



A Regional-Political Perspective on the Gaza Campaign

The Gaza campaign is not a local conflict. Although the fighting is confined to a specific geographic area, it risks spreading and turning into a regional campaign that involves the United States and its regional allies in shaping the war and its aftermath. Understanding the attitudes, interests, sensitivities and capabilities of each country in the region regarding the campaign, as well as the actions each is taking, is thus of great importance. Below is a compilation by Mitvim experts outlining the regional view of the Gaza campaign as it unfolds, summing up events of the third week and offering guiding principles for Israel's regional foreign policy. For a broader view of our experts' insights, we recommend Mitvim's series of [publications](#) on the regional-political perspective on the Gaza campaign.

Third week of the war

A Regional Perspective

Dr. Roei Kibrik, Director of Research, Mitvim

Arab rulers found themselves forced to maneuver between their declared commitment to the Palestinian cause and their continuous struggle against radical Islam, with domestic stability at the top of their priorities. Each country in the region faces different internal and external challenges, and demonstrates differing degrees of urgency and involvement in the war. While Morocco and the United Arab Emirates make do with the bare minimum necessary to uphold their commitment to the Palestinians and avoid domestic unrest, Egypt and Jordan, being far closer to the events, are seized by a sense of urgency and feel they cannot wait on the sidelines until the campaign ends.

Egypt hosted an international peace conference on Oct. 21, which was attended by leaders and foreign ministers from the region and Europe. The timing may have been premature to draw up a relevant road map for the day after the war, as Egypt intended, with participants unable to even agree on a joint statement on the subject. At the same time, the conference provided an opportunity for the participating countries to draw red lines and formulate key messages. Egypt and Jordan drew a red line on accepting Palestinian refugees into their territory, Europe highlighted the need to uphold Israel's right to defend itself, and all agreed on the importance of allowing humanitarian aid into Gaza. The US with its dominant posture, and Israel, were conspicuous in their absence.

While Israel failed to provide a definitive vision regarding the aftermath of the war, the regional powers, Europe, and the United States emphasized their intention to advance a two-state solution to the Palestinian issue once the war ends. Even as the campaign appeared to stall in the initial two-three weeks, most regional and European attention was

directed to the immediate objective of restoring regional stability and preventing the spread of the fighting.

An Egyptian Perspective

Prof. Elie Podeh, Board Member, Mitvim

Egypt continued its deep involvement in all political aspects of the war, attempting to restore calm, promote humanitarian aid to Gaza and negotiate for a hostage release. With a view to restoring calm, Egypt initiated an international peace conference on October 21. The Cairo Peace Conference was attended by some 12 prime ministers and foreign ministers from Western Europe and the Arab world, in an attempt to create an international consensus on ending the war and condemning attempts to settle Gaza refugees in Sinai. However, in light of disagreements among the participants over the wording of a joint communique, the Egyptian government issued a statement calling, among other things, for an end to the war and warning of a humanitarian catastrophe. The statement also called for long-term action to establish an independent Palestinian state within the 1967 borders with east Jerusalem as its capital. In terms of Egypt's second objective, American pressure on Israel led to a trickle of humanitarian aid into Gaza through the Rafah crossing, although its future extent at the time was unclear. Egypt was also involved in attempts to release abductees, although its role appeared less pronounced than Qatar's.

In the bilateral arena of Israeli-Egyptian relations, an IDF tank accidentally attacked an Egyptian position in Sinai, wounding several soldiers. Israel apologized for the incident and the Egyptians accepted the apology without trying to over-sensationalize the incident and score points at Israel's expense. However, the establishment media continued to condemn Israel for its actions in Gaza, while expressing solidarity with Hamas. Various journalists coined the term "Second October Victory" (the first, of course, being the Yom Kippur War in October 1973) to describe the Hamas offensive. Al-Azhar University also chose to praise Hamas for its "resistance" to Israel's occupation. While some accused Hamas of burying the Palestinian problem, these voices were drowned out by the overwhelming criticism of Israel.

Egypt would likely support damage to Hamas, and perhaps even its collapse, but the a-Sisi government cannot express this position given its public's broad support for the Palestinians. As the war in Gaza escalates, with increasing casualties on the Palestinian side, a-Sisi will come under domestic and Arab pressure to sever or suspend his country's relations with Israel. Such was the case during the First Lebanon War (1982) and the Al-Aqsa Intifada (2000-2005), but not during Operation Protective Edge against Hamas in 2014.

