



Killing to Cling to Power? The Dilemmas of Israeli Prime Minister

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Abstract

Hamas's strategic surprise attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, is not only a military and intelligence failure on the part of Israel, but it also casts doubt on the capacity of the Israeli Prime Minister to provide the security needs of Israelis. What this paper does is explore the complexities and dilemmas of Israel's war on Gaza despite domestic pressure to halt the Gaza war to enable the release of hostages, the call on the coalition government to account for the needless deaths of Israelis on the fateful October 7, 2023 attack and the growing pressure abroad to respect humanitarian law of war in Gaza. The war nevertheless continues unabated while Hamas is ducking for cover with the multiracial captives. The multilevel demands on the Israeli PM and his right-wing coalition have ramifications on the regime's legitimacy, a bleak future for the two-state solution, and the general implication of the war on global politics. This paper utilised the Diversionary Theory of War to explain the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. The paper argues that Hamas attacked Israel to thwart the normalisation process between Israel and Saudi Arabia, while the Israeli prime minister is using the Gaza war as an alibi to boost his reelection bid and to divert the attention of Israelis from the toxic domestic politics to cling to power.

Keywords: *Far-right; Hezbollah; Humanitarian Law; Israel-Hamas War; Right-wing*

Introduction

The declaration of war on Gaza by the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu appears 'greenlighted' by the United States and its allies –they ducked to Israel to solidarise, mourn, and offer military aid to actualise the war on Gaza. It is unclear if the U.S. president, Joe Biden, French president, Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, and other diplomats knew Israel's war on Gaza was going to be horrific, disproportionate, collective punishment, genocidal in character, and flagrant disrespectful for human rights and international humanitarian law of war. The death toll of civilians involving women and children, babies, the weak and the elderly has not only sharply divided the world, but it is a monumental failure of global political leadership and international organisations that are

presiding over a gleeful genocidal ambience of the 21st century. The international community would have continuously applauded Israel's revenge if the war on Gaza was targeted at eliminating Hamas leadership and its fighters as a fitting retribution for the October 7, 2023 attack. However, the indiscriminate bombings of the Gaza Strip, the killing of unarmed civilians, the elderly, children, and babies, the attack on ambulances, and hospitals, the arbitrary arrest of medical personnel, the blocking of humanitarian aid, deliberate starvation of the Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs), and the attack on places of worship are incongruent to international humanitarian law (Brahmah, 2014). These atrocities are occasioned by Israel's frustration with identifying Hamas fighters in the densely populated enclave. Thus, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) frustration elicits hostile aggression toward the totality of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (Kruglanski et al, 2023).

The mass killing of civilians in Gaza is also an attempt to assure Israelis that the government is in control of their security, military deterrence to state and non-state actors in the Middle East and a propaganda tool to delight compatriots both at home and abroad/ The overarching goal is to cling to power after Gaza war. This phenomenon of Western leaders presiding over these atrocities in Gaza is borne out of the double standards in foreign policy decisions towards the Middle East. Europe, Asia and across continents. The role of Western leaders in the Israeli-Hamas war in comparison with the Russian-Ukraine war defies the logic of similar conflicts around the world. Hence, this paper aims to diagnose the root causes of the ongoing Israel-Hamas war and its ensuant on global politics. To achieve the aim of the study, I attempt to address the following intertwined research questions to put the study in a proper context.: (1). Why did Hamas attack Israel? (2). What has been the reaction of Israel since the attack? (3) What are the implications of the Gaza war on global politics?

Method and Materials

This section provides the study's navigation and information on the ongoing snarl and complex conflict between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, the entanglement of the U.S., Iran, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Lebanon in the conflict and its ramifications on global politics. The method and materials for this study are hinged on a qualitative content analysis. It draws data and information mainly from past and present documentary evidence descriptively on Israel-Palestinian relations in the Middle East, official or public statements from U.S. officials, Israeli PM and his phalanx war cabinet, Hamas leadership, and the diplomatic engagements since the start of the Israel-Hamas war. Thus, this study made good use of a variety of secondary sources of data from United Nations (UN) technical reports on the Middle East crisis, textbooks, journal articles, bulletins, and magazines among others. Besides, non-participant observations of the ongoing Israel-Hamas war from credible international news agencies such as Cable News Network (CNN), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Al-Jazeera networks on the conduct of the Israeli-Hamas war in Gaza. The role of Western political leadership in the Gaza war and its ramifications on global politics was also explored. These sources of data and information were scrutinised and thematically analysed in line with the research questions.

