

Trump's Reinventing of the Old 'British East India Company' Frightens Europe

News:

At the Munich Security Conference on 13 February 2026, the Guardian reported that the EU's foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas warned that Trump's Gaza "Board of Peace" is drifting away from the UN basis for it, saying: "There is a security council resolution, but the Board of Peace does not reflect it." Spain's foreign minister José Manuel Albares also accused Trump of trying to bypass the original UN mandate and said Europe, "one of the chief funders of the Palestinian Authority"—had been "excluded from the process."

Comment:

The so-called "Board of Peace" for Gaza that the Europeans and the Trump administration disagree about signals a new instrument of U.S. hegemony, and it has an ugly historical cousin: the infamous British East India Company. As the company grew richer and held a huge monopoly on trade, it became virtually an autonomous state with its own army bringing death to millions in India and China. It was capitalism unleashed upon the world in its most direct and open manner. The British East India Company's success brought its eventual downfall through its efforts to bleed dry the American colonies with its monopoly on the tea that led to the American revolutionary war of independence with the rise of the U.S. as a great power as Britain's power declined. Since then, the capitalists had to sit in the backseat and exert their power indirectly through the politicians with bribes, lobbying and campaign funding. The twentieth century was dominated by the fiction of an international rules-based system, whose rules were only enforced when they suited the enforcer and vetoed when they did not, and that was the U.S. The Trump era is seeing a shift away from that towards the sheer exercise of unilateral power in total disregard for the international norms and institutions that served its hegemonic designs previously. However, Trump's bullying risks isolating the U.S. that would be significantly weaker if its former European allies were to become less cooperative. Also, at the Munich summit U.S. Secretary of State Rubio soothed European fears considerably with a new tone of speech: "Our home may be in the western hemisphere, but we will always be a child of Europe."

The global stage, with the growing ascendancy of China and new alliances forming, is becoming ever more contested, and the US realizes that it will not always be able to block, delay, or pervert the directions of the old institutions that once served it so well. So now it looks to test new paradigms and build new instruments that better serve its needs. Kallas's objection is precisely about this pivot: the U.N. framework was Gaza-specific, time-limited, and premised (at least formally) on Palestinian participation, yet the evolving structure of the Board for Peace is departing from all those anchors and Europe is concerned because it fears the departure of the former world order that brought stability to Europe after centuries of bloody wars. Albares's complaint that Europe, a major funder of Palestinian governance, is being excluded adds the crucial detail: reconstruction is being reorganized as leverage, and leverage is being centralized around the U.S. administration with no limits. The U.S. will control the Board for Peace and will decide which countries will be able to join and will charge them \$1 billion for the privilege.

This is where the East India Company's history clarifies the present. The Company began with a chartered mandate and commercial privileges, but its political transformation accelerated when it could convert coercion into massive revenues. The British state's later "oversight" did not abolish the hybrid between state and company; it refined it. The creation of a Board of Control institutionalized a system in which corporate machinery could govern while Parliament managed the geopolitical direction. This is the imperial innovation: rule that can present itself as managerial necessity; trade regulation, fiscal order, "security", while remaining structurally aligned with colonial interests, patronage, and extraction.

The Gaza "Board of Peace" dispute fits that pattern because it is fundamentally about who controls three things: the security envelope, the funding pipeline, and the definition of "transition." The private sector's role is not incidental to this re-platforming of power; it is one of its enabling conditions. Modern U.S. statecraft has repeatedly converted war, occupation, and "stabilization" into contracted ecosystems. In Iraq in 2011, Defense Department contractors in-country exceeded uniformed personnel. Across Iraq and Afghanistan, contractor workforces reached into the hundreds of thousands, often outnumbering troops, embedding profit incentives inside basic functions of governance and force support. This matters because contracting is a political technology: it diffuses accountability, creates revolving-door dependence, and channels public money into private networks that can become a constituency for perpetual "stabilization."

Let us not forget as we talk about shifting international orders that the battleground is the precious land of Gaza, which has experienced genocide and betrayal and still the slaughter and destruction continues. The Prophet (saw) said: **«يُوشِكُ الْأَمَمُ أَنْ تَدَاعَى عَلَيْكُمْ كَمَا تَدَاعَى الْأَكْلَةُ إِلَى الْأَكْلَةِ إِلَى قَصْعَتِهَا»** فَقَالَ قَائِلٌ: وَمِنْ قَلَّةِ نَحْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ؟ قَالَ: **«بَلْ أَنْتُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ كَثِيرٌ وَلَكِنَّكُمْ غَنَاءٌ كَغَنَاءِ السَّيْلِ وَلَيَنْزِعَنَّ اللَّهُ مِنْ صُدُورِ عَدُوِّكُمْ الْمَهَابَةَ مِنْكُمْ وَلَيَقْذِفَنَّ اللَّهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمُ الْوَهْنَ»** فَقَالَ قَائِلٌ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، وَمَا الْوَهْنُ؟ قَالَ: **«حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا وَكَرَاهِيَةُ الْمَوْتِ»** ***"The people will soon summon one another to attack you as people when eating invite others to share their dish."*** Someone asked: 'Will that be because of our small numbers at that time?' He replied: ***"No, you will be numerous at that time: but you will be scum and rubbish like that carried down by a torrent, and Allah will take fear of you from the breasts of your enemy and last enervation into your hearts."*** Someone asked: 'What is wahn?' Messenger of Allah (saw): He replied: ***"Love of the world and dislike of death."*** (Sunan Abi Dawud 4297).

Those who loved this world too much and believed in the lies of its leading tyrants took hold of its so-called international institutions will surely return thirsty from the sea of deception. They sought refuge in an international order for a hundred years and ignored all its betrayals and now must watch in surprise as the tyrants tear down the institutions they sanctified. As the blessed month of Ramadan let us reconsider Allah's words in the international context: **﴿وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَالِغُ أَمْرِهِ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا﴾** ***"And whoever puts their trust in Allah, then He alone is sufficient for them. Certainly, Allah achieves His Will. Allah has already set a destiny for everything."*** [Surah At-Talaq. 65:3].

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