

The unsinkable aircraft carrier: Israel and the crisis of U.S. imperialism

written by Gary Wilson
October 16, 2025



Palestinian resistance fighters confirmed the destruction of an Israeli Merkava

battle tank in the south of Gaza, Feb 27, 2024. Photo: INRA

Israel is a fortress of empire — a U.S.-armed garrison planted in the heart of West Asia to protect capital's most prized assets: oil, trade routes, and regional dominance.

Behind the rhetoric of democracy and security lies a simple truth. Israel is the outpost through which U.S. power projects itself across the region. Pentagon planners have long called it “our unsinkable aircraft carrier,” a phrase that strips away the pretense. Israel’s role is not to defend itself, but to defend the global reach and profits of U.S. monopoly capital.

A base for monopoly capital

Since 1948, Israel’s survival has depended not on self-reliance but on Washington’s patronage. The billions of dollars in U.S. aid that flow every year are not acts of generosity — they’re investments.

U.S. strategists viewed Israel as an anchor for imperialist domination of West Asia’s resources. In 1981, General Alexander Haig put it bluntly: Israel is “the largest American aircraft carrier in the world that cannot be sunk.” The metaphor wasn’t hyperbole. Israel’s job has been to secure trade routes, protect oil profits, and serve as a proving ground for U.S. weapons systems before they’re sold around the world.

Every Israeli war — from Lebanon to Gaza — has served the demands of monopoly capital. Washington supplies the funding and diplomatic cover; Israel supplies the firepower; U.S. arms manufacturers reap the profit.

Air power and the colonial method

Israel didn’t invent the use of air power as a tool of imperialist domination — it perfected a strategy pioneered by earlier empires. In 1911, Italy used airplanes to

bomb anti-colonial fighters in Libya, ushering in a new era of warfare that allowed colonizers to kill without risk or accountability.

Britain refined the method across West Asia in the 1920s. Air Marshal Arthur “Bomber” Harris, who later commanded the firebombing of Dresden, first tested his tactics in Iraq and Palestine, boasting that “the Arab and the Kurd now know what real punishment means.”

Lenin described how imperialism replaces direct colonial rule with financial and military domination. Air power became the perfect weapon for this stage of capitalism — violence delivered from a distance, maintaining control without the costs of occupation.

From Gaza to Iran: Imperialism from the sky

Nowhere is this imperialist domination more visible than in Israel’s ongoing air war across West Asia. For nearly two years, Gaza has been subjected to a campaign of annihilation that has leveled entire neighborhoods, hospitals, and refugee camps. Israel has struck not only Gaza but the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and Iran — always under the familiar pretext of “self-defense.”

Each of these bombardments follows a predictable pattern. The United States bankrolls the assault, provides the munitions, and blocks any attempt at accountability. Israel pulls the trigger. And U.S. defense contractors — Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon — see their stock prices climb with every new strike.

For two years, Israel has waged an unrelenting air war on Gaza, reducing entire neighborhoods, hospitals, and refugee camps to rubble. It has also struck the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and Iran — always under the pretext of “self-defense.”

This is imperialism in its purest form. Air power delivers destruction from a safe distance; monopoly capital converts that destruction into profit. Every bomb

dropped on Gaza reverberates through Wall Street.

The fortress cracks

For decades, Washington used Israel as the cornerstone of its regional strategy — a dependable enforcer whose military superiority guaranteed U.S. hegemony from the Mediterranean to the Arab/Persian Gulf. But the Gaza war has exposed how fragile that arrangement has become.

After nearly two years of relentless bombing — tens of thousands of tons of explosives dropped on one of the most densely populated areas on Earth — Israel has failed to achieve its stated goals. The resistance remains intact. Hamas still governs Gaza and commands popular support, while the Zionist forces have suffered heavy battlefield losses, including many of the supposedly invincible Merkava tanks. No Arab army in history has inflicted such losses on the Israeli military machine.

The myth of invincibility shattered

The Al-Aqsa Flood operation did more than breach Israel's borders — it tore apart a political mythology that had underpinned U.S. power in the region for decades. Israel's aura of military supremacy, carefully cultivated since 1967, was shattered in a single day. What Washington had long presented as a "pillar of stability" was revealed to be brittle and overextended.

Benjamin Netanyahu's answer was the same as every imperialist proxy facing crisis: overwhelming violence. The genocidal air campaign that followed was meant not only to destroy Hamas but to reassert the illusion of control. Yet despite the scale of the onslaught, the resistance has endured. As senior Hamas official Ayham Shanaaa put it, the very survival of Gaza's fighters amid such destruction "constitutes a strategic victory."