Theoretical Framework

There is a plethora of theories in international politics to undergird a study of this nature. The study adopted the *Diversionary Theory of War* or the scapegoat hypothesis as an explanatory model of Israel's relentless urban war with Hamas in the densely populated or embedded enclave – i.e., the Gaza Strip. The gist of the hypothesis is that political elites often resort to war to distract popular attention away from internal social, political, and economic problems to consolidate or shine spot their domestic political support (Zeigler, et al, 2013; Morgan & Bickers, 1992; Levy, 1989). Wright (1965) argues that one of the main causes of war is the perception that war is a “necessary or convenient means ...to

establish, maintain, or expand the power of a government, party, or class within a state” (p.727). In other words, political leaders who sense the danger of being voted out of power will normally ensnarl themselves in a risky war, since even a small probability of victory may offer a boom to reelection chances (Braumah, 2023; Downs & Rocke, 1994). Hence, the main aim for engaging in muddy war is to customarily, divert the attention of citizens from the domestic social, economic, or political mess to focus on the external war to maximise the government’s legitimacy to either seek reelection or continuously engage in a prolonged war to cling to power – leaders of this category are willing to sacrifice the lives of its population or military forces seen and explained off as collateral damage of war insofar as that will inure to their narrow political interests, which is power.

Drawing from the above hypothesis of war, I applied the tenets of the diversionary theory of war to explain the conduct of Israel’s ensorcelled war on Gaza despite international outcry calling for a humanitarian ceasefire to ease the plight of the noncombatant civilian population. Before the October 2023 attack on Israel, the public perception of the Israeli PM and his far-right coalition was at its lowest ebb. This is because the government had embarked on some controversial public policies including an attempt to curtail the powers of Israel’s Supreme Court despite condescension of the masses in Israel. Hence, one of the main causes of Israel’s aggression and continuous bombardment on Gaza is the coalition government’s strategy to whittle down the public perception of domestic failures or problems. This is to divert the attention of Israelis to focus on the external conditions (e, g, the war on Gaza) rather than the domestic mess to court public sympathy and support to either maintain power or be reelected (Ferraro, 2023; Von Soest & Grauvogel, 2017). By so doing the far-right government is trying to court the trust of Israeli masses to the political leadership, and to increase its legitimacy that is expected to keep them in power or delay the ever-increasing calls for early elections. The Israeli PM is interested in sustaining the war on Gaza or even escalating the war beyond the region for two main reasons: to douse domestic pressure to step down as Israeli Prime Minister and to delay the resumption of alleged corruption charges scheduled to kickstart in February 2024 (Braumah, 2016). These two objectives of the Israeli PM explain why the Israeli PM and his far-right government are not interested in ceasefire efforts advocated by the international community to de-escalate the war as a catalyst to freeing the hostages being held by Hamas in Gaza. Thus, the continuous war on Gaza is being used by the far-right government as a *raison d’être* to remain relevant in Israeli politics.

The U.S. Policy in the Middle East

The principles of U.S. foreign policy in the aftermath of the Cold War in the Middle East are pivoted around four key thematic areas. First is economic, the U.S. support for Saudi Arabia to protect the free flow of oil is sacrosanct and a nonnegotiable vital interest in the Middle East. Second, a policy framework to combat all sorts of terrorist activities, Third, support for Israel to ensure its survival as a sovereign state, and finally, promote democracy (Braumah & Forson, 2023; Harrison, 2019; Skerritt, 2019; Wood, 2019). In practical terms, the U.S. in recent times, has focused more on two of its core principles (i.e. counterterrorism and backing of Israel as a key strategic ally) in the Middle East. The rest of the U.S. policy principles have been succinctly eclipsed by the unfettered support for Israel’s security and survival. The U.S. eye is on Tehran whose technological advances in military hardware, creation and/or support to proxies (i.e., Hezbollah, Houthis, Islamic Jihad, and Hamas who are designated terrorist groups by the U.S.), and Iran’s overall increasing influence in the Middle East are ascending. According to the U.S., Iran poses a security threat to regional stability as well as that of Israel and Washington’s interests. Thus, the U.S. is more fixated on counterterrorism and the protection of Israel in the Middle East than a commitment to resolve the Israel-Palestinian colonial imbroglio. The U.S. needs to work around the clock to broker peace between Israel and Palestine by confronting the root causes of the age-old conflict that has claimed several lives since the creation of the Jewish state in 1948. The tap and dance around the needs of both Israel and Palestinian questions by the U.S. is the reason for the protracted lethal

conflict over the past seven decades spanning from Eisenhower (1953- 1961) to Biden (2021 to date). How then can Washington's Middle East hegemony be exploited to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict?