A US Perspective

Nadav Tamir, Board Member, Mitvim

The Biden Administration kept up its staunch public support of Israel's right to retaliate and deal a blow to Hamas, while urging Israel to adhere to international law by differentiating between Gaza's civilian population and the terrorist group, providing humanitarian aid through Egypt, and prioritizing the release of hostages over the planned IDF ground incursion. The United States worked to negotiate through Qatar and Egypt for the release of all hostages, not only American citizens. American security experts advised Israel's top brass to define achievable targets for the operation, urging them to launch a ground offensive only if they can formulate a clear exit strategy and avoid occupying Gaza. The

delay in launching the ground operation stemmed, inter alia, from US pressure. The United States also shielded Israel from a UN Security Council resolution promoting a ceasefire.

The United States devoted concerted efforts to preventing the Gaza campaign from turning into a regional war. Accordingly, it defined limits for Israeli military action and deployed two carrier strike groups (led by the Ford and Eisenhower carriers) in the Mediterranean in order to deter Hezbollah and Iran from joining the campaign. The administration also airlifted weapons and ammunition to the IDF, and a US Navy vessel in the Red Sea intercepted a missile and drone fired by the Houthis from Yemen towards Israel. Israel continued to enjoy bipartisan support in the US, which was also reflected in the visit of a joint congressional delegation. By linking US aid to Ukraine and Israel in one package submitted to Congress, Biden overcame Republican objections to aid for Ukraine by taking advantage of the bipartisan support for Israel.

A European Perspective

Dr. Maya Sion-Tzidkiyahu, Director of the Israel–Europe Relations Program, Mitvim

Europe continued to express solidarity with Israel, but its statements were more nuanced than their untempered initial statements. Some European states expressed staunch support, ostensibly giving Israel broader freedom of military action, while other supporters were more inclined to emphasize the warfare limitations expected of a democratic state – respect for international law and international humanitarian law. This group also highlighted the need for a political goal to the war. Unlike Biden, who focused the political goal on the Gaza Strip alone, the Europeans eyed an overall Palestinian political goal based on the two-state solution applied to both the West Bank and Gaza Strip in hopes of ending the conflict. It is important to note that voices critical of Israel were still limited and support for Israel remained stable.

On Oct. 24, French President Emmanuel Macron joined the ranks of heads of state visiting Israel. Macron expressed unequivocal solidarity with Israel, but he represents a more complex and nuanced voice. In addition to visiting Israel, he also met in Ramallah with Palestinian Authority President Abbas. The Elysee Palace said it would propose renewing the peace process while providing guarantees for Israel's security. (It is worth remembering that Macron tried unsuccessfully to mediate between Russia and Ukraine. His visit to Ramallah was also intended to alleviate domestic French concerns about a pro-Israel bias). At a news conference with Netanyahu, Macron proposed fighting Hamas and terrorist organizations together, just as the West fought ISIS.

Macron called for prioritizing a hostage release over an IDF ground incursion, unlike other European leaders who have not publicly prioritized the targets of the campaign. All European leaders emphasized the importance of preventing regional escalation, including deeper involvement by Hezbollah and other Iran-backed militias to Israel's north.

Macron's relatively late visit to Israel was linked to domestic concerns. Macron positions himself somewhere between Marine Le Pen's extreme right, which expresses overwhelming sympathy for Israel and perhaps even takes advantage of the war to promote its Islamophobic agenda, and the pro-Palestinian far left, whose voters have been mounting demonstrations that threaten public order in France, already under threat several times this year.

European leaders faced fundamental challenges, such as concerns about public order and internal security due to warnings of radical Islamic terrorism. At the same time, they were

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also concerned about the sharp rise in anti-Semitic incidents and the need to secure Jewish communities.

Israel must act to maintain Europe's supportive position. This requires exposing politicians, diplomats and media professionals to the Hamas atrocities of Oct. 7 and preserving the memory of these savage acts in the face of the documented destruction and rising number of fatalities in Gaza. Israel must communicate the IDF's attempts to adhere to international law, advisedly with the help of European experts on the issue. The release of the hostages must be promoted in every possible way vis-à-vis the leaders of European countries who can exert pressure on Hamas. Despite each country's concern for the fate of its own citizens among the estimated 240 abductees, prioritizing the release of those who hold foreign citizenship over those with "only" Israeli citizenship would be immoral. As long as Netanyahu remains prime minister, Israeli diplomacy cannot promote a long-term political goal for the war, despite the European and American desire for such an outcome.

An Iranian Perspective

Dr. Gil Murciano, CEO, Mitvim

Israel's attacks in Gaza continued to pose a dilemma for Iran between expanding the conflict and losing strategic deterrence assets, and avoiding intervention and losing regional prestige, and possibly even the trust of its proxies.