But the cracks run deeper than military failure. Apartheid Israel's economy has

hemorrhaged over [\\$67 billion](#) in direct war costs. The economic toll may cost Israel an estimated \$400 billion in lost economic activity over the next decade, according to the [Rand Corporation](#).

The tourism and construction sectors have collapsed. The vaunted tech industry — long marketed as proof of Israel's supposed dynamism — is bleeding talent and capital. Immigration — the lifeblood of any settler-colonial project — has declined.

Most tellingly, the Israeli military reports its highest suicide rate in 13 years alongside thousands of reservists fleeing combat duty — the unmistakable marks of an army in both tactical and psychological collapse.

A client state in crisis

This is what the Trump administration now faces: a client state too exhausted to fulfill its imperialist function. For Washington, the deal is simple — Israel exists to serve U.S. strategic interests, not the other way around.

When [U.S. officials warn](#) that “Israel in such a weakened state would be unable to provide support in a potential conflict with Iran,” they are admitting that their regional enforcer can no longer enforce.

For decades, Washington sold the illusion that the path to Palestinian freedom ran through negotiation. The 1993 Oslo Accords turned a struggle for national liberation into a managed process of dependency. “Dialogue,” “security coordination,” and “painful compromises” became euphemisms for surrender.

Under this system, the U.S. funded the expansion of settlements, deepening the occupation.

Gaza never accepted this arrangement. Despite a crushing blockade since 2007 designed to enforce surrender through starvation, the Strip remained ungovernable.

Each Israeli assault — in 2008, 2012, 2014, 2021, and the ongoing genocide since 2023 — left Gaza devastated but undefeated. Homes were rebuilt from rubble; weapons were fashioned from unexploded Israeli shells. The siege produced not submission, but defiance.

As Islamic Jihad official Haitham Abu al-Ghazlan emphasizes, “The resistance is now more entrenched than ever.” The measure of victory is not material destruction but the failure of the Zionist project to displace or pacify the population.

The technocratic trap

Now, as the bombs pause, the U.S. and its European imperialist allies are pushing their latest rebranding exercise: a “technocratic” government for Gaza, divorced from politics and resistance, staffed by hand-picked managers and overseen by international donors.

The model is familiar. It’s the same template the IMF and World Bank apply from Haiti to Iraq — governance without sovereignty, administration without liberation. It seeks to manage Gaza, not free it.

The Palestinian resistance has made its position clear: while it does not oppose civil administration for daily life, security sovereignty remains non-negotiable. “The resistance’s arms are a red line as long as the occupation exists,” Shananaa insists. Any attempt to link reconstruction to disarmament is a bid to achieve through diplomacy what two years of genocide could not accomplish.

The united resistance understands what U.S. imperialism desperately works to obscure: Every so-called peace process designed by the imperialist powers has ended in more settlements, more displacement, more apartheid.

There can be no technical fix to colonial domination, no managerial substitute for liberation.

Empire's declining returns

The crisis extends far beyond Palestine. Yemen has effectively closed the Red Sea to Israeli shipping. Iran has shown it can strike Israeli military installations at will. Even traditional U.S. allies face mounting public pressure for their complicity in genocide.

The so-called “rules-based international order” — code words for U.S. imperialist hegemony — is crumbling under the weight of its contradictions.

What we are witnessing is the unraveling of imperialist power. The very brutality required to maintain the colonial project undermines its legitimacy. The more Israel bombs, the more the world sees it for what it is: not a democracy defending itself, but a settler state sustained by massacre.

Global public opinion has shifted decisively. Millions have marched in solidarity with Palestine, and governments once afraid to speak now move to recognize Palestinian statehood. Even within Israel, the legitimacy of the Netanyahu regime is eroding. The prime minister who sought to destroy Hamas may instead go down as the man who broke Zionism.

Beyond the rubble

Amid the ruins of Gaza, something remarkable endures: not just survival, but defiance. Every rebuilt home, every tunnel dug, every act of mutual aid is a declaration that Palestine will not disappear.

This endurance carries a larger meaning. If Gaza — besieged, starved, and bombed by the most powerful militaries on earth — can continue to resist, then the entire architecture of U.S. imperialist power is more fragile than it appears. The “unsinkable aircraft carrier” is taking on water, and no amount of weapons or propaganda in the U.S. arsenal can keep afloat a racist settler colony that has lost its

legitimacy and faces growing resistance both locally and globally.