Paradoxically, the United States is part of the problem and part of the solution in the Middle East crisis – particularly issues that border Israel and Palestine. Past and present U.S. presidents are fully abreast with the complexities and security needs of both Israel and Palestine. The security of the Jewish State has been the blueprint of Washington. Hence, Washington's annual support of USD 3 billion in military aid to Israel to fend itself against its adversaries in the Middle East. Yet, American presidents are not unaware of Israel's forceful annexation and occupation of Palestinian lands, construction of illegal settlements on expropriated lands, daily humiliation, arbitrary arrests and detention of Palestinians in Israeli jails without charge, human rights abuses by the occupation forces, targeted killings in Palestine, deprivation and desecration of places of worship (e.g. Al-Aqsa Mosque), blockade in the Gaza Strip, thwarting efforts of a Palestinian state, collectively ragtag and bobtail Palestinians with disrespect, flagrant disrespect to UN resolutions (242, 1967; 338, 1973) and flouting international humanitarian law with dealings with Palestinians. Perhaps, the succinctness of President Obama's remarks on Israel and Palestine depicts a clearer understanding of the bifurcated conflicts and their complexities. In the words of President Obama (cited in Mahmoud, 2010),

America's strong bond with Israel was based upon cultural and historical ties and the recognition that the aspiration for a Jewish homeland is rooted in a tragic history that cannot be denied.

President Obama justified Israel's case and its right to exist as a Jewish state in Palestinian land by stating among other things:

Around the world, the Jewish people were persecuted for centuries. And anti-Semitism in Europe culminated in an unprecedented holocaust ... Threatening Israel with destruction or repeating vile stereotypes about Jews is deeply wrong and only serves to evoke in the minds of the Israelis this most painful of memories.

President Obama also talked about the Palestinians

who have suffered in pursuit of a homeland ... endured the pain of dislocations...the daily humiliations, large and small, that come with occupation... America will not turn our back on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity and a state of their own...the only resolution is for the aspirations of both sides to be met through two states, where Israelis and Palestinians each live in peace and security (cited in Mahmoud, 2010:63)

The above statements from President Obama are a further indication of the U.S. appraisal of the conflict between Israel and Palestine for decades. Nevertheless, the U. S. unstinting backing of Israel in the ongoing catastrophic war on Gaza has severely battered its reputation and credibility around the world as a neutral arbiter and an honest peace broker. Some member-states of the European Union (EU) -e.g. Belgium, and Spain - have openly denounced and criticized Israel's horrific war on Gaza. The U.S. also failed to use its influence as a global superpower to stop the carnage – in fact, ammunition is covertly and overtly being transported to aid Israel's war on Gaza. Besides the supply of ammunition and financial support to Israel, Washington is erringly providing diplomatic cover to Israel to continue its carnage on Gaza. The Human Rights Watch is of the view that the U.S. risks "complicity in war crimes" because of its role in the geographical war (Sherwood & Wintour, 2023). It is in light of the preceding that many have expressed the need to haul some persons before the International Criminal Court (ICC) who have played key roles in the pounding and massacre of innocent civilians in Israel and Gaza. Despite the disquietedness of states in the Gaza war, the U.S. is still capable of overhauling its foreign policy nous by brokering U.S.-backed regional diplomacy to deal with what appears to be a modern 'genocidal' crisis of international concern (Duss & Okail, 2023).

Dilemmas and the Political Future of Israeli PM

In the aftermath of the deadly attack on Israel, the high-tech security architecture of the Jewish state was badly fractured and demystified by Hamas for the first time in the history of Israeli-Palestinian unwavering gnarl conflicts (the Hamas attack reportedly claimed nearly 1,200 Israeli deaths and over 200 multiracial people seized as captives). This phenomenon has sent shockwaves within and outside the Middle East. Expectedly, the Israeli government declared war on Hamas-controlled Gaza with four-pronged objectives. The first was to eliminate Hamas leadership and its vaunted underground infrastructure; the second was to free hostages; the third was to restore the confidence of Israelis in the ability of their government to guarantee security; and finally, a hidden agenda to reoccupy the Gaza strip. This latter objective is not backed by the U. S and might send the U.S. and Israel on a collision course unless Israel backtracked from its hidden agenda. Israel's war on Gaza is a truism of being micro-manage by the U.S. in three key directions: supporting Israel with ammunition and financial resources; deterring other potential adversaries from joining the war against Israel while it conducts its deadly war on Gaza, and assisting Israelis and Palestinians to decide the future of Gaza's leadership vacuum (Satloff et al, 2023). In the domestic and international arena, the Israeli government is confronted with three (3) key dilemmas.

