

Nature, Impact and Trend of the New Round of Conflict between Palestine and Israel

Yue Hanjing^{1*}

¹Professor, School of Government Management, Shanghai University of Political Science and Law, Shanghai, China

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36347/sjahss.2024.v12i09.004>

| Received: 09.08.2024 | Accepted: 12.09.2024 | Published: 14.09.2024

*Corresponding author: Yue Hanjing

Professor, School of Government Management, Shanghai University of Political Science and Law, Shanghai, China

Abstract

Review Article

On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel, causing heavy casualties and more than 200 people were taken hostage. Israel immediately launched a large-scale retaliation campaign to carry out collective punishment against the residents of Gaza. In this new round of Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the nature of the actions of both sides of the conflict has a dual nature: Hamas's violent actions have a superficial terrorist nature and an inherent national liberation nature; Israeli military action has an illusory nature of self-defense and a real terrorist nature. In terms of the impact of the conflict, the conflict has promoted international and domestic polarization, and has made the international call for fairness and justice even higher; The conflict has increased the risk of terrorist attacks on Western countries; The conflict is generally unfavorable for the United States and favorable for Russia. As far as the trend of the conflict is concerned, the conflict will be mainly limited between Palestine and Israel, especially between Hamas and Israel and although there will be spillover, the scale will be limited; The conflict will last for a long time; New conflicts may be triggered in the later stage of the ongoing conflict. China should pay even more attention to the Palestinian-Israeli issue in the future.

Keywords: Palestinian-Israeli conflict; Hamas; Israel; Middle East; China, US and Russia.

Copyright © 2024 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

INTRODUCTION

On October 7, 2023, the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in the Gaza Strip launched a large-scale attack on Israel known as Operation Al-Aqsa Flood. As a result of the attack, more than 1400 Israelis were killed and 243 were taken hostage. In response to this, chanting the slogan of the complete elimination of Hamas and the rescue of hostages, Israel immediately took the so-called self-defense military action against Gaza: 300000 troops were mobilized to surround the area and implemented measures such as power, water, food and network cuts. At the same time, a large-scale military offensive was launched in northern Gaza, imposing collective punishment on the people of Gaza, ordering them to relocate to the south of Gaza or preferably flee to other countries. The actions of the Israeli army caused an extremely serious humanitarian disaster. This paper will

analyze the nature of the behavior of both sides of the "conflict", the influence and trend of "conflict".

I. The Dual Nature of the Behavior of Both Sides of the Conflict

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has a long history and is complicated. Many factors contribute to its emergence and long-term persistence¹. However, the conflict has focused on territorial disputes. In terms of the characteristics of the two sides of the conflict, on the one side is the strong (known as the Middle East bully, the pocket superpower) with colonial military colonization, and on the other side is the weak (no independent sovereign political entity, deeply controlled by Israel) whose land has been eaten away and whose right to existence has been seriously threatened, restricted or even deprived; One side has long been strongly protected by the hegemonic country, the United States, and the other side has gradually been ignored and

¹ See Wang Lincong, Li Shaoxian. "Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: Root Causes, Effects, and Solutions," *International Economic Review*, No. 1, 2024, pp. 30-51.

even abandoned by its brother countries with declining nationalist ideas. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict embodies the failure of justice and the failure of international political and institutional governance, highlighting the anarchic nature of the international system. The current round of Israeli-Palestinian conflict is different from previous ones in that the actions of both sides have a dual nature.

(I) The Violence of Hamas Is of a Superficial Terrorist Nature and an Inherent National Liberation Nature

It is true that Hamas, through its raids, has caused a large number of casualties among Israeli civilians and taken a large number of civilians hostage, which is of terrorist character, but its actions are aimed at drawing the attention of the international community to its oppressed and occupied status and arousing nationalist sentiments in fraternal countries. In part, the foray was a desperate move in a highly asymmetrical balance of power. In addition, Hamas is considered a terrorist organization by the U.S., the European Union (except Norway), the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, Israel, and Switzerland, but it is considered a resistance organization by most countries in the world. It is not right and should not be right for the strong to plunder and occupy for a long time what the weak are living in, and then label them as terrorism, and try to kidnap the weak with ordinary social morality and prevent them from taking relevant actions of resistance. Hamas's actions reflect the need for national survival, and a strong occupier cannot use "peace" and "humanity" as an excuse to prevent a weak occupied occupation from waging a violent struggle for survival. "The fundamental reason for the development of the Palestinian-Israeli situation today is that the Palestinian people's rights to statehood, survival and return have been ignored for a long time"². The fact that Israel has failed to end the occupation gives the Palestinian people the right to resistance under international law.

