



A fire rages where a rocket fired from Gaza into southern Israel landed in the city of Ashkelon on October 7, 2023.
● YOSSEI ZAMIR/FLASH90

ing casualties and infrastructure damage, consistently demonstrated resilience. Following each conflict, Hamas rebuilt infrastructure, adapted new tactics, and refined strategies.

On October 7, Hamas executed a swift and coordinated action by land, sea and air, resulting in the deaths of around 1,200 people, including at least 846 civilians, 278 soldiers and 44 police. Hamas also took an estimated 239 hostages. This unexpected move disrupted the status quo, altering dynamics in the Middle East. Journalist Alon Pinkas described Hamas's incursion as an "epic Israeli debacle."

Israel's mission impossible

Given the historical patterns of conflict between the Israel Defense Forces and non-state actors like Hezbollah and Hamas over the past 40 years, we can predict how this present conflict will evolve. Israel's chances of winning the war against Hamas are slim. Netanyahu painted himself into a corner with "destroy Hamas" as an objective, just as Begin and Olmert painted themselves into corners with "destroy PLO" or "destroy Hezbollah." Both of them won their battles but eventually lost their wars, withdrawing from the fight without achieving

their declared objectives.

If Netanyahu aims to "destroy Hamas," he would have to wage a protracted and bloody urban war, similar to what Begin faced. The question arises: Is Israel prepared for a prolonged war on multiple fronts against highly motivated resistance groups entrenched for over a decade? Will the Israeli public tolerate significant IDF casualties? Even if the IDF incapacitates Hamas in Gaza, as it did with the PLO in Lebanon in 1982-83, merely destroying infrastructure will not eradicate its ideology. As Ami Ayalon, Gilead Sher and Orni Petruschka point out, Hamas is an idea, and it will persist among Palestinians as long as there is no real peace option to which they can attach their hopes. Moreover, Tel Aviv is unlikely to bring the 2 million Palestinians in an occupied Gaza to submission. More likely, considering history, we will witness the IDF leaving Gaza, leaving destruction in its wake, similar to its compelled withdrawal from Lebanon. Hamas would claim a victory because it, or at least its ideology, wasn't completely destroyed.

New trends in the Middle East

Netanyahu has said he will "change

the Middle East," establishing a regional order aligning with Israel's interests. However, his actions following October 7 have had the opposite effect. The region has undergone drastic changes: Protests have erupted in major Arab capitals, leading to the suspension of normalization talks between Israel and Saudi Arabia and forcing Cairo, Amman and Riyadh to change their official narrative. Israel's relations with Turkey are strained, and groups affiliated with Iran have targeted Israel, as well as US assets in Iraq and Syria, with missiles and drones.

A sustained ground operation by Israel could result in tens of thousands of casualties, heighten the risk of a broader regional conflict and destabilize governments in multiple Arab countries. Iran has also hinted that it would not allow Hamas to lose without escalating the conflict.

Internationally, Israel's maneuvering space is narrowing, as public opinion increasingly rejects the dehumanization of the Palestinian people. The voices supporting Palestinians resonate from London to Madrid to Washington. The United States, once the primary force in the Middle East, is no longer the sole or main authority. We live in

a multipolar world. Muslim-majority states in the Middle East are demonstrating greater independence and a willingness to establish strategic partnerships with different global powers, including BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) or the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The withdrawal of US troops from Iraq in 2011 and Afghanistan in 2021 serve as poignant reminders of evolving regional realities. Prime Minister Netanyahu presented himself as a master statesman who could do the impossible for Israel. In addition to killing the two-state solution, his plan involved normalizing relations with all Arab states, and treating Palestinians as a security concern to be managed indefinitely. But everything Netanyahu has built for decades crashed in a matter of hours. The political grave he dug for the two-state solution may now become his own, and like Menachem Begin four decades earlier, he and his unpopular ministers may retire from politics. The recent conflict and devastation in Gaza might sow the seeds for a new order, challenging the existing structure of the occupation of Palestine, which, in turn, contains the seeds for more wars that Israel cannot win and cannot end.

Biden's support for Israel, Arab public opinion pose threat to US



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OPINION

According to a report by a Western media outlet, the US administration, through a diplomatic cable from the American embassy in the Arab capital, Oman, has informed President Biden that anti-American sentiments among the youth in the Arab world have reached a dangerous level. The diplomatic cable also highlights that American embassies in the Arab world have received serious warnings, indicating that traditional American support in the Arab world has suffered due to unwavering support for Israel's destructive and aggressive military campaign.

As per the published excerpts of the cable, there is deep concern in the Arab and Islamic world about the appointments of American diplomats in Arab countries, with growing resentment against the United States. This resentment has intensified since the beginning of military actions by Israel against Hamas immediately after the start of hostilities.

The cable warns that in the Arab world, attacks on Israeli cities are perceived as acts of war crimes, holding the United States morally and ethically responsible. The cable, dispatched from the embassy in Muscat, includes communications from several American ambassadors in Arab capitals, addressed not only to the American President but also to the White House National Security Council, the CIA, and the FBI.

Appointments made by senior officials in embassies, as conveyed in the cable sent by top officials of the embassies to the Middle East, indicate a rising anti-American wave in Arab societies. These threats are being acknowledged by American policymakers, leading the United States to adopt a flexible stance from its previous hardline position. Consequently, a few hours of ceasefire have been initiated to provide basic humanitarian aid, including food, water, and medicines, to people deprived due to the conflict.

It is emphasized that the demand for the unilateral release of Israeli prisoners of war, which the United States is advocating during these few hours of ceasefire, is not based on justice. Hamas has already rejected such demands, and even after a week of ground attacks by Israel, the Israeli military has not been able to recover the prisoners of war from October 7.

There is a possibility that even if Israel declares the release of all Palestinians arrested or abducted in the past eight to ten years, Hamas may still be ready to negotiate the release of prisoners of war. Despite Israel's occupation of Gaza, Hamas cannot be eliminated. Israel will have to face prolonged resistance indefinitely, and it is possible that supporters and humanitarians from various parts of the world may arrive to aid Hamas and the people of Gaza.

The Biden administration and the forced support for Israel have been duly noted, recognizing that global public opinion does not align with them. Western governments are under tremendous pressure to rethink their support for Israeli aggression. The ongoing presidential election campaign in the United States has begun, and President Biden will have to confront the public. At that time, Biden will have to face not resistance but opposition.

I believe that the Democratic Party will keep Biden away from future presidential elections as per the demand of democracy. The requirement of democracy is that an unpopular person should not be brought into the field. If the support for Israel continues, it will become a reason to end an ancient tradition of American politics.



Hamas' armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, enters the Israeli side of the fence in Gaza on October 7, 2023.
● HANI ALSHAER/AFP