The first domestic dilemma was whether to wage war on Gaza and sacrifice the lives of captives or the reverse. Israel's war cabinet led by the PM settled on the former even though, a cross-section of Israelis wanted immediate and practical steps on how to bring the captives back home rather than wage war which has the propensity to endanger the lives of the captives seized. While the citizens' demand is legitimate, the Israeli government needed to wage the war on Gaza first as a face-saving mechanism, and second to assuage the domestic pressure, anger, and backlash for its security lapse. The Israeli Prime Minister waffles confusingly whenever he addresses the nation on the war situation in Gaza and the whereabouts of the hostages. Altruistically, the war on Gaza was also used as a diversionary tactic to keep Israelis focused on the Gaza war rather than to call for early elections – hence, the declaration of war on Gaza to dislodge Hamas leadership and their combatants. Secondly, the sustained airstrikes in Gaza could not immediately show captured or killed Hamas fighters or any sight or hope of rescuing hostages. The IDF seemed frustrated, and aggressive and began killing civilians the majority of whom were women, children, babies, and the elderly. According to IDF and trumpeted by the U, S. Hamas was using civilians as human shields and operating from designated buildings that needed protection according to international law of war. In these frustrations, all persons in Gaza including United Nations Staff, medical practitioners, journalists, and aid workers among others, became the target of Israeli forces with the intent to delight compatriots and show Israel's military might in the 'one-sided' war with Hamas. Finally, the Israeli war on Gaza and the horror inflicted on humanity in this modern century has made the Jewish state a growing global pariah for more than half of the entire membership of the United Nations Organizations (U.N.O). In terms of individual and group security, Jews and Muslims around the world have become targets for intimidation, shootings, discrimination, fear and panic, and arbitrary arrest, and to cap it, scholars and students in higher learning institutions around the world have become intolerant, and, are also inextricably embroiled in the fall outs of the Israel-Hamas war. The cohesion between states that existed before the October 7, 2023 attack on Israel has to some extent eroded and threatens world peace and security. The question of hauling some notable individuals or officials to face the ICC for committing crimes against humanity is another dimension of Israel's war on Gaza which casts doubt on the relevance and application of international law without discrimination in contemporary times because of state alliances in the global system.

Political Future of Israel's Prime Minister

This section examines the political future of the Israeli PM in the aftermath of the Gaza war. This includes accountability of the processes leading to the unprecedented horrific attack on Israel on the

fateful October 7, 2023. The management of the war in Gaza and Israeli captives need further scrutiny to fully understand the philosophical mindset of Israel's PM and his right-wing coalition government whose world horizon is to dismantle democratic institutions within Israel (e.g. tirelessly degrading the powers of Israel's Supreme Court), recapture more Palestinian territories, build more settlements in occupied lands belonging to Palestine, deprive Palestinians access to the al-Aqsa mosque, arbitrary arrests and detention of Palestinians, total disregard to international law and frets over Iran, Lebanon and Syrian sovereignty with airstrikes constitute the causes of the simmering tensions created by the right-wing coalition government within and without Israel. The result was the October 7, 2023 security lapse. It is unclear what intrinsically the focus of Israel's coalition government seeks to achieve for its people since their ascension to political power.

The right-wing government led by PM Benjamin Netanyahu is itself a security threat to Israelis. Yet they are bent on using the Gaza war as a pretext to remain in the saddle of government business. While this paper is not advocating the PM's immediate succedaneum amidst the revelry war on Gaza, it is important to show why Israel's coalition government is not fit for purpose to stay in government after the Gaza war - they cannot be trusted to guarantee the security of the Israeli people. The coalition government is an anti-two-state solution and is never willing to engage in any fruitful process for a lasting peace that will ensure the security of Israelis and Palestinians in the long run. The Israel PM publicly rubbished the U.S. bluff of Gaza belonging to Palestinians, and stated among others, "Gaza will be neither Hamastan nor Fatahstan", and "not on my watch". By this, the Israeli PM is insinuating that Israel will reoccupy the Gaza Strip regardless of the U.S. call for a revitalised Palestinian Authority (PA) to take control of Gaza after the end of Israel's war on Gaza (Gotkine, 2023). Besides the disrespect to the U.S. and its allies regarding the status of Gaza, the Israeli PM has neither respect for American policy on post-Gaza war nor international law. The PM also asserts that Israel would not comply with the International Court of Justice (ICJ), where Israel is accused of genocide and could be ordered to halt its offensive (Izso et al, 2024). In a press briefing to mark the 100th day of the war on Gaza, the PM also states among other things that, "Nobody will stop us – not The Haque, nor the axis of evil and not anybody else" (Izso et al, 2024). The arrogance of power being exhibited by the Israeli PM is getting overboard, and an attempt to position himself as the face of Israel to cling to power. The actions or inactions of the PM are costly to the reputation of the Jewish State around the globe – already, Israel has been an isolated state in the Middle East and beyond, and disproportionately on the receiving end of international opprobrium that needs more allies in the region than adversaries to gain an enhanced security and economic power (Singh, 2020)