(II) The Israeli Military Operations Have the Illusory Character of Self-defence and the Real Character of Terrorism

² "Xi Jinping Attends the BRICS Leaders' Special Video Summit on the Israeli-Palestinian Issue," *People's Daily*, November 22, 2023.

³ See Qais Abu Samra, "Israeli Military Operations in Gaza Contradict and Contravene International Law and United Nations Charters in Self-Defense," Shawan Jabareen Tells Anadolu," November 12, 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/right-to-self-defense-does-not-apply-to-israel-in-its-war-on-gaza-say-experts/3051915>.

⁴ Ralph Wilde, "Israel's War in Gaza Is Not a Valid Act of Self-defence in International Law," November 9, 2023, [https://opiniojuris.org/2023/11/09/israels-war-in-](https://opiniojuris.org/2023/11/09/israels-war-in-gaza-is-not-a-valid-act-of-self-defence-in-international-law/)

In defending Israel's military actions, Western countries stressed that Israel has a legitimate right to self-defense. But Israel's military action in Gaza is not self-defense. The right to self-defence applies when one country is attacked by another and its national security and survival are at risk. The country must first notify the United Nations and then use force to defend itself. But Hamas is not a country³. Palestine is an occupied territory, and Israel effectively controls Gaza and the West Bank. Ralph Wilde, a professor of law at the University of London, pointed out that Israel's use of force in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 lacked the (initial) legal basis for the use of force, so there was no basis to continue to use force in response to Palestinian violence against the occupation. Israel cannot simply use violence to deal with the consequences of the illegal use of force by Hamas as a reason to continue to push the illegal use of force to a new stage. Otherwise, the unlawful use of force will be considered legal simply because of the violent resistance of those affected by such force⁴. The statements made by Israel, the United States and the European Union regarding Israel's right to self-defense not only have no legal basis but also violate international law. They are not legal statements, but political statements biased in favor of Israel.

Far from acting in self-defence, Israel's military actions constitute war crimes because the targets of its attacks are non-military targets such as civilian housing, civil service institutions and hospitals. According to a statement issued by the Hamas Media Office on November 21, 2023, since the outbreak of the new round of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Israeli army attacks on the Gaza Strip have killed more than 14000 people and injured more than 33000. The statement said that among the dead were more than 5840 children and more than 3920 women, while more than 6800 were missing. At least 60% of residential buildings in the Gaza Strip were damaged in the Israeli attack⁵. The Gaza Health Ministry said in a statement on February 10, 2024 that Israeli attacks on Gaza have killed at least 28,064 Palestinians and wounded 67,611 since October 7⁶. Since the outbreak of the war, Israel has cut off the supply of water, food, medicine, electricity and fuel to some 2.3 million residents of Gaza. Since 2006, as a result of the ongoing

[gaza-is-not-a-valid-act-of-self-defence-in-international-law/](https://www.gaza-is-not-a-valid-act-of-self-defence-in-international-law/).

⁵ Liu Weijian, "Hamas: More than 14,000 Killed in Israeli Attack on Gaza Strip," November 22, 2023, http://www.news.cn/world/2023-11/22/c_1129987026.htm.

⁶ Nidal Al Mughrabi, "Gaza Death Toll Climbs 28,064 Palestinians Killed, 67,611 Injured since Oct. 7, Health Ministry Says," Reuters, February 10, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/gaza-death-toll-climbs-28064-palestinians-killed-67611-injured-since-oct-7-gaza-2024-02-10/>.

Israeli siege, the living conditions of these residents have long been very poor, and Gaza is simply the largest open-air prison in the world. Israeli military operations have also resulted in the deaths of many United Nations personnel and journalists. In addition, senior Israeli officials have publicly threatened to use nuclear weapons and carry out nuclear blackmail. In this regard, Israel's actions are more like terrorism⁷.

II. The International Impact of the Conflict

Because of the extreme nature of the behavior of both sides of the conflict and the particularity of their identity, the outbreak of the conflict immediately aroused widespread concern in the international community, and opposing camps appeared in all countries and within them. The game between opposing camps has an important impact on international security and inter-state relations.

(I) Conflict Has Promoted International and Domestic Opposing Camps and Increased the Call for Equity and Justice in the International Community

After the outbreak of the conflict, different camps have emerged in the international community. It can be roughly divided into three categories. The first category is the camp that believes that Israel has the right to self-defence in the event of such an attack. This category of countries are mainly the United States and Europe, and there are some small countries in Asia and Latin America. Among them, the United States specially sent aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines to the Middle East, and provided a lot of assistance to Israel, and some of its leaders also visited Israel to show their support. The German Chancellor also said as early as October 14, 2023 that he would provide arms assistance to Israel and that Germany had a historical responsibility for Israel's security. French President Macron, British Foreign Secretary David Cameron and other Western dignitaries also visited Israel to express their support and condolences. The second category is countries that deny Israel's right to self-defence under such circumstances. Jordan, Palestine, Pakistan, Russia, Iran, Bolivia, Syria and Bangladesh explicitly rejected Israel's right to self-defence in their statements at the United Nations. This is also the position adopted at the special Arab-Islamic summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on November 11, 2023⁸. The third category consists of

states that acquiesce in Israel's right to self-defence, but consider its self-defence to be excessive and unlawful, violating the principles of necessity and proportionality of self-defence. It is worth noting that with the development of the conflict, especially the phenomenon of the killing of large numbers of civilians by Israeli military operations, some of the countries in the first category have gradually moved into the third category.