In an attempt to deter Israel from a ground operation in Gaza and maintain a balance of deterrence vis-à-vis the United States, Iran demonstrated initial readiness to expand the conflict into a multi-front operation. It used the Houthis in Yemen to launch drone and cruise missiles aimed at Israel (and intercepted by US naval forces), promoted attacks on US bases by militias in Syria and Iraq, and encouraged the ongoing limited conflict on the Lebanese border between Hezbollah and Israel. At the same time, the Iranians, especially their foreign minister, held a series of meetings with leaders of the so-called "resistance axis" – including the heads of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. A ground operation by Israel or an unplanned Israel-Hezbollah escalation would further exacerbate the Iranian dilemma.

At the same time, Iran's fingerprints on the October 7 atrocities were magnified by reports of a massive cyberattack on state-level Israeli sites launched concurrently with the terrorist massacre, and of hundreds of Hamas fighters who underwent training in Iran prior to the attack. However, whether Iran participated in planning and supervising the attack, and to what extent if so, remains unclear.

However, as indicated by recent statements of senior Iranian officials, Iran clearly seeks to use the current escalation to put spokes in the wheels of normalization between Israel and the Arab world.

A Jordanian Perspective

Former Knesset member Ksenia Svetlova, Policy Fellow, Mitvim

Stormy protests broke out in Amman, Irbid, Aqaba and other towns following the deadly Oct. 17 blast at the Al Ahli Al Arabi Al Ma'amadani Hospital in Gaza, which was broadcast live on Jordanian television based on reports by the Gaza Health Ministry affiliated with Hamas. Protesters shouted slogans against Israel and demanded that their government sever relations with Israel. Senior Hamas leaders, such as Ismail Haniyeh and Khaled Mashaal, appealed to the Jordanians over the regime's head and called on them to

continue demonstrating and supporting the struggle of the "resistance" in Gaza. In fact, Jordan has become a regional focus of anti-Israel and pro-Hamas demonstrations, including support for the Islamist organization's policies (massacre of Israeli civilians and incessant missile launches at Israel's civilian population).

Jordan is the country most affected by the current escalation between Israel and Hamas. More than 2 million Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA live in Jordan, and opposition to normalization with Israel has always been particularly strong, both among trade unions and ordinary Jordanians. The demonstrators tried – not for the first time in recent years – to march to the Allenby Bridge border crossing, but were stopped by Jordanian security forces. It could be argued that anti-Israel demonstrations in Jordan are an expression of Jordanian society's opposition to King Abdullah and his regime.

The upheaval in Gaza is dangerous for the Jordanian regime, just as it is for the Palestinian Authority, Egypt and, to a lesser extent, the Arab regimes in the Gulf.

In Jordan, popular rage against Israel is combined with severe economic distress and the state's inability to improve its citizens' livelihoods and living conditions. The economic promise of peace with Israel has not been fulfilled, at least that is how ordinary Jordanian citizens see it. Their anger is intensified by conditions in the West Bank, where many have close family ties, the centrality of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and what is perceived as Israel's threat to Jordan's custodian status in Jerusalem's holy Muslim sites.

Netanyahu's governments have long contributed to undermining relations with the Jordanian royal family, ignoring the need to develop economic relations, rejecting joint projects, weakening the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and giving free rein to settlers in general, and to Temple Mount loyalists, in particular. Today, much depends not only on developments in the Gaza arena, but also on current developments in the West Bank and Al-Aqsa Mosque. If Israel wants to maintain calm on its border with Jordan and ensure stability in this important country, it must restrain the militias of extremist settlers attacking Palestinians in the West Bank and the extremists in the Israeli government who seek to add fuel to the fire. Any clash at Al-Aqsa is liable to significantly damage relations with the Kingdom, and undermine the status of the King and his regime. Israel must maintain constant contact with the Jordanians, consult and assist them as needed, and include them in future considerations regarding Gaza and the West Bank.

A Turkish Perspective

Dr. Nimrod Goren, President of Mitvim and Senior Fellow for Israeli Affairs at the Middle East Institute

On the 2nd and 3rd week of the war, Turkey intensified its public criticism of Israel and expressions of support for the Palestinians.

Turkish President Erdogan and senior Turkish government officials used harsh words to describe Israel's attacks in Gaza, and also lambasted the United States for its support of Israel, timing its rhetoric to coincide with President Biden's visit to Israel. Erdogan's harsh accusations that Israel's attacks amount to genocide have also permeated the streets. Anti-Israel demonstrations, including a stormy protest in front of the Israeli consulate in Istanbul, broke out following the explosion at the al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza. Criticism of Israel was not confined to Erdogan's AK party, emanating from other Turkish politicians, such as the leader of the nationalist MHP party, Bahçeli.

Turkey expressed a commitment to providing humanitarian supplies to the Gaza Strip, sending several Turkish planes to the Al-Arish Airport in Sinai, from where the Egyptians coordinated the aid transfer to Gaza. This development is the result of warming Egyptian-Turkish relations, which both competed in the past for influence in the Gaza Strip and are now finding a common language. Turkey expressed understanding and support for Egypt's concern that Israel would encourage Gaza Palestinians to move to Egypt. Turkey also offered to treat wounded Palestinians at its hospitals and promoted the evacuation of its own citizens from the Gaza Strip.