It is worthy of note that excessive use of instruments of violence does not necessarily resolve conflicts – the use of diplomatic optics is key and devoid of hubris. The Israeli PM aims to escalate the Gaza war which will entangle the U.S., the U.K., and other Western allies to prolong the war in Gaza to cling to power (Picheta, 2024). This has been largely achieved because the U.S. and its allies have ordered airstrikes on Houthi positions in Yemen for the incessant attacks on ships in the Red Sea that are already affecting global supply chain management. The attacks on Israeli-linked ships are a fallout of the IDF pounding of Gaza. While the U. S. is not directly involved in Gaza airstrikes beyond ammunition shipments to Israel, the Red Sea skirmishes are directly linked to Israel's war on Gaza. This is what the Israeli PM has succeeded in getting the U.S. and its allies entangled in the war ambience.

Domestically, the Israeli PM and his far-right coalition government should not be allowed by Israelis to survive politically if hostages are released incapacitated or dead. The continuous clinging to political power and use of the Gaza war as a vamp-up diversionary political tactic for reelection must be rejected – they have nothing tangible to offer the people of Israel except stoking acts of aggression with its immediate neighbouring countries, promoting internal inequalities among minority ethnic groups within Israel and working to weaken state institutions (e.g., the Supreme Court) to satisfy their parochial interests. The PM's objectives for peace in Gaza (i.e., destroy Hamas, demilitarise Gaza, and deradicalise Palestinians) as *sine quo non* to end of the war in Gaza is root and branch, a façade. The IDF

can topple Hamas from Gaza's governance and weaken its military capabilities, but the objective to destroy the entirety of Hamas as an organisation is an abstraction, utopian, and may take several years to achieve (Lowen, 2024). This is because the organisation is not limited or confined to the embedded Gaza Strip. The objectives of the Gaza may take several months and even years to achieve. And the more the war drags on, the better for Benjamin Netanyahu to cling to power. It is in light of this craving to remain in power at all costs that explains why the Israeli Prime Minister and his coalition government are resisting a pause of the war on Gaza for the release of hostages and on humanitarian grounds. In the estimation of the Israeli PM, a ceasefire in Gaza is highly likely to see the end or collapse of his coalition government. In the view of former Israel security agency chief, Ami Ayalon:

The major defeat for Hamas is a future of two states. Unless we discuss the future of the two states, there is no way to defeat Hamas and to create a better political horizon for Palestinians and Israelis ... Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu doesn't represent the views of the majority of the Israeli people... and unfortunately, you know, he is leading us (Gigova & Amanpour, 2024)

Besides, it is unclear how the Israeli PM is going to rev up the achievement of the third objective of deradicalising Palestinians with their embedded pain and rancour against Israel/s massacre of civilians, destruction of property, and expropriation of Palestinian lands. An obscure fourth objective of the Israeli PM which "unashamedly wormed its way into the open" political arena is "getting Prime Minister Netanyahu reelected" to stir the affairs of Israel (Gotkine, 2023). This is where Israeli electors must not be taken for granted in their quest for enhanced personal and national security beyond the usual coterie of Israel's political machine. For, the security of Israel and its people is more of an essence than ward-healers or political hacks.

Discussion and Global Implications

The Hamas's magnitude attack on Israel continues to be a shockwave within and without the Middle East. Hamas's audaciousness to infiltrate, and inflict pain on Israeli soil calls for critical analysis. The ensuing Israeli war on Gaza is cascading into a regional conflict with global security and economic reverberations. In this section, the study attempts to interrogate the ongoing Israel-Hamas war by restating the research question, why did Hamas attack Israel?

Hamas's attack on Israel is pivoted around a three-spectrum analysis. According to Hamas political leadership, its attack on Israel was a fitting revenge against the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) which consistently prevented Palestinians from worshipping in the Al-Aqsa Mosque, beating worshippers to pulp, and for the daily killings and arbitrary arrest and detention of Palestinians in Israeli jails without trial. Thus, its military wing was tasked to exact the same pain on Israel as fitting retribution for its excesses. Hamas political leadership further accused the international community (especially the U.S., the UK, France, and Germany who have suddenly found their voices in the Middle East) of focusing on the October 7, 2023, attack on Israel but chose to ignore or remain silent on the inhumane and violent treatments perpetrated by Israel on the Palestinian civilians before its strategic attack on the former. Hamas's justification for attacking Israel is flawed and needs further analysis. Perhaps Hamas's attack on the IDF instead of the multilayer civilian population would have been considered a 'reasonable' response of self-defence in the context of struggling people using all other means to liberate themselves from the clutches of the occupying power - Israel. Second, Hamas capitalised on the disenchantment of Israelis against the far-right coalition government's controversial policy of stripping some powers of Israel's Supreme Court. The attempted implementation of the obnoxious policy or decision by the far-right government sharply divided the Jewish State including some elements within the IDF. Hamas exploited this loophole by infiltrating into Israel for the attack. The main purpose was to add to the domestic confusion and cause Israelis to turn against the far-right government Hamas considered "unreasonable"