Some countries oppose Israel's military actions by severing diplomatic relations and other means. After Colombia, Chile, Bolivia and other countries, Belize is the latest American country to renounce diplomatic relations with Israel. Turkey, Jordan, Chad, Honduras, Bahrain and South Africa also recalled diplomats in Israel. On November 21, 2023, the South African Parliament passed a proposal to suspend diplomatic relations with Israel and close the Israeli Embassy in South Africa. Iran has threatened that the war will expand inevitably. Turkish President Erdogan denounced Israel's actions as state terrorism and charged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide to the International Criminal Court.

Thanks to the popularization of the Internet, the development of communication tools, the progress of various media technologies, and the emergence of a large number of we-media, the people of all countries can learn about the development of conflicts at the first time. The governments of various countries mainly view the Palestinian-Israeli conflict from a political point of view, but the people of all countries mainly look at the Palestinian-Israeli conflict from the perspective of legal principle and morality, as well as the perspective of identity. It is worth noting that, not to mention Iran, Lebanon, Turkey and other countries, even large-scale anti-Israel protests have taken place among people in Europe and the United States that support Israeli military action⁹. Countries such as Britain, Canada, France and Germany have stepped up security around potential Jewish targets, and pro-Palestinian demonstrations have broken out in cities around the world¹⁰. Because of Israel's unwillingness to cease fire, this call for an end to the war is in effect an opposition to Israel's related actions. This puts some pressure on the governments of the relevant countries. Chinese Internet users were also

⁷ Graham Keeley, "Israel Accuses Spain of Siding with Hamas after 'Genocide' Accusation," October 17, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/17/israel-accuses-spain-of-siding-with-hamas-after-genocide-accusation>.

⁸ The specific countries covered by the above two categories are described in detail in Raphael Van Steenberghe, "A Plea for a Right of Israel to Self-defence in Order to Restrict Its Military Operations in Gaza: When Jus ad Bellum Comes to the Aid of Jus in Bello," November 16, 2023, [https://www.ejiltalk.org/a-plea-for-](https://www.ejiltalk.org/a-plea-for-a-right-of-israel-to-self-defence-in-order-to-restrict-its-military-operations-in-gaza-when-jus-ad-bellum-comes-to-the-aid-of-jus-in-bello/)

[a-right-of-israel-to-self-defence-in-order-to-restrict-its-military-operations-in-gaza-when-jus-ad-bellum-comes-to-the-aid-of-jus-in-bello/](https://www.ejiltalk.org/a-plea-for-a-right-of-israel-to-self-defence-in-order-to-restrict-its-military-operations-in-gaza-when-jus-ad-bellum-comes-to-the-aid-of-jus-in-bello/).

⁹ "People Across the World Protest against Israel's War on Gaza," November 17, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2023/11/17/photos-people-protest-israeli-war-on-gaza-across-the-world>.

¹⁰ "Israel-Gaza War Has Worldwide Impact," October 8, 2023, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/10/israel-gaza-war-has-worldwide-impact>.

divided, though those who condemned Israel were more numerous.

In response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the nations and peoples of the world are not only taking opposing positions, but they are also taking opposing actions to present their positions more forcefully. For example, the government conducts diplomatic activities, utilizes relevant international mechanisms, expresses opinions and coordinates positions at international organizations such as the United Nations, and the public conducts demonstrations. The strong expression of this position and the violent collision of views have, in general, aroused greater sympathy among the people of the world for the Palestinian people and deplored the long-standing violation of international law and basic norms governing international relations by Israel. "The conflict has also sparked a battle of narratives that has heightened tensions within many societies, particularly in the West. It further polarizes relations between countries in the global North and south, embedding itself in domestic divisions and raising questions about international norms"¹¹. The conflict has made governments more aware that they can no longer turn a blind eye to the reality and ultimate consequences of Israel's 56-year occupation of Palestinian territories since the 1967 war.

