

Connecting the Dots: From the Global Friction and Intra-'West' Fracture, Through the Multi-front (Gaza) War to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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This paper analyzes how the October 7 attack and the ensuing multi-front and Gaza war reshaped the region within the broader context of global power competition, inducing intra-Western fractures. While the war strengthened Israel's regional military position and weakened Iran and its proxies, it simultaneously eroded Israel's legitimacy in much of the West. Yet it also generated an East-West divide in Europe between states viewing Israel more as a security asset and those treating it as a normative liability. Despite intensified polarization across Western societies, the Global South, and the Middle East, international support for the two-state solution has not declined. On the contrary, it has consolidated into a broad Euro-Arab diplomatic alignment that frames the two-state formula as the only acceptable resolution framework. Ultimately, the interaction between global friction, regional war, and domestic polarization reinforces—not weakens—the international consensus around two states as the sole viable pathway forward. The paper shows that the war produced a paradox: military developments shifted the regional balance toward Israel and the US, yet political dynamics increased pressure for conflict resolution.

A. Introduction

Hamas' October 7 massacre and the ensuing Gaza war returned the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the center of the global agenda. The multi-front war¹ that erupted between Israel, Iran and its proxies following Hamas's attack, unfolded against the backdrop of global friction, making the Middle East one of its focal arenas. Thus, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

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¹ The main fronts were the Gaza Strip, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in the Red Sea and Iran. The secondary ones were the West Bank and Iranian proxies in Iraq and in Syria. In December 2024, when the Assad regime fell, Syria – Israel border became the eighth front. When the Gaza War is mentioned below, it only refers to this front specifically.

was embedded within the broader dynamics of global friction but also within the intra-Western fractures.

The friction in the Middle East took place between the Iranian part of 'CRINK' (China, Russia, Iran, North Korea) - an alignment of autocratic powers with imperial aspirations challenging liberal world order² - and part of the "West" – Israel, backed mainly by the US, but also by some European countries, who stood with Israel and its right to self-defense at the beginning of the war, and at times also assisted it militarily against Iran.

Amid the global friction, the "West" that was once understood as a "unified political, economic, normative and security community," is no longer unified. Instead, it is increasingly fractured along several lines, for example between liberal-democratic governments seeking to preserve the rules-based international liberal order and illiberal governments undermining it from within. The return of Donald Trump to the White House has caused transatlantic fractures due to his and his administration's approach to NATO, customs, international law, international institutions, and conflict resolution. The later includes the Russia war of aggression against Ukraine and the Gaza war as part of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Although Trump has adopted a sharper, more confrontational economic stance toward China and a military one versus Iran, he has also stopped support to Ukraine, not standing forcefully against Russia, straining transatlantic relations, sowing uncertainty about NATO's future. Tensions also rose due to his departure from democratic norms,³ and became an open fracture over Greenland during the Davos conference, January 2026.

Despite Trump's 'peace through strength' approach, the expectation is for a less peaceful world.⁴ The overall picture is that Trump stomps on the political, legal and economic liberal international rules-based order, dividing the 'West' to those who wish to preserve this order, and within it the two-state solution, and those who wish to transform it to sheer power play based on self-interests.

In addition to increasing the transatlantic fractures, the Gaza war also enhanced domestic tensions within Western and Arab countries. In Western countries - mainly in Western Europe - the tensions were between progressive camps and nationalistic ones. The Gaza war was internalized within domestic political competition, became part of identity politics, and was used to polarize and mobilize voters.⁵ Supporting Israel⁶ became toxic for many

² The term "CRINK" is used in this paper for descriptive purposes, not prescriptive ones. The multi-frons war, reaching Iran, showed its weakness – Russia did not come to the help of Iran (nor China).

³ Domestically, Trump is attacking US fundamental liberal norms and institutions. Versus Europe, Trump and some in his administration are siding with extreme right-wing political parties, e.g., JD Vans speech, Munich Security Conference, February 2025. In addition, in his foreign policy, Trump has an over liking to non-democratic leaders as Putin, Erdogan, Orban and Netanyahu, while publicly ridiculing to the extent of bullying the EU and some European leaders.

⁴ Stewart Patrick (2025), "[What Happened to "the West"](#)? As America Drifts Away From Its Allies, a Less Peaceful World Awaits," Foreign Affairs, September 18. See also Gil Murciano (2025) "[Peace Through Strength – Israel's Version](#)," *Mitvim*.

⁵ Maya Sion Tzidkiyahu (2025), [Accursed, Glorious and Rational: The Implications of the Iron Swords \[Gaza\] War on Israel – Europe Relations](#)," Public Spheres Journal, Vol. 20-21, pp. 42-67 (in Hebrew).