with its relations with Palestinians. Finally, the most significant reason for Hamas's attack on Israel was to scuffle and subsequently divert attention from the near-normalisation process between Saudi Arabia and Israel which has the backing of the U.S. Hamas felt threatened that if Saudi Arabia normalises ties with Israel, it would mean the quest for Palestine statehood would be permanently confined in the dust. Besides, other Arab states are likely to follow in the footsteps of Saudi Arabia by concretizing diplomatic relations with Israel. In this perspective, Hamas will be left isolated and there will be no funding of any sort from the Muslim world for its governance or activities. Hence, the temerity to attack or provoke Israel to act in a manner which will keep the normalisation attempts in abeyance. Hamas's diversionary tactic has largely succeeded because, Israel's war on Gaza is fast alienating Arab states which have already normalised diplomatic ties with Israel (e.g. Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates) dubbed the "Abraham Accord" while keeping the rest of Israel's perceived adversaries in the Middle East to recalibrate any notion of normalising ties with the Jewish state.

The second research question posed was, *what has been the reaction of Israel since the attack?* Customarily, every state, be it powerful or weak will respond to attacks on its sovereignty and people. However, the scope, nature, and intent of the revenge incurably matters. The focus of military revenge in such a phenomenon must be targeted at the aggressors or invaders with the sole objective of minimising civilian casualties to the barest levels and in line with the humanitarian law of war (Brammah & Mbowura, 2018). As captured by Centeno (2010):

Wars ... can turn us all into lunatics and convince us that only the state can protect us from the horrifying foe ... a variety of regimes justify the continuing limitation on individual freedoms by either claiming that the enemy remains undefeated or by pulling even new terrors from the political magicians' hat (p. 255-256)

In the case of Israel, there is a conflagration or indiscriminate bombardment of the whole population in Gaza whose mission lacks clarity or direction – the IDF collectively punishes the entire civilian population including women and children in the embedded enclave. Also not exempt include hospitals, ambulances, health workers, aid workers, the sick and the aged, journalists, and places of worship contrary to international humanitarian law. The flattening of civilian homes by the IDF with the intent to evict or wipe out the entire population of Gaza is rooted in a genocidal matrix. The overreaction of Israel on Gaza has had a tremendous effect on the security of Israelis and Palestinians since October 2023. For instance, the IDF's incessant bombardment in Gaza has the potential to compromise the lives of those in captivity. Yet the prime minister and his right-wing government whose second objective of the war in Gaza is/was to free hostages have thus rejected all attempts to pause the war on Gaza to facilitate a deal to free the hostages, and Palestinians languishing in Israeli jails. It is therefore unclear how the reaction of Israel to Hamas's attack will lead to freeing Israelis in captivity if there is no negotiation to pause the war.

Finally. A third research question was, *what are the implications of the Gaza war on global politics?* The Israeli-Hamas war in Gaza is fast diverging diplomatic optics among Western and European alliances in respect of human rights and dignity, justice, minority rights, democracy, self-determination of a people, an end to all forms of territory annexation, occupation, and subjugation, forceful evictions and destruction of places of habitation, ethnic or religious cleansing, racial discrimination, refugee rights, international law of war among others. However, the Israeli-Hamas war tends to annihilate these global values and political and humanitarian law consensuses. This is a threat to global peace and security. The selective application of international law based on "allies" and "non-allies", and the growing double standards of foreign policy nous of states on global issues has far-reaching consequences on the efficacy, and respect of international law, and the relevance of inter-governmental organisations and institutions such as the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Red Cross. The veto of the U.S. calling for

a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza is a testimony of the impotence of the UN Security Council to undertake its core mandate to ensure ‘International peace and security’. The ongoing Israeli-Hamas war and the unstinting backing of Israel by the U.S. in the carnage is unfurling the following global security implications:

The first implication is that the war on Gaza questions the moral standing of Washington and its allies in the Russian-Ukrainian war. Ukraine is fighting for its lands and right to existence as a sovereign state just as the Palestinians are fighting for its occupied lands, and right to exist, and seeking self-governance from the clutches of Israel. In these two instances, the winds of double standards in foreign policy by the Western world in dealing with similar international issues of concern are once again becoming a gale in world politics. Hence, the Western world midwifery stance on Israel’s catastrophic war on Gaza and the West Bank seems to legitimize Russia’s war on Ukraine. Russia’s war on Ukraine even though disgusting, is at least not deliberately and collectively targeted at unarmed civilians, women, and children, the elderly, hospitals, ambulances, medical staff, media personnel, starvation of the whole population and places of worship, even though civilian casualties cannot be discounted in a full-blown war situation. The Western world customarily identified and labelled Putin as a ‘war criminal’ but remains muted about Israel’s alleged complicity in committing crimes against humanity in the face of what is happening in the Gaza Strip.