Erdogan reiterated these points in a phone call with Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal, stressing that Turkey supports the two-state solution and is committed to advancing it in the international arena. The official report of the conversation lacked a Turkish call for the release of the Israeli hostages held in Gaza, despite Turkey's initial stated desire to be involved in the matter. However, as was the case in previous rounds of Israel-Gaza fighting, Erdogan's hostility towards Israel's actions have left Turkey on the sidelines of relevant political activity, including on the issue of a hostage deal, in which Qatar plays a central role.

Turkey did take part in the international summit held in Cairo on Oct. 21, and in addition to calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, has also floated its own idea in recent days for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by copying the Cypriot model of "guarantor states" for each side. Russia is reportedly willing to discuss this issue with Turkey. At the same time, Turkey is also proposing to various countries the idea of deploying a peacekeeping force in Gaza. Its efforts to position itself as a central political activist in the Israel-Gaza conflict has not borne fruit so far.

A Hellenic Alliance Perspective

Former Ambassador Michael Harari, Policy Fellow, Mitvim

Greece and Cyprus continue to stand firm alongside Israel. Cypriot President Christodoulides and Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis visited Israel in mid-October, stressing their support for Israel and its right to defend itself, while underscoring the need to protect Palestinian civilians. The Greek prime minister was clear in differentiating between Hamas and the Palestinian people. At the same time, the Cypriot president called for de-escalation of the crisis, humanitarian aid to residents of the Gaza Strip, avoiding harm to civilians on both sides, and launching a political process in the region. On his return from Israel, he again condemned the Hamas terror attack, noting that he had discussed with the Israeli leadership a number of issues with which his country could help. "These are issues related to humanitarian aid, the possibility of evacuating (residents) in the area, as well as presenting the true picture of the situation to the European Union," Christodoulides said.

It should be noted that prior to their arrival in Israel, the two participated in a summit hosted by Egypt in Cairo. The strong stance they expressed there against Hamas, as well as the position of Western European participants, appears to have contributed to the conference participants' inability to agree on a joint concluding statement.

Thus, both countries continue to support the Israeli narrative, but emphasize even more strongly the need to avoid harming civilians and provide humanitarian assistance to Gaza's residents. Both countries greatly value their relationship with Egypt, and are likely to be attentive to Cairo's tone of concern and anger towards Israel. They will have to weigh

the voices from Arab capitals relevant to the public discourse they make. Their support for Israel in the EU corridors in Brussels will continue to be very significant.

A small explosive device went off in Nicosia near the Israeli embassy on Oct. 21, leading to the arrests of four people, reportedly of Syrian origin. The Cypriot authorities fear further such attempts and continue their close security cooperation with Israel.

A Moroccan Perspective

Einat Levi, Policy Fellow, Mitvim

Anti-Israel, pro-Hamas demonstrations continued in Morocco, but at lower intensity than during the initial days, and the country went back to focusing on its massive September earthquake damage and economic development. The call issued by Hamas political bureau head Haniyeh to attack Israeli and Jewish targets around the world prompted a severe Israeli warning to its citizens against travel to Egypt and Jordan, and a recommendation to avoid non-essential travel to Morocco. The staff of the Israeli mission in Rabat was called back to Israel, a move the Israeli Foreign Ministry described as "taking steps in light of temporary circumstances," while emphasizing the strength and resilience of relations between the two countries.

Morocco has continued to maintain neutrality, urge peace, and express willingness to provide humanitarian aid to the Palestinians. On October 17, Morocco condemned the blast at the al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza, which Israel insisted was caused by a misfired Palestinian rocket. Moroccan Foreign Minister Bourita attended the Cairo peace conference and discussed the need to end the violence, jumpstart the peace process, avoid civilian casualties, and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. Bourita highlighted Morocco's rejection of any solution that entails transferring Gaza's Palestinian population, warning that it could endanger the stability of neighboring countries. At the same time, he underlined his country's willingness to assist in resolving the conflict. On October 25, two Moroccan military planes landed in Egypt with humanitarian aid for Gaza, including food, medicine, and water.

At the same time, Morocco continued maneuvering between the various parties playing a role in the campaign, especially in light of Qatar's attempt to influence the domestic Moroccan arena through the popular Al-Jazeera channel and by financing the mass demonstrations held in Rabat against normalization with Israel and in favor of the Palestinians. Qatar also regularly supports the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) and local anti-Israel boycott movements. Regional unrest and the current war are incompatible with the interests of Morocco, which needs calm and stability to restore its economy following the earthquake.