⁶ The term "Israel" and "Europe" is deceptive. Neither is homogenic. Israel has become deeply divided between the liberal democratic camp - and within it the smaller peace camp - and the populist, nationalist and messianic extreme right-wing camp. Many European societies are also internally polarized and divided along the progressive – nationalist line, and the Gaza war was used to amplify this polarization. Yet despite all the fragmentation, and despite the different fractures the Gaza war caused in the West regarding Israel, the position supporting the two-State solution remain strong.

governments. Yet Israel's military achievements and know-how also made it a security asset within the context of the global friction and the security threats Europe is facing from Russia.

In Arab countries the Gaza war further amplified anti-Israeli sentiments. In countries with peace or normalization agreement with Israel these relations amidst the war in Gaza and the region became a source of domestic tension vis-a-vis the government. If before the war there were attempts to advance normalization between Israel and Arab or Muslim countries and try to either skip the Palestinian issue or use it to pave a path to the two-state solution, these two options are off the table for the time being. Connecting these dots, before, and moreover during the war, European and Arab governments formed an informal coalition for advancing the two-state solution. Their political alignment served to some extent in easing the domestic pressures caused by the Gaza war.

This paper wishes to explore how has the multi-front war, and within it the Gaza war, affected the global friction, Israel's status and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resolution. These effects are complex and sometimes contradictory when examining the global, regional and domestic arenas. This paper will assess how the global friction influenced the Middle East, and vice versa - how the multi-front war, and within it the Gaza war, influenced the global friction. Moreover, it will examine how the global friction, the multi-front war and the intra-Western fracture shaped positions regarding Israel and regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the options for its resolution. It is an attempt to connect the dots, showing that despite all the global, regional and domestic societal changes in Western and in Arab countries, the two-state solution is still the only widely agreed solution governments put on the table.

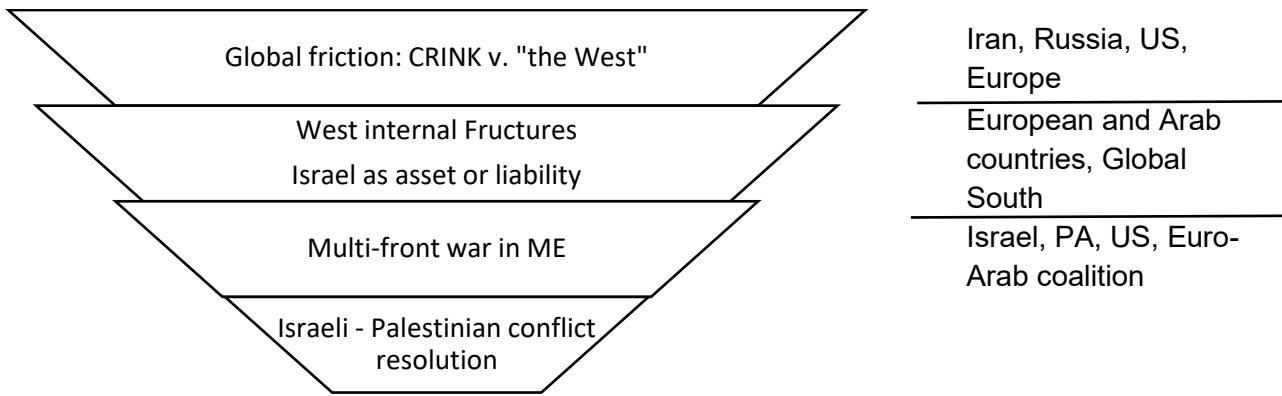
Four interlocking questions guide the paper:

1. How has the Gaza war affected positions regarding the two-state solution across the international community, among and within different actors?
2. How has the multi-front war reshaped the Middle East and interacted with the broader global friction?
3. Amid the global friction and 'West' fracture, to what extent - and where - is Israel perceived as a security asset versus normative and political liability? Europe will serve as the main focal point of examination. Arab countries will be examined briefly too.

The conclusions of the paper will come back to the first question from a wider perspective:

4. How have these global, regional and domestic dynamics influenced countries' positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its resolution?

The chart below describes the layers and players of this multi-layered complex arena.



B. The Tensions Caused by Israel's Conduct of the Gaza War Only Reinforced the Support for the Two-State Solution

The Gaza war amplified pre-existing tensions and polarization within Western societies - especially in Western Europe. It divided between public opinion and government position towards Israel, between governments who turned against Israel and those who stood by it, and between supporters of Israel in the Global North – as Germany or those who were unable to take steps against it, as the EU - to the Global South.