Also, the world ought to prepare for the latent tensions involving China fretting over Taiwan, tensions between Venezuela and Guyana over the oil-rich Essequibo region, and North Korea’s threats over South Korea and Japan among others. Israel’s war on Gaza exposes the efficacy of international law of war and the relevance of international institutions or organisations such as the UN, EU, Arab League, International Criminal Court (ICC), and International Non-governmental organisations to uphold the sanctity of international law for global peace and security. If global political leaders fail to seek equal application of international law, the world risks the reverberations of an anarchical world where ‘might is right’ in all circumstances. This Israel-Hamas war lends credence to Huntington’s philosophical supposition that, in the international system “might is right” and powerful states will always trample upon the rights of small or less powerful states.

Third, the Israeli-Hamas war is escalating and transcends beyond state borders – hate crimes in the U.S., war reverberations in Lebanon (Hezbollah), Syria, Yemen, Jordan, Iraq, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Red Sea skirmishes, and continuous domestic security threats of nation-states via pro-Palestine and pro-Israel demonstrations around the world. These are signs of an unfolding ugly spectacle for the Middle East and a threat to global peace and security. The Israel-Hamas war has the potential to get the U.S. and its allies embroiled in an avoidable lethal conflict unless there is a lull between Israel and Hamas with reduced civilian massacres. As noted by Dress (2005; cited in Braimah, 2023):

Conflicts are not tidy and do not always remain within borders. They spill chaotically across borders, cultures, nations, and societies, and there must be regional and sub-regional mechanisms to build and maintain transnational cooperation. Such regional mechanisms vary widely in their interests, efforts, abilities, and resources (p. 132).

There is an unprecedented rise in islamophobia and antisemitic attacks, hate crimes, and shootings across the U.S. and around the world. Pro-Israel and pro-Hamas/Palestine demonstrations are influencing and muddleheaded into job losses, censoring of papers in reputable academic journals that criticize Israel’s war on Gaza, and curtailing free speech in higher institutions among others. These phenomena are antithetical to democratic ethos and potential threats to world peace and security architecture.

A fourth implication of the Israeli-Hamas war is that it has created a diplomatic wedge between states around the world. Arab leaders within and without the Middle East have lost any vestige of credibility to Biden's administration as a consequence of its 'complicity' in the atrocities being perpetuated by Israel's war on Gaza (Robbins et al, 2023). The unrepentant backing of Israel culminated in the snubbing of Biden's planned meeting with Political leaders of Egypt, Jordan, and Palestine among others. Washington's quest to normalise relations between Israel and her neighbours, especially Saudi Arabia has taken a nose dive. The Saudi Crown Prince is likely to face a legitimacy crisis from citizens if authorities attempt to normalise relations with Israel in the short to medium term. The war on Gaza has increased resentment against Israel and Biden's administration in the Arab/Muslim nations in Asia, the Middle East, and some African states. Washington's grip and influence in the Gulf is waning at an exponential rate. There is an eerie feeling of schizophrenia in U.S.-Arab relations in the Middle East. Indeed, leaders in the Arab world are turning to China and Moscow as credible partners in terms of security, development, and trustworthiness. Hence, the BRICS are getting new members around the world to challenge the U.S. dominance in the economic and political world systems.