(II) The Conflict Increases the Risk of Terrorist Attacks in Western Countries

As mentioned above, the conflict has not only created opposing camps among states, but also sharply opposing camps within them, that is, pro-Israel and anti-Israel camps, especially in the West. As the conflict continues, indiscriminate attacks by the occupying Israeli army and heavy civilian casualties the attacks caused, could spawn Islamist extremists among pro-Israel populations in Western countries. They are more likely to carry out terrorist acts. Many existing Islamic terrorist groups have also taken or are preparing to take action against these countries in response to Israel's extreme reprisals and Western countries' condoning and even supporting such actions. In the context of the conflict, these terrorist organizations are also more likely

to recruit terrorists. Khaled Meshal, the political leader of Hamas militants and one of the group's founders, has called for global jihad, raising fears in European cities of the worst. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a key recurring factor in jihadist propaganda¹².

The more out of control and cruel Israel's retaliation, the deeper the root of revenge for terrorist attacks by extremist Islamic organizations will be, affecting not only Israel's own homeland security, but also spreading the haze of terrorism around the world. Several terrorist groups have issued warnings of terrorist attacks in the United States, with the FBI claiming that the United States is facing its most serious terrorist threat in 10 years¹³. "European security officials believe there is a growing risk of attacks by Islamists radicalised by Israel's war with Hamas, with the biggest threat likely to come from hard-to-track lone wolf attackers"¹⁴.

On October 13, less than a week after the conflict broke out, in northern France, a man who had been under surveillance by French security services since the summer of 2023 stabbed a teacher to death and wounded three others at his former high school, due to Islamic radicalization. The gunman who killed two Swedish football fans three days later on October 16 was likely inspired by ISIS. The head of Europol says Islamist terrorism remains the biggest terror threat in Western Europe¹⁵.

Perhaps influenced by the stance of people around the world and the threat of terrorism, there has been a shift in Europe from unconditional support for Israel to greater sympathy for the Palestinians. Under popular pressure, even countries that publicly support Israel's right to defend itself oppose Israel's collective punishment in Gaza. Belgian Prime Minister Alexander de Croo was one of the first European leaders to publicly announce the shift, telling a news conference, "Our country will not stand idly by if Israel commits war crimes. Israel has the right to defend itself, but even in war there are rules. The collective punishment of Gaza is

¹¹ Maha Yahya. "The Gaza War and the Rest of the World," November 24, 2023, <https://carnegie-mec.org/2023/11/24/gaza-war-and-rest-of-world-pub-91106>.

¹² Laura Llach, "Lone Wolf Terrorists in Europe Are Not So Lonely Anymore-Who Is Radicalising and Recruiting Them?" October 26, 2023, <https://www.euronews.com/2023/10/26/lone-wolf-terrorists-in-europe-are-not-so-lonely-anymore-who-is-radicalising-and-recruiting>.

¹³ Yan Mengda, "The Shadow of Terror Is Coming Again?" *Lianhe Zaobao*, November 5, 2023, <https://www.zaobao.com/forum/views/story20231105-1447738>.

¹⁴ Andrew Macaskill, et al, "Gaza War Increases Risk of Islamist Attacks in Europe, Security Officials Say," November 24, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/gaza-war-increases-risk-islamist-attacks-europe-security-officials-say-2023-11-24/>.

¹⁵ Josh Margolin. "Europol Director Says Islamist Terrorism Remains the Biggest Terror Threat to Western Europe," October 19, 2023, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/europol-director-islamist-terrorism-remains-biggest-terror-threat/story?id=104100812>.

unacceptable”¹⁶. Following their meeting in Japan on 8 November 2023, the foreign ministers of the Group of Seven (the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Italy, Germany, Japan and the European Union) issued a statement calling for adherence to international law, unhindered access to international humanitarian assistance, and the advancement of the peace process on the basis of the two-state solution. Equally important, the statement condemned not only the so called Hamas’ terrorist attacks on Israel, but also “extreme violence” by Israeli settlers against Palestinians¹⁷.

(III) The Conflict Is Generally Bad for the United States and Good for Russia

Overall, the conflict had a negative impact on the United States. In addition to the fact mentioned earlier that the conflict poses a greater risk of terrorist attacks on the United States, the conflict also disrupts US’s relevant foreign policies and undermines the achievement of its strategic objectives. The first is the Iranian nuclear policy. Since the outbreak of the conflict, the Biden administration has come under increased pressure from both parties in Congress to clamp down harder on Iran and curb its alleged regional sabotage, particularly its support for Hamas¹⁸. As a result, not to mention that restoring the Iran nuclear agreement will become even more elusive, even negotiations (whether in Vienna or Qatar or Oman) will be more difficult to restart.