Within Western societies, the Gaza war became a focal point for widespread protests, social and political unrest within Western societies, American and European alike. It was instrumentalized by radical left and right - progressive and nationalistic xenophobic camps - to politicize, polarize and mobilize voters, turning this war into a prism through which debates on identity and immigration, antisemitism and islamophobia were intensified and refracted.⁷ From the two-state solution angle, progressive groups adopted the extreme and radical call “from the river to the sea,” meaning one-state solution for Palestinians only, delegitimizing Israel’s right to exist. Radical far-right nationalist actors instrumentalized the Gaza war to advance xenophobic agendas. While they did not reject the two-state solution or advance an alternative one, a racist agenda rests on a similar exclusionary logic as Smotrich and Ben Gvir’s Jewish-only one-state solution.⁸ Yet overall, despite pooling to the extreme left and right, the general support for the two-state solution has – if anything – increased and is back on the global and regional agenda.

At the West’s governmental level, there was considerable shift during the war from strong solidarity with Israel following October 7 massacre to strong criticism of the way Israel conducted the war from humanitarian perspective and the high civilian death toll and destruction in Gaza.⁹ It divided between Western governments who supported Israel’s right to defend itself throughout the war while also criticizing it, and the ones who not only criticized it, but also promoted steps against it.

Within the EU, these divergences highlighted longstanding foreign policy institutional weaknesses. The disagreements regarding the way Israel should be treated contrasted

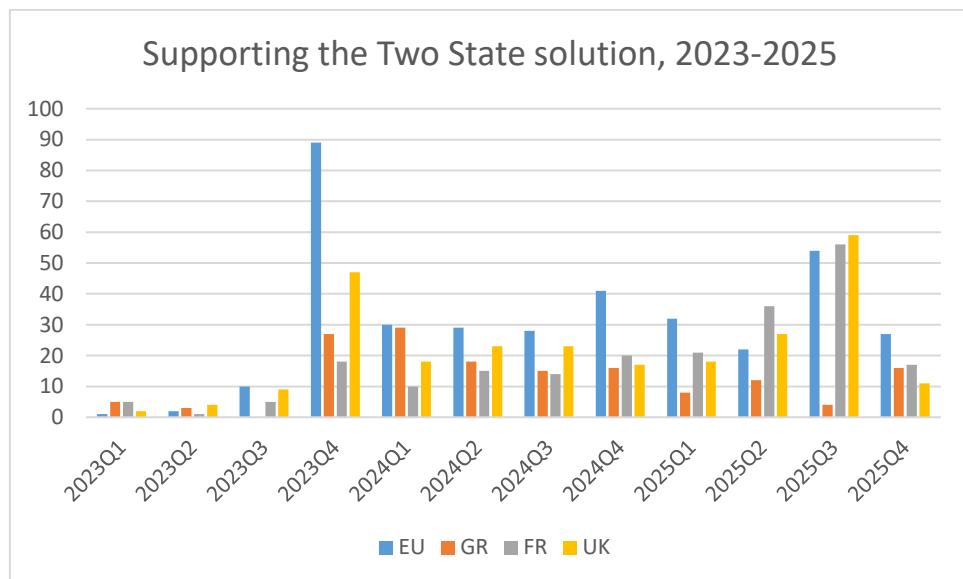
⁷ Maya Sion Tzidkiyahu (2025), [Accursed, Glorious and Rational: The Implications of the Iron Swords \[Gaza\] War on Israel – Europe Relations](#), “Public Spheres Journal, Vol. 20-21, pp. 42-67 (in Hebrew).

⁸ Before the war very few MPs supported Israeli annexation of the West Bank. They are still an insignificant minority. See for example, Aaron Reich (2020), [20 MPs from Europe, Latin America, Africa sign pro-annexation letter](#), JP, 1 July.

⁹ See Maya Sion Tzidkiyahu and Azriel Bermant (2024), “[Europe’s Response to the War in Gaza: Capabilities and Actorness](#),” Strategic Assessment, INSS.

sharply with the EU's relative unity vis-à-vis Russia, its war of aggression against Ukraine and the latter's right to self-defence. Despite these disagreements, European governments consistently reaffirmed their commitment to the two-state solution as the only viable framework for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Graph no. 1 below shows the number of official statements by the EU, Germany, France and the UK supporting the two-states solution before and after October 7, 2023. The rise in overall numbers shows the change from 'managing the conflict' when it was mostly off European agenda, to the wish to have it resolved. When analyzing the content of government formal statements and tweets, all presented the two-state solution as the only acceptable one.

Graph no. 1: Number of official statements by the EU, Germany, France and the UK supporting the two-states solution before and after October 7, 2023.¹⁰



At the global level, the Gaza war widened existing rifts between the Global North and the Global South. Governments and public opinion leaders in the Global South accused Western governments of double standards, by (somewhat mistakenly) comparing Israel's right to self-defence to Russia's war of aggression. They found Western support for Israel and their demands for solidarity with Ukraine contrasting.¹¹ Yet amid these accusations, support for the two-state solution remained a shared reference point for both the Global North and the Global South.

