taunted the Achaemenid Persian empire.

In the "History of Persia" by ancient Greek physician and historian Ctesias, the Median king is quoted as saying, "Alas! How brave these terebinth-eating Persians are!"

By referring to "terebinth-eating Persians," the king was mocking Persia for the barrenness of its land. Similarly, Netanyahu and Trump have a bad habit of looking down on Iran for no reason. Just recently, Araghchi said that Iran, a nation with a rich culture originating from 7,000 years of civilization, will never respond to the language of threat and intimidation. This can't be dismissed as just bluster.

Netanyahu dreams of establishing Israel's hegemony in the Middle East. This would require Turkey, the only remaining power in the Middle East, to capitulate or make concessions. As they have not been able to agree to a division of power in Syria, it will not be easy for Israel and Turkey to come to a compromise.

Additionally, Israel has been growing more isolated since its IDF blockade began to starve Palestinians, with the United Kingdom, France, Canada and Australia having all expressed their readiness to recognize a Palestinian state. Moreover, Netanyahu's endorsement of the "Greater Israel" vision has angered even those Arab kingdoms that had normalized ties with Israel.

Netanyahu is creating enemies through an endless war and leaving these enemies feeling nothing but humiliation. These political tactics have no goal. In the end, he may hear nothing but the groans of Conrad's Mr. Kurtz: "The horror! The horror!"

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