**The War in Gaza**

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The Israeli military campaign into Gaza appears to be a rather knee-jerk reaction to the 7 October 23 Hamas raids into Israel. Its desired end state and strategic objectives thereof remain ambiguous and uncertain.
The US’ ostensible objectives in supporting Israel’s war in Gaza are quite apparent. Foremost, it wants to re-iterate its presence, sphere of influence and strategic reach as a global power. Two, it wants to demonstrate its unwavering determination in what it considers the WOT. Three, it wants to re-emphasise its GMER policy, reaffirming Israel as its foremost ally to the exclusion of all others. Four, it perhaps intends to highlight its reliability and trustworthiness by standing by its ally regardless of world opinion, the injunctions of international human rights and humanitarian laws, the (un)justness of the cause and the consequent war. Five, crucially it perhaps wants Israel to annihilate Hamas and bring the GMER and the stalled Abraham Accords back to a stable keel, speedily!
To that end, the US has crafted an enabling strategic environment for Israel to pursue its objectives (?), unperturbed. In a multi-pronged policy, it has sanitised the theater of war both diplomatically and militarily. The diplomatic prong has been most evident and vociferous at the UN/UNSC/UNGA where it has repeatedly vetoed UNSC Resolutions calling for a ceasefire or a meaningful, long lasting humanitarian pause, (except one). The US, in particular, and its western allies including India have gone overboard in shielding Israel from adverse diplomatic pressures and international opinion at the UN and elsewhere. The US-led West and certain western media houses have callously ignored the massive human casualties as well as the near total destruction of infrastructure in Gaza. They have been outrageously hypocritical in their approach; disregarding the genocide, the literal pogrom of the Gazans/Palestinians under the garb of Israel’s right of self-defense!
Militarily, the US has isolated the theater of war by deploying an aircraft carrier strike group each in the Mediterranean and the Arabian Seas respectively. This force-in-being has deterred all nations and/or militant groups from undertaking any military adventures against Israel. Furthermore, it has continuously reinforced and replenished IDF capacities and capabilities in this essentially lopsided, asymmetric war. Thus, secured from diplomatic and international censure and from any undesirable military or militant interventions/distractions in its campaign, Israel has moved audaciously deep into Gaza, focused on annihilating Hamas and displacing over a million Gazans internally from the North to the South. A ceasefire, however would remain subject to Israel achieving its strategic objectives (?) and as the latest US pronouncement goes, “to the total elimination of Hamas’ leadership”.
The Israeli leadership, on the other hand, has been wont to giving varying strategic objectives that the IDF might be pursuing. They have variously ranged from changing the status quo in Gaza to the total annihilation of Hamas; pushing all the Palestinians into the Sinai; creating a buffer zone in the Gaza and/or taking on the control and security of the Gaza Strip themselves etc. There is no consistency or clarity in thought and purpose. Hypothetically, assuming that the IDF does manage to totally annihilate Hamas, what happens thereafter? How does Israel (and the US) bring this horrendous campaign to a closure in a way that meets Israel’s strategic objectives and brings the extermination of the Gazans to an immediate halt? They are both mutually exclusive. What will Gaza’s status be subsequently? How will the aftermath of this war be then managed and/or given a viable, internationally acceptable political avatar? How does the reconstruction of Gaza and rehabilitation of Palestinians take place? Will Israel annex Gaza? An occupation or annexation of Gaza will be unacceptable internationally. There is though, a segment of extreme right-wing Israelis who propose an “occupy; expel; settle” policy, meaning the occupation of Gaza, expelling the Palestinians into the Sinai and settling Jews there. This will result in incessant strife, war and bloodshed. It will stoke the unsatiated Palestinian desire for a homeland even more furiously. Israeli incursions into Lebanon resulted in the emergence of Hizbullah and its earlier forays into Gaza resulted in Hamas coming into being. How can things be any different now especially when the Gazans have thus far suffered 18000 plus dead and 50000 plus wounded. Horrifically, they may have lost a complete generation of children to the incessant, remorseless and ruthless air and ground campaigns of the IDF!
The war in Gaza will impinge upon the geopolitics of the GMER in more ways than one. The manner in which it is brought to a closure and its aftermath is managed might determine the pace of Saudi Arabia’s rapprochement with Israel. This gives Saudi Arabia critical leverage. Furthermore, it will directly impact the future prospects of the Abraham Accords and the proposed India-ME-Europe Economic Trade Corridor (IMEEETC). Therefore, what happens to the Gazans/Palestinians must essentially meet Saudi (and by implication Muslim) aspirations for them, else the Abraham Accords and IMEEETC could sink into deep cold storage for a very long time. That would directly harm US interests in the region. It thus becomes imperative that the end state of the war ensures a modicum of strategic balance in the geopolitics of the GMER. Period. The 2024 US elections, not surprisingly, seem to be having an indirect albeit crucial bearing on this war!
The Israelis must seriously seek peaceful co-existence. It could consider handing over control of the Gaza Strip to a UN Peace Keeping Force that could create a buffer between them and the Gazans. This could secure it from direct or indirect fires, attacks or raids from Gaza. This could also be the harbinger to sustainable UN-supervised Israel-Palestine-Arab parleys leading to a two-state solution. There is no other alternative!