In the Middle East, public opinion has become even more anti-Israeli then before the Gaza war, sharpening the Palestinian question. As described above, it has become a domestic source of strain for governments who have or are considering peace treaties or normalization agreement with Israel (e.g., Jordan, UAE, KAS). This has been a major obstacle to US-led normalization efforts (Biden & Trump), which has become an important segway to Israeli-Palestinian peace (see below). The option to do it *aka* UAE style, i.e., skipping the Palestinians and the two-state solution (only paying lip service to it) has become

¹⁰ The data is based on the writer's research in [Tamrur Politography](#)'s research group.

¹¹ Sion Tzidkiyahu and Bermant (2024), "[Europe's Response to the War in Gaza](#)".

unlikely in the past two years.¹² As a path to a two-state solution was nowhere in sight, the second path to normalization also went off the table for the time being.

Another division in the Middle East is between the pragmatic Arab Sunni governments (i.e., KSA, UAE, Egypt and Jordan), who support the two-state solution¹³ against radical Shiite Iran and its proxies, who support the annihilation of Israel (Palestinian-only one-state), and the current extremist Israeli government who resist the two-state solution, promoting the Jewish-only one-state.¹⁴

So, while the Gaza war deepened domestic, governmental, inter-governmental and global tensions - it did not weaken the support for the two-state solution, on the contrary. Overall, it reinforced the two-state solution as the only viable one. To demonstrate the support for the two-state solution and the size of the three camps: 142 governments of the 193 UN countries endorsed on 12 September 2025 the French-Saudi led NY Declaration, including Russia and China,¹⁵ leaving the Trump administration, backing the Israeli government, isolated, with only Hungary and Argentina's governments at their side. Iran chose to be absent.

Yet, Trump's 20-point Gaza ceasefire plan (late September 2025), adopted as UNSC Resolution 2803 (17 November 2025), only vaguely refers to Palestinian's right to "statehood." Thus, Trump's position on the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict beyond Gaza remains ambiguous. His 2020 "Peace to Prosperity" plan (called "Deal of the Century") deviated extensively from the 1967 green line, allowing Israel to annex 30% of the West Bank. It indicated a lack of commitment to the 1967 point of departure agreed internationally and in past Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. However, in October 2025 Trump spoke out against Israel's de-jure annexation of the West Bank, putting a red line to Minister Smotrich's Jewish-only one-state aspirations. Nevertheless, de-facto annexation is advancing on speeds. The only thing Trump is upfront about is the transactional deal he seeks - normalization between Israel, KSA, and other Arab and Muslim countries. A united European-Arab coalition behind the two-state solution may be able to withstand Trumps' pressures to deviate from this once US agreed formula.¹⁶

C. The Multi-front War Effect on the Middle East and the Global Friction

The multi-front war has recalibrated the regional balance of power in favor of the US, Israel (and Sunni countries), slightly moderating the global friction to the West's benefit from a military perspective.

The war Hamas begun on October 7 had some of its roots in regional processes that are related to the global friction, meaning it was not solely aimed at Israel. It is also aimed at regional and global power-struggle of the West against CRINK.

At the regional level, the timing of the attack was partially because of the advancement towards normalization agreement between Israel and KSA. In September 2023 President

¹² Aziz Alghashian (2026), "[Saudi Arabia and the Palestinian State: A need and a role to play](#)," January, Mitvim.

¹³ In a sub-group within the Sunni camp there are the more radical Islam governments - Turkey and Qatar - promoting and sponsoring the Muslim brotherhood, including Hamas, while supporting the two-state solution.

¹⁴ For example, by accelerated de-facto annexation, or by not stopping settlers' violence, which echoes Minister Smotrich's "decisive" plan. See Maya Sion Tzidkiyahu (2025), "Euro - Arab Coalition Stopping Annexation," August, Mitvim.

¹⁵ While Russia and China abstained on UNSC 2803 (2025), 17 November 2025, they did not obstruct it.

¹⁶ Maya Sion Tzidkiyahu (2025), "Euro - Arab Coalition Stopping Annexation," August, Mitvim.

Biden announced the India-Middle East Economic Corridor (IMEC) initiative, as part of the West answer to China's Belt and Road Initiative.¹⁷ IMEC was planned to connect India, UAE, KSA, Jordan, Israel and Europe by sea and land. The attack on Israel aimed against Israeli-Saudi normalization, which was around the corner. It also as it was intended to strengthen a U.S.-backed regional security coalition against Iran, a patron of Hamas. And indeed, October 7 terror attack successfully targeted the emerging US-led regional architecture between Israel and pragmatic Arab governments, as KSA.¹⁸

Hamas' attack returned the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the top of global agenda after years in which Israel "managed" the conflict and managed to take it off the agenda of American, European and even Arab governments. Hamas attack was indeed successful in globalizing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a military, economic and especially cognitive/ perceptual perspective.