Finally, the unrepentant backing of Israel in the face of aggravated catastrophe in Gaza has globally dented the image and credibility of the U.S. Mid-East policy, and as the paragon and promoter of international law, human and minority rights, democracy, and its imperatives around the world. The U.S. vows to back Israel at the imperil of its Mid-East economic, political, and social interests is troubling and threatens global peace and security. The growing anti-American sentiments owing to its veto on a ceasefire at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the continuous supply of military hardware (i.e. U.S. made bombs and financial resources) to Israel to continue the "humanitarian cataclysm" in Gaza have alienated the U.S. allies (e.g., the United Kingdom, France, Australia, Canada, New Zealand) At the same time, international public opinion weighs heavily against the hard-handedness of Israel's indiscriminate bombardment in Gaza with the ever-growing civilian deaths, fatalities, blockade of humanitarian aid and starvation of displaced persons without regard to humanitarian law of war. The overwhelming vote for a ceasefire at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) by all member-states except the U.S. is a further testimony and ball up of Washington's backing of Gaza atrocities and crimes against humanity in the 21st century.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Hamas's pogrom on Israel was root and branch horrific and the security intelligence inertia of Israel was, to say the least yucky. The needless death of Israelis was borne out of Israeli intelligence hubris – overbearing pride or presumption that Israel is the military 'superpower' in the Middle East. The Israeli PM and his right-wing coalition must be held accountable for presiding over the Hamas's deadly attack on Israel. The Israeli rage and revenge on Hamas's attack has been equally horrendous with seemingly 'genocidal' calculus. Both Hamas and Israel are using the war in Gaza to further their political interests. Hamas's attack was meant to derail U.S.-backed normalisation between Saudi Arabia and Israel, while the Israeli PM and his coalition government leveraged the war on Gaza to boost its legitimacy with the sole purpose of maintaining power or enhancing reelection. The relentless airstrikes on Gaza's civilian infrastructure, hospitals, ambulances, and places of worship, extermination of medical staff, aid workers, noncombatant civilians, the elderly, women, and children, deliberate starvation of displaced persons, flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and disproportionate collective punishment have attracted international outcry. The Gaza war has reverberations across states and increased incidences of antisemitism, anti-America, Islamophobia, and pro-Palestine demonstrations within the U.S. and around the world. All attempts by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to restrain Israel and cause a humanitarian ceasefire have been vetoed by the U.S. The death toll of civilians in Gaza continues to rise while the U.S. unrepentantly ships more ammunition to Israel to scale up its attacks on the Gaza Strip. Generally, the U.S. is accused by the Arab world of blowing both hot and cold air with its foreign policy

in the Middle East crisis over the past five decades. Resolving the age-old conflict requires Israel's cessation and occupation of the Palestinian lands as a rehearsal for the creation of a Palestinian state. But the recent rebuff of Washington's desire for a two-state solution by the Israeli PM and some extremists in the coalition government cast doubt on the possibility of a Palestinian state which guarantees Israel's security. The Israeli government is resistant to U.S. plans for peace in the Middle East despite the latter's unflinching financial and military support or backing to the Jewish state for the past five decades. This is creating fears that the U.S. is fast losing control or influence on Israel in the Middle East. What next for the Israel-Palestinian peace process beyond the Gaza war?

Recommendations

Based on the study discussion and implications, it is recommended that the U.S. have to demonstrate its willingness to dismantle the complexities that bedevil the Two-State solution. The Israeli occupation must end after 56 years of oppression or subjugation. Palestinians must renounce violence and recognise Israel as a sovereign state. However, the U.S. may not succeed with this policy with PM, Benjamin Netanyahu in power. He is a major obstacle and not the Israeli people to peace and security in the Middle East. The PM is reversionistic in character and allergic to a Two-State solution advocated by the U.S. and its allies. He thrives on violence as a means to cling to power or recapture power by toying with the lives of the Israeli people. The PM and some extremists in the coalition government are working to stoke another fire in the West Bank. The right-wing government is ingrained in land confiscation and demolishing some structures in the West Bank belonging to Palestinians to build new settlements and subsequently expropriate the enclave. The Biden administration has the opportunity to swiftly act boldly and sternly to Israel to stop these illegalities and cooperate with the U. S. to act upon the proposed Two-State solution for a sense of lasting peace to prevail in the Middle East or defer the opportunity for a lasting solution until another brutal conflict erupts in the future (Miller & Kurtzer, 2023; Nasser, 2021). The Palestinian Authority (PA) led by Mahmoud Abbas also needs a new trail of political reforms to function effectively under a new political leadership who will be committed to peace with Israel. The legitimacy of the PA among the multitude of its people is at the lowest ebb.

In addition, this paper recommends the U.S. should act boldly in keeping the lifeline of the 'Abraham Accord' with major stakeholders in the Middle East despite the anti-Americanism and anti-Israel sentiments among the populations of the Arab World. The Accord if successful, will leapfrog increased peaceful co-existence between Israel and Palestine and by extension, the stability of the Middle East. To ensure peace and stability in the Middle East, the U.S. may leverage the renewed diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran to broaden the scope of the Abraham Accord. Any attempt to isolate Iran from the normalisation process with Israel will be an exercise in futility. Complex as it may be to rake in Iran, continuous persuasion of Tehran, lifting of international economic sanctions, and halting the occasional airstrikes on Tehran's interests abroad by Israel and the reverse, maybe an end