The second is the push to normalize relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel. The Biden administration has been pushing to normalize relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel in order to extend the Abraham Accord. After the resumption of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, it has stepped up efforts to promote this process and has achieved remarkable results. But in the context of the conflict, even if Biden and Netanyahu wanted to, the Saudi Crown prince is unlikely to talk about normalizing relations with Israel while Israel is creating a massive humanitarian crisis in Gaza. On February 7, 2024, in response to US claims that Israel and Saudi Arabia were giving “positive feedback” on the normalization of relations, the Saudi Foreign Ministry said in a statement that diplomatic relations with Israel would not be established unless an

independent Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, was recognized, and all Israeli occupying forces withdrew from Gaza¹⁹.

Third, aid to Ukraine. After the outbreak of the conflict, there was no small voice in the United States to ask the Biden administration to put aid to Israel in a higher priority than aid to Ukraine²⁰. Although the Biden administration publicly said that the two will receive equal attention and the assistance to Ukraine will not be weakened, it is objectively difficult for the United States to do so, and its assistance to Ukraine will be somewhat weakened.

In addition, the conflict also undermined a geopolitical strategic plan aimed at China advocated by the United States, Europe, and India. The G20 summit in New Delhi in September 2023 kicked off with the announcement of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor. The EU, France, Germany, India, Italy, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the United States pledged to work together to upgrade and coordinate trade infrastructure between India, the Arabian Peninsula and Europe. Two wheel-rail transport corridors linking India and Europe via the Arabian Gulf are at the heart of the initiative. The 4,800km corridor will pass through the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel, giving consumers and producers in these countries easier access to European and Indian markets²¹. The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor is considered a competitive strategy to counter China’s Belt and Road Initiative. The recent Israeli-Palestinian violence has highlighted the enormous political challenge of including Israel in the trade initiative. Countries opposed to Israel and its policies in Palestine may be reluctant to use the corridor, especially if Israeli ports become hubs on the transportation corridor. In the current context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, continued Israeli violence and support for Israel by the United States, parts of Europe, and India may even make Arab countries lose interest in the construction of the corridor.

The policy toward Iran and the promotion of the reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Israel are closely related to the Middle East strategy and even the

¹⁶ Hugh Pope, “Three European Views of the Gaza War,” October 2023, <https://jstribune.com/three-european-views-of-the-gaza-war/>.

¹⁷ “G7 Japan 2023 Foreign Ministers’ Statement,” November 8, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/g7-japan-2023-foreign-ministers-statement/>.

¹⁸ “Bipartisan Group of Lawmakers Pressure Biden to Get Tough with Iran,” October 17, 2023, <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202310171782>.

¹⁹ “Saudi Arabia Says No Diplomatic Ties with Israel Unless Gaza Conflict Ends, Palestinian State Recognized,” Xinhua, February 8, 2024,

<https://english.news.cn/20240208/01f5051ccfa94d5d969aee0ffce18e1f/c.html>.

²⁰ Thomas O Falk, “Why Are US Republicans Pushing for Aid to Israel but Not Ukraine?” November 8, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/8/why-are-us-republicans-pushing-for-aid-to-israel-but-not-ukraine>.

²¹ Steve L. Monroe, “The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor: An Early Assessment,” October 31, 2023, <https://theforum.erf.org/eg/2023/10/30/the-india-middle-east-europe-economic-corridor-an-early-assessment/>.

global strategy of the United States, and the aid to Ukraine and the construction of the India-Middle East-Europe economic corridor are more related to its relations with Russia and China and great power competition, so the conflict undermines the realization of the strategic goals of the United States.

Since the United States is in a fierce confrontation with Russia, a conflict that is not good for the United States must be good for Russia. And indeed it is. First, the conflict has weakened America's ability to suppress Russia. Because the conflict has further dispersed the power of the United States, and Islamic countries have further seen the double standards of the United States, and are more reluctant to follow the footsteps of the United States in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Second, the conflict has elevated Russia's international status. After all, as mentioned earlier, the conflict has led to the polarization and polarization of countries around the world, and Russia belongs to the camp of anti-Israel military action that includes many countries, and is also a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council in this camp, daring to ignore Israel's threat to meet with Hamas leaders. Of course, Russia's diplomatic support for Hamas in the conflict makes Israel angry, and Israel is likely to do things that harm Russia's interests in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Syria and other issues, but this damage cannot offset the gains Russia has gained from the conflict.

III. Trend of the Conflict

In the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Israel is the main aspect of the contradiction and determines the trend of the conflict. Although American factors are also important to the course of the conflict, Israel has a greater degree of independence from the United States. Moreover, in view of the strength of the Israeli army and the height of its operational objectives, the conflict trend here more specifically refers to the spillover situation caused by the current round of Israeli military operations and the duration of military operations, that is, the quantity of the conflict in the space-time dimension.