Militarily, unlike previous rounds of Israeli operations against Hamas, October 7 ignited a regional conflagration in multiple fronts. For the first time, Israel and Iran moved from proxy clashes to direct aerial confrontations in April and October 2024, culminating in a twelve-day war in June 2025.

Also a first, the Houthis' attacks disrupted freedom of navigation and global trade not only against Israeli but also against Western commercial vessels in the Bab al-Mandab Strait, a key maritime corridor connecting Europe and Asia.¹⁹ The Houthis' attacks on commercial shipping illustrated how regional Iranian proxies embedded the Gaza war within the global friction: they selectively targeted Western-linked ships, while sparing Russian and Chinese vessels, thus enabling the latter to take the shorter and cheaper route, adding an economic aspect to the military one.

Yet the multi-front war also produced unexpected strategic outcomes that ran counter to the interests of Hamas, Iran and Russia. Israel's military campaign significantly weakened Hamas and Hezbollah, and exposed Iran's conventional military vulnerabilities. The ceasefire agreement regarding Lebanon, November 2024, included obligation of the Lebanese newly elected government to disarm Hezbollah (yet to be fully implemented). Lebanon has begun to stabilize under a new government, backed by the West and Sunni countries (US, France, KSA, Qatar). As Hezbollah was weakened, opponents of the Asad regime in Syria were able to bring it down, shrinking the Russians, stronghold there, diminishing its regional influence, forcing Iran out of Syria, disconnecting (at least temporarily) its land supply corridor to Hezbollah. Iran lost decades of investment and positive regional and global momentum due to the war that its proxy, Hamas, started. This paved a path for Turkish, Western and Israeli competing influence and interference in Syria.

¹⁷ The plan was to establish a trade, energy and digital route, connecting India, the Gulf (KSA), Jordan and Israel to Europe. Ksenia Svetlova (2025), "[Here's Why Israel Should Care About the Modi-Trump Meeting](#)," Mitvim February. See also EcoPeace's visionary initiatives to link IMEC to Gaza: "[Our New Path to Sustainability: The IMEC Peace Triangle](#)," EcoPeace, July 16 2025, and Gedalya Afterman (2025), [IMEC 2.0: A New Regional Vision After the Gaza War](#)," Mitvim.

¹⁸ Marcus Walker and Summer Said (2025), "[Hamas Wanted to Torpedo Israel-Saudi Deal With Oct. 7 Attacks, Documents Reveal](#)," WSJ, May 18.

¹⁹ The attacks forced major shipping companies to divert routes around the Cape of Good Hope, leading to longer transit times, higher fuel and insurance costs, increased consumer prices in Europe and reduced export competitiveness to Asia. The disruptions also strained European supply chains for energy, raw materials, and manufactured goods, particularly in industries dependent on just-in-time delivery.

In June 2025 Israel also achieved military areal supremacy over Iran in the 12 days war, when the US joined it for the first time, bombing Iran's nuclear facilities. Moscow's inability and/or unwillingness to support Tehran emphasized the limits of the Russia–Iran partnership (No assistance was expected from China to begin with).

Another unexpected strategic outcome was caused due to Netanyahu's decision to bomb Hamas political leadership in Doha, Qatar. The attack generated a new regional perception of Israel as prone to unpredictable and irresponsible use of its military strength. Against the backdrop of broad criticism raised across the world, Trump signed an exceptional executive order to defend Qatar if attacked. Moreover, it led Trump to pressure Netanyahu and Hamas to stop the war in Gaza and accept the 20-point cease-fire plan.

Hamas' October 7 massacre followed by other Iranian proxies' attacks on Israel caused the Middle East to become an active front of global power competition. Developments in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, the Israel–Iran confrontation and the Red Sea intersected directly with broader CRINK-'West' rivalry and power competition.

After a decade in which the US withdrew its military presence from the Middle East and shifted its attention and resources to deal with the two big fronts of the global friction – Russia and China – the multi-front war forced its returned focus on the region. Still, as the US National Security Strategy, November 2025, openly declares, "America's historic reason for focusing on the Middle East will recede". At the time of writing, US is drawing military forces around Iran in what looks like an attempt to pressure Iran - the more susceptible domino among CRINK – by military, economic, diplomatic or political measures.

What has begun for Israel as a highly traumatizing defeat on October 7, ended in solidifying its dominant regional military power, reasserting its deterrence, with the two US administrations - Biden and Trump - staunchly by its side. The Biden administration was too weak vis a vis Netanyahu and did not manage to pressure him to agree to its political solution for the "Day After", which included the return of the PA to rule Gaza in the medium turn, leading to the two-state solution in the long term. Trump was able to pressure Netanyahu to accept the 20 points plan for Gaza, but as mentioned, his position towards the two-state solution is unclear.

