**End of the Two States Solution**

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“Leader Gaddafi refloats one-state idea after Gaza war”. Reuters January 22, 2009

The shocking Hamas assault on Israel marks a significant turning point for the Middle East, causing both a beginning and an end. The ensuing result is the initiation of an inevitable, brutal, and unpredictable war that will unfold with profound consequences. It puts to rest any lingering belief that the United States can disentangle itself from a region that undeniably shapes its national security policy. It is already apparent that the outcome of the forthcoming conflict in Gaza is heavily tilted in Israel’s favour, with its undeniable strength in comparison to Hamas. Israel possesses the capability to vanquish the group and establish a new and fortified security framework within Gaza, tailored to particular preferences. However, there remains a limited threat of Palestinian attacks within Israel and the West Bank; they are likely to remain sporadic and isolated. Ultimately, Israel retains the capacity to construct a comprehensive security apparatus in Gaza.

The Palestinian state is divided into four enclaves. The first one is the greater Jerusalem area, where conflicts arise over control of the holy places, housing, and business restrictions on Palestinians in East Jerusalem. The second enclave is the rest of Israel, which has different regulations on Palestinian rights of citizenship, and movements along with tight surveillance and security. The third enclave is the West Bank, where the Palestinian government is weak and Israeli security forces have control. The fourth enclave is Gaza, which faces the most severe pressure from Israel on Palestinians. Israel’s hardline government and anti-Palestinian stance suggest they may isolate or occupy Gaza, impose more economic and security pressures, introduce new restrictions on Palestinians in Jerusalem and the West Bank, expand Jewish settlements, and only make superficial diplomatic efforts for a true political solution.

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In terms of military threats, Israel does not appear to face any significant direct challenges from any of its Arab neighbours. Egypt, although possessing a strong military potential, is no longer willing to engage in direct conflict with Israel. Jordan’s military capability to combat Israel is now limited, as the nation faces serious economic and political challenges. Syria, amidst ongoing civil war, finds itself entangled in internal conflicts. An unstable Iraq cannot project its military perspective. Iran, however, can provoke and threaten Israel, providing financial support and arms supplies to Palestinian fighters.

The prevailing poverty and unemployment rates in Gaza have contributed to widespread support for Hamas and the perpetuation of violence. Israel’s future security measures in times of war and post-war are likely to exacerbate this situation. The consequences of the conflict will impact Israeli and Palestinian actions in the West Bank to a greater degree. These efforts alone will not foster enduring peace, and it appears that a practical short-term resolution may only be attainable in the form of a “no-state” scenario in the coming years.

It is crucial to prevent the US and the global community from falling into a trap of assigning blame that unfairly targets Israel or the Palestinians amidst the ongoing crisis. Rather than that, the emphasis should be on strategies aimed at reducing the repercussions of Hamas intrusion and Israel’s offensive in Gaza, as well as their aftermath. This does not negate the significance of pursuing more substantial and practical negotiations for peace.

The White House implemented an innovative exit strategy aimed at establishing a new geopolitical balance in the Middle East. The objective was to reduce the US presence and focus in the Middle East, while simultaneously preventing China from seizing the opportunity. A significant milestone in this strategy was the initiative to normalise relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, thereby forging a formal alliance against their common adversary, Iran. The goal of this coalition was to defend Saudi Arabia from succumbing to China’s strategic dominance. With a synchronized approach, the administration diligently endeavoured to address and mitigate tensions with Iran, a country deemed as posing the paramount threat.

It remains uncertain whether Iran played any specific role in the recent events in Israel. President Biden’s attempt to rapidly withdraw from the Middle East, despite an earnest endeavour, proved fundamentally flawed. In contrast, Iran along with its proxies has persistently engaged in escalation tactics as a means of advancing their strategic and economic goals. Given this context, Iranian leaders had strong incentives to obstruct any potential breakthrough in relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia. At first sight, the stance taken by Iran seems puzzling.

Presently, Israeli forces are directing their response towards the immediate danger, exhibiting a reluctance to widen the conflict further. The initiation of the Israeli ground offensive in Gaza will surpass its initial borders, leaving us to contemplate the scale and speed at which this escalation will unfold. Nevertheless, Hezbollah may be lured into starting a second battlefront in light of the unexpected successes of Hamas. As tensions continue to rise, Israel may potentially shift their attention towards targeting Iranian assets in Syria without engaging directly with Iran. Up till now, Tehran has endured such strikes within Syria without feeling compelled to retaliate directly against Israel. This phenomenon could potentially give rise to an intensified war on the ladder of escalation in the entire Middle East.

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