(I) The Conflict Will Be Confined Primarily to Israeli and Palestinian, particularly between Israel and Hamas, with spillover but limited in scale

Since the outbreak of the conflict, it has a certain spillover. There have been clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces in the West Bank, and between Israel and Lebanon. There have been some casualties, but not on a large scale. And, at least so far, Hezbollah does not appear to be targeting civilians, focusing on Israeli military positions and mostly avoiding attacks beyond the five-kilometer evacuation

zone inside Israel. The Israeli response was limited to military targets²². Yemen's Houthis have also fired drones and ballistic missiles at Israel and seized an Israeli ship on November 20, 2023. However, because of their disparity in strength compared with Israel, which has received military support from the United States, Germany and other countries, it is difficult for them to trigger a long and large-scale military conflict with Israel even with the support of regional powers like Iran. The Houthis' involvement in the conflict, especially its attacks on Israeli-linked commercial vessels in the Red Sea, is primarily aimed at demonstrating and enhancing the legitimacy of their political rule. Due to the balance of power and other considerations, the United States and Europe will also be limited in the fight against the Houthi armed forces, and will not launch large-scale military operations in Yemen to eliminate the organization. Jordan has issued a war warning to Israel and a red line for Israel (no expulsion of Palestinians into Jordan), and it is expected that Israel will not cross the red line of Jordan and initiate war spillover, and the West Bank is not the focus of Israeli military operations. At the same time, Jordan's red line also indirectly indicates that Israel's military action in Gaza will not trigger a Jordanian military response.

In the context of the strong military support of the United States and other Western countries to Israel, coupled with the relatively strong military strength of Israel itself, the major powers in the Middle East, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran and other countries oppose Israel's military actions and atrocities in political and diplomatic aspects. The main impetus comes from national interests determined by their respective role identity (regional and Islamic world powers), collective identity (identity with Palestine), and so on. The possibility of Egypt and Saudi Arabia taking the initiative to intervene militarily in the conflict is zero, after all, Egypt is the first country to establish diplomatic relations with Israel, and the two countries have formed a certain degree of interdependence in economy and even geopolitics, and Saudi Arabia was almost on the eve of establishing diplomatic relations with Israel before the outbreak of the conflict. Turkey's military involvement in the conflict is unlikely, given its complicated status as a NATO member and its greater concerns about the threat of Kurdish separatist movements and its vital interests in Libya. Although Iran may have entered the conflict indirectly through the use of Hezbollah and the Houthis, its direct military involvement is also unlikely, given the threat of war against it by the United States and Israel, the long-standing sanctions imposed by the United States and Europe, and its domestic political instability. As the conflict evolves, Iran will at best increase its support for Hezbollah and the Houthis. Because of the

²² Andrew J. Tabler, "Gaza War Shows Heightened Risk of Escalation in the Region," November 17, 2023, [https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/gaza-war-shows-heightened-risk-escalation-region)

[analysis/gaza-war-shows-heightened-risk-escalation-region](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/gaza-war-shows-heightened-risk-escalation-region).

occupation of its Golan Heights by Israel, Syria has the greatest incentive than any other country to use force against Israel, but it lacks the capacity, its territorial sovereignty has been severely undermined for more than a decade, and large parts of its territory remain separated and occupied. The great powers in the Middle East want each other to intervene directly militarily, so it is difficult to launch joint military operations.

(II) There Are Paradoxes in Israeli Military Action, and the Conflict Will Continue on and Off for Many Months

The conflict will last a long time, largely determined by the paradoxes that exist in Israeli military operations. The first is the paradox of purpose. Israel says its military campaign aims to achieve two things: first, to completely annihilate Hamas; Second, to free the hostages. However, these two goals are contradictory, that is, they cannot be true at the same time. If Hamas is to be completely destroyed, it will not be possible to effectively rescue the hostages, because Hamas will not be willing to be killed in order to keep the hostages alive. By the same token, in order to effectively rescue the hostages, Hamas cannot be completely eliminated, otherwise those who have been kidnapped will not be called hostages, and Hamas should at least let some of the hostages be buried with them. Giving up the goal of freeing the hostages and letting them die with Hamas in order to achieve the goal of the total elimination of Hamas is unlikely to be possible for the Israeli government, which is already under pressure not only from the families of the hostages, but also from the governments of the countries to which the non-Israeli hostages belong²³. The goal paradox objectively limits the strength and speed of Israel's military action, but it also makes it difficult to stop its military action, so that the conflict will not end in a short period of time.