To conclude, these events have recalibrated the regional balance in favor of the US, Israel, and indirectly also the pragmatic Sunni countries, slightly moderating the global friction to the West's benefit from a military perspective.

This section dealt with the military and some economic aspects. The next section will assess the political and perceptual (cognitive) price Israel has been paying for the way it conducted the war in Gaza. These aspects should be taken into account when trying to assess the regional and global pressures to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The following section assesses how Israel is perceived amid the global friction and the war in Gaza.

D. Israel Amid Global Friction and Gaza War: Security Asset or Normative and Political Liability?

To what extent and where is Israel perceived as a security asset versus normative and political liability? This section will focus on Europe, though the trends it represents are wider. European perceptions of Israel during the Gaza war increasingly diverged along an East–West geographic axis shaped by differing threat perceptions, strategic priorities, and domestic political settings. Despite wide public criticism of Israel throughout Europe due to

the way it conducted the war in Gaza, in general, governments in Eastern Europe still perceive Israel more as a security asset while governments in Western Europe perceive Israel more as a normative and political liability.²⁰

Israel as a Strategic Asset

For many Central and Eastern European governments, who are facing the more acute and immediate security threat from Russia, Israel's successful military performance during the multi-front war, after recovering from October 7 defeat, reinforced its image as a valuable security partner. The multi-front war demonstrated Israeli military performances both on the offence and defence. Israel's targeted beeper operation against Hezbollah exhibited its prowess. Its ability to achieve aerial dominance over Iran, overcoming the S-400 Russian air defence systems, while achieving above 90% interception rates against Iran's ballistic missiles and UVAs demonstrated capabilities that resonate strongly in European security circles, as they accelerate their rearmament efforts. As Foreign Minister, Gideon Sa'ar, stated, "Europe is facing security and strategic challenges. It needs Israel as much as Israel needs Europe".²¹ And indeed, in 2024, the share of Israeli defence exports destined for Europe rose from 35% to 54% of total exports. Most of it was to Central and Eastern Europe.²² Israel's battlefield experience and combat-proven military know-how, technology, innovation and intelligence expertise are appreciated.

From the supply side, defense cooperation with Israel can create political constraints and may give the Israeli government some leverage. Governments that rely on Israeli military equipment and expertise would be less inclined to adopt steps against Israel, even when critical of its actions in Gaza.

From the demand side, most of the Central and Eastern European countries maintain limited engagement with the Middle East and face relatively low levels of public mobilization around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As a result, domestic pressure to distance themselves from Israel remains modest, allowing strategic considerations to dominate their policies.²³ Yet, their principled support for the two-state solution (and perhaps lip-service to EU agreed language) remains in place.

Israel as a Normative and Political Liability

In Western Europe the Gaza war fundamentally worsened Israel's standing. The scale of civilian suffering, destruction, and humanitarian deprivation in Gaza eroded the initial sympathy and solidarity with Israel that followed Hamas's October 7 massacre. The more

²⁰ For a fuller analyses, see Maya Sion Tzidkiyah (2025) "[Glorious, Accursed and Rational: The Implications of the 'Iron Swords' War on Israel – Europe Relations](#)," Public Sphere Journal, vol. 21-22, p. 41-67 (in Hebrew).

²¹ Gideon Saar, [X](#), 7 September 2025.

²² SIBAT, Ministry of Defense, Israel. Israel's defense industry is ranked among the top ten globally. Many of Central and Eastern European countries continued to purchase Israeli military equipment and weapons throughout the war. The governments of Finland, Sweden, the Baltics, Poland, Romania and Greece are the main examples. Finland was the first EU country buying David's Sling, Romania purchased SPYDER (short-range air-defense suites) and Estonia acquired the Blue Spear coastal-defense system. Germany purchased the Arrow 3 system in early 2023 and Spike2 missiles in 2025, advancing nowadays toward an Arrow 4 deal.

²³ Despite growing criticism on how Israel conducted the war in Gaza, public opinion is mostly disengaged, and the conflict is not at the forefront of public interest. During the height of the Gaza war, there were only modest protests in these countries (though they too are a novelty), as the populace is largely preoccupied with closer-to-home concerns, Russia's war against Ukraine being the main one.

the Gaza war unfolded, the more Israel's standing has deeply deteriorated. It transformed Israel into a deeply polarizing and divisive issue in domestic politics.

The war triggered "globalized intifada": a transnational wave of mobilization linking local grievances to the Palestinian cause across Western, Arab, and Global South arenas. As part of the global friction, the Gaza war was weaponized by Iran, Russia and China to stir public opinion and, play out these social schisms.²⁴ This transnational mobilization embedded the Gaza conflict within wider struggles over post-colonial order and justice. Israel was reframed as a focal point of global normative conflict, intensifying polarization and contestation of its legitimacy.

Throughout the war there were sustained protest movements, especially in Western Europe. Debates over Israel's conduct strained interethnic, interreligious relations and in some countries even coalition government politics.²⁵ This is true not only in European countries, but also in Arab and Muslim ones, where opinion of Israel was negative to begin with. This also happened in many countries in the Global South and in the US.²⁶ Hence, government support for Israel increasingly carried domestic political costs, while harsh criticism and steps against it usually paid off publicly and sometimes politically.

And indeed, at the governmental level, these normative and political pressure translated in quite a few cases to measures against Israel. The review of the EU–Israel Association Agreement, which was stopped in February 2024, passed in May 2025. When further EU steps against Israel did not pass, individual member states chose to take steps: Full or partial arms embargo (e.g., Spain, Italy, even Germany for a short but influential period), suspending trade talks (UK), boycotting trade with the settlements (Spain, Slovenia), sanctions against ministers Smotrich and Ben Gvir (Slovenia, UK, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands) and violent settlers (EU and the West in general, including US under Biden Administration). After four European countries recognized a Palestinian state in May-June 2024, ten Western countries, including bigger and more significant ones, as France, the UK and Canada, followed suit in September 2025.

Germany represents a hybrid case. While its two successive governments upheld Israel's security as a core element of German *Staatsräson* (*raison d'état*), they also faced increasing difficulty reconciling this historical commitment with their obligations under international law and international humanitarian law (to the extent of confusing defending the Israeli people and state with defending an Israeli extreme right-wing government). Eventually, following mounting domestic criticism, even Chancellor Merz - a strong supporter of Israel - imposed arms embargo on items which can be used in Gaza between August-November 2025 and when visiting Israel (December 2025) did not repeat the *Staatsräson* phrase.²⁷ Nevertheless, Germany (and Italy) shielded Israel from most of the measures raised at the EU level.

²⁴ Mark Scott, "Analysis: five online takeaways from the ongoing Mideast conflict," Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab), October 7, 2024, <https://dfrlab.org/2024/10/07/analysis-five-online-takeaways-from-the-ongoing-mideast-conflict>.

²⁵ For example, in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Norway. See Nissan Shtrauchler (2025), "[Ministers resign, coalitions in crisis and pressure mounts: "The war in Gaza is dividing Europe"](#)" Israel Hayom, July 27.

²⁶ Maya Sion Tzidkiyahu (2025) "[Glorious, Accursed and Rational: The Implications of the 'Iron Swords' War on Israel – Europe Relations](#)," Public Sphere Journal, vol. 21-22, p. 41-67 (in Hebrew).

²⁷ Instead, he used "unveränderlichen Wesenskern" ('unchanging essential core' or 'immutable core of being').

To conclude, the balance between Israel as a security asset and as a normative and political liability change through time, geography and matter. Following the Gaza war, Israel is considered a pariah state by a big part of public opinion and some governments. Yet in many European capitals, Israel is also acknowledged as a security asset. Israel has strengthened the 'West' strategic position by weakening Iran, its proxies, and Russia's regional foothold, yet it has simultaneously fragmented Western societies, undermined the 'West' normative stance regarding international law and international humanitarian law, and its political cohesion. These two trends illustrate the dual nature of Israel's position amid the Gaza war. The next section tries to connect the dots. It deals with the US, Europe and pragmatic Arab countries' role in advancing the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict amid the global friction.

E. Connecting the Dots: From the Global Friction to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Its Resolution

The October 7 attack and the ensuing Gaza war returned the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the center of the global agenda, while embedding it within broader dynamics of global friction and intra-Western fragmentation.

Despite the major changes in international relations due to the escalating global friction, and despite the multi-front war in the Middle East, the West's (besides Trump) and Arab countries' position hasn't changed: the 1967 formula of land (and state)-for-peace, leading to the two-state solution are still their principled stance. The Euro-Arab coalition,²⁸ led by France and KSA, culminated in the New York Declaration, adopted by 142 UN member states in September 2025. Western, Arab, Muslim and Global South countries, including Russia and China, secluded the US and Israel, who opposed it. It reaffirmed the two-state solution as the dominant international framework for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This brings the Euro (Western)-Arab coalition to a possible clash with Trump if the vague commitment in the 20 points plan to Palestinian "statehood" is hollowed out. Such a clash is particularly uncomfortable for Europe when needing Trump to stand with Ukraine against Russia. Europeans are standing for liberal international world order, in which the UN Charter principle of no acquisition of territory by force is respected both in Ukraine and regarding the Occupied Palestinian Territories (i.e., the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem). This principle was also adopted by the Arab League. By flouting these norms, Israel becomes a normative burden on Europe not only in Gaza and the West Bank, but also in Ukraine. Fighting for the two state solution crosses camps.