In fact, even without the goal of freeing hostages to tie its hands, Israel will not be able to completely eliminate Hamas. This brings us to the second paradox: the paradox of means and ends. Israel's goal is to wipe out Hamas, but its methods are brutal. This will further increase Palestinian hatred of Israel, which will drive more Palestinians to become members of Hamas, because Hamas as an organization is based on the ideology and feelings of hatred against Israel. Israel's violence has been the most effective in furthering the

socialization of hatred among Palestinians and even among Arabs and other Muslims. In other words, while the Israeli military operation aims to completely eliminate Hamas, it also objectively creates more Hamas members. It is safe to say that even if Israel kills all the residents of Gaza, it will not eliminate Hamas completely, and on the contrary, it will produce more Hamas members. As Anthony H. Cordesman, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, put it: "It seems very likely that any Israeli success in defeating Hamas and PIJ (Palestinian Islamic Jihad) and in overthrowing their leadership will result only in replacing them with something equal or worse"²⁴. Moreover, Israel's brutal means to achieve its goals have also aroused stronger opposition in a growing number of countries, and even the United States and European governments have found it difficult to continue to unconditionally support Israel's policies, and even there are large numbers of domestic people who oppose Israel's military action. These countries opposed to the Israeli military action exerted pressure on Israel in various forms²⁵. This is the paradox of means and ends.

The above-mentioned paradox of Israel's military operation in Gaza has the effect of making it difficult for Israel to completely stop the pace of the military offensive, and on the other hand, it has to moderate the offensive to avoid the disaster of the hostages, and thus have to negotiate with Hamas. Hamas, for its part, is afraid to release hostages for fear of being completely wiped out by Israel, and every time a hostage is released, it has to negotiate hard with Israel. At the same time, fearing that Israel would use drug-like substances (as the Russians have done to free hostages), Hamas would disperse the hostages and take other precautions. Although on November 22, 2023, Israel and Hamas reached an agreement to exchange 50 people for a four-day ceasefire, the agreement was delayed for two days to take effect, and the subsequent development still faces serious challenges. Hamas and the rest of the world must have seen through Israel's inevitable idea of first freeing the hostages in the process of fighting Hamas, and then destroying Hamas more vigorously, and Hamas must therefore be prepared to do everything possible to prevent Israel from achieving this goal. In future negotiations, it is highly likely that Hamas will not be satisfied with the release of some hostages in exchange for Israel's temporary ceasefire, but will also put forward

²³ TOI Staff, "'Our Patience Is Up': Hostages' Families Blast Government Inaction at Tel Aviv Rally," October 27, 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/our-patience-is-up-hostages-families-blast-government-inaction-at-tel-aviv-rally/>.

²⁴ Anthony H. Cordesman, "Gaza: Why the War Won't End," November 2, 2023, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/gaza-why-war-wont-end>.

²⁵ See Muhammet Tarhan, et al, "Opposition to Israel's Massacre in Gaza Growing Worldwide Despite Support

by US, West," November 21, 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/opposition-to-israels-massacre-in-gaza-growing-worldwide-despite-support-by-us-west/3060465>; Ivana Kottasová and Adi Koplewitz, "The World Is Turning against Israel's War in Gaza and Many Israelis Don't Understand Why," November 7, 2023, <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/11/07/middleeast/israel-mood-gaza-war-intl-cmd/index.html>.

harsher conditions, such as demanding the release of some hostages in exchange for Israel's longer ceasefire or even withdrawal from Gaza. Therefore, whatever the final outcome, the conflict will not end any time soon.

III. At a Later Stage of the Conflict, a New Conflict Could Be Triggered by the Displacement of Palestinians as a Result of Israel's Forcible Occupation of Gaza

Israel has suffered heavy losses in this conflict, especially casualties, which shows that the strength of Hamas is something to be reckoned with. In order to "make up" for its heavy losses, and for its long-term security, Israel's goal in this military operation is not only to completely destroy Hamas and free the hostages, but also to occupy at least part of Gaza. The occupation of Gaza is partly necessary to achieve its goal of eliminating Hamas altogether. However, it would be difficult to achieve this goal by occupying Gaza without displacing the Palestinians in Gaza, so Israel would try to dislodge the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank and prevent them from returning. Indeed, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wants the Palestinians out not only of Gaza, but also of the West Bank. Israel's current coalition government includes two ministers who are open to this idea. Former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and other Israeli politicians have repeatedly put forward the idea, claiming that Jordan can be another home because many Jordanians are of Palestinian origin

²⁶

When it signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994, Jordan insisted on including provisions that would prevent the possibility of large-scale population transfers. Over the past month, both Jordan and Egypt have repeatedly declared that their borders will not open, or even take in a single Palestinian. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi delivered a tough speech as early as October 18, 2023, saying that the current war is not only to fight Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, "but also to force the civilian population emigrate to Egypt". He warned that it could undermine peace in the region ²⁷. Jordan's King Abdullah II made a similar speech a day earlier. Egypt and Jordan did so not to deny humanitarian aid to Palestinians under attack, but to prevent Israel from emptying the West Bank and Gaza Strip of as many Palestinians as possible. The purpose of Israel's expulsion of the Palestinians is to make Palestinian statehood even more impossible and to solve the Palestinian "majority problem" it faces.

²⁶ Marwan Muasher, "Jordan's Redline on Admitting Palestinians Is Unlikely to Change," November 21, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/11/21/jordan-s-redline-on-admitting-palestinians-is-unlikely-to-change-pub-91077>.

If the Israeli army continues to advance into southern Gaza (after a brief ceasefire) and displaces the residents of northern Gaza into the south, despite the dissuasion of the international community, or if Israel is unwilling to withdraw from northern Gaza and refuses to allow the Palestinians expelled to southern Gaza to return to northern Gaza, Egypt will objectively face enormous pressure for refugee entry. This could lead to new conflicts.

IV. CONCLUSION: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

From the perspective of China's national interests, combined with the above analysis of the nature of the behavior of the two parties to the conflict, the impact and trend of the conflict, the author puts forward the following policy recommendations.

First, for the military conflict in Gaza, it is recommended that our official institutions and their media continue to use the term "Israeli-Palestinian conflict", and it is best to prohibit the use of "Israeli-Hamas conflict" in our academic circles and even in our media. Israel, the United States and other Western countries mostly use the "Israeli-Hamas conflict", as well as the "Israeli-Hamas War" and "Gaza War". Indian media generally use the "West Asia crisis" to avoid the use of the "Israeli-Palestinian conflict", Prime Minister Modi recently publicly used the "Israeli-Hamas conflict". The use of the term "Israel-Hamas conflict" gives the impression that this conflict has nothing to do with the vast majority of Palestinians and their national authority, and is mainly related to Hamas, the so-called terrorist organization, which narrows the scope of actual Israeli oppression and control from the level of discourse, cuts off history, and covers up the root cause of the problem. Moreover, Hamas's victory over Fatah in the 2006 general election to the Palestinian Legislative Council shows that it has a considerable popular base. If our country uses "Israel-Hamas conflict", it is not conducive to the effective expression and implementation of our relevant policy positions.

Second, taking this Palestinian-Israeli conflict as an opportunity, China should more actively participate in promoting or even leading the settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, so as to enhance the image of a responsible major country and its international influence. China is a strategic force in the world, after the conflict, the majority of Islamic countries have great expectations of our behavior. More active efforts to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, help realize the legitimate rights and interests of Palestinians, safeguard

²⁷ Jack Jeffery, "Why Egypt and Other Arab Countries Are Unwilling to Take in Palestinian Refugees from Gaza," October 19, 2023, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/egypt-arab-countries-unwilling-palestinian-refugees-gaza-104083766>.

the effectiveness of international law, safeguard international fairness and justice, can further narrow the relationship between China and Islamic countries and other countries and even some Western countries, and help our country to cope with the oppression of the United States and its allies, especially on issues related to Xinjiang and Taiwan. Moreover, in recent years, China has put forward the concept of “community of human destiny” and “three major initiatives”, which have been widely recognized by the international community, and further constructed China’s “role identity” as a responsible major country. This identity, in turn, determines the new interests of our country--actively resolving conflicts, promoting cooperative development, maintaining and promoting world peace, and safeguarding fairness and justice. And here the Israeli-Palestinian issue is a starting point.

Third, meet the expectations of the international community in a timely manner, and unite relevant countries to use relevant international platforms to pressure Israel and the United States to stop military operations and even withdraw troops from Gaza at an early date, so as to facilitate the international community to start the political and economic reconstruction of Gaza at an early date. At the same time, it supports the relevant serious positions of Middle East countries, such as opposing the expulsion of Palestinians to other countries as a solution to the problem. As far as the Middle East countries are concerned, they may all hope that Israel will disappear from the earth, but in the case of Israel will

not disappear, no Middle East country really hopes that the Palestinian-Israeli issue will be completely solved, such as the implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions, because then they will lose a diplomatic chip against the United States and Israel and other countries. It will also lose the opportunity to enhance its international standing. They are therefore firmly opposed to Israel’s continued encroachment on Palestinian territory and displacement of the Palestinian people, because if the Palestinians do not have some resistance, they will also lose leverage, in realist terms, effective checks and balances.

For international strategic forces such as China, the United States, Russia and Europe, the Palestinian-Israeli issue has become the key point of the game between them to a certain extent, in other words, become a tool for them to win international support and enhance soft power in the strategic game, which seems to be increasingly the case for China. Therefore, they agree that the two-state solution must not be abandoned. However, Trump’s two-state solution, perhaps including Biden’s two-state solution, is different from China’s two-state solution. China’s two-state solution is the one based on relevant UN resolutions expected by Middle East Arab countries. Therefore, China should support the relevant positions of Middle East countries and prevent Palestinians from continuing to be expelled to other countries and present their hopes of statehood from fading any further.