Trying to connect the dots between the global friction, with Iran and Russia on the one side, to the "West" - which in itself is internally fractured - on the other side, and the multi-front war around Israel in the Middle East is a multi-directional and multi-layered exercise. This paper looked at the global and the regional shifts in order to examine what has changed regarding the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

From an illusion of managing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Hamas drew the Mashreq region to war, in which Israel - backed by the US and at times also by European and Arab governments - fought Iran and its proxies. It is a complex picture of multi-front, in which in some fronts Israel is "doing the dirty work" for the "West" and in others it enhances the

²⁸ Maya Sion Tzidkiyah (2025), [Saving the Two-State Solution: Euro-Arab Coalition Stopping Israeli Annexation](#), Mitvim, August.

internal fractures within the “West”. Yet despite all the global, regional and domestic changes, the two-state solution is still the only widely agreed solution on the table. On the sidelines, yet increasing in numbers, the horrendous Gaza war considerably increased the radical left progressive and Muslim publics in Europe, the US and across the Middle East that delegitimize the right of the State of Israel to exist.

The interaction between the multi-front war, global friction, perceptions of Israel, and of the solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict reveals a complex picture. Many regional changes have occurred due to this war: from a CRINK v. West perspective the war reshaped the Middle East and the power struggle in it to the military benefit of Israel, the US and to some extent the ‘West’ and to the detriment of Iran, its proxies and Russia. The Assad regime in Syria fell, Lebanon finally elected a president and a government who undertook to disarm Hezbollah. From a destabilising regional factor, the multi-front war also brought some unexpected results which may lead to a more stable Middle East. But the Israeli government acted as a spoiler and has missed out politically, by not planning for the “Day After” in Gaza, insisting the PA will not be part of the solution and rejecting the two-state solution altogether. Therefore, it also shoved normalization with KSA – that has a transformative strategic importance - off the table.

Israel surmounted from traumatic defeat on October 7 to hold a position of military might to the extent of hybris. Yet Israel’s use of excessive military power, specifically in the Gaza Strip, came with such a high normative price and political cost to itself and to Western societies. The Gaza war further polarized Western and especially Western European societies domestically, and fragmented them inter-governmentally. It undermined their moral credibility in the eyes of many of their citizens and many in the Global South. Adherence to the two-state solution, cooperation with pragmatic Arab governments, and pressure on Trump to influence Netanyahu formed the path to restoring Western and Arab political credibility.

The Euro-Arab coalition represents Europe’s most credible attempt to overcome its political marginalization, yet its impact remains constrained and depends on the Arab countries and mostly on KSA cooperation. If Europe seeks to preserve some of the liberal international order under conditions of intensified global friction, then meaningfully advancing a path to a two-state solution would remove a major source of internal and external destabilizer and strengthen Europe’s normative stance.

Yet some Western governments perceptions of Israel were increasingly filtered through the prism of global power competition. In Europe this happened especially by Central and Eastern countries who are threatened by Russia. This produced a East–West geographical divide within the EU. Even if it does not bear consequences on their principled stance regarding the two-state solution, it may have hindered them from taking steps against Israel or advocating for such measures. They may hesitate to do so also in the future if it comes to pressuring Israel to re-enter a path leading to the two-state solution.

The war in Gaza served as an arena of political struggle between the various forces of the global friction: the main fault lines are CRINK versus the West, progressives versus nationalist, the Global South versus the Global North, pragmatic Sunni versus radical Shiite. Russia, Iran and also China used the Gaza war to inflame and further polarize public opinion in the West and in the Global South. In the fight over public opinion against Israel (and the US), CRINK had the upper hand. By doing so, Russia also enjoyed the diverted public attention from Ukraine for some time.

The paper emphasizes three main findings and core claims. First, European governments' approaches to Israel are increasingly filtered through two prisms – that of the security threat from Russia and that of claims of genocide in Gaza, producing a clear left-right and East-West divide. Second, while the Gaza war exacerbated fractures within Western societies and governments, it did not undermine, and even reinforced, international support for the two-state solution. This is shared by Arab countries, serving to form a Euro-Arab political front versus Trump. The Euro-Arab coalition remains the best chance to lead the US in this two-state solution direction, even if it offers only a very partial corrective, if continued and played wisely and effectively. However, in an era of intensified global friction, in which Trump's policies are driven by 'America First' and by 'peace through strength', the prospects for the Israeli-Palestinian resolution remains in the hands of the US administration, Israelis and the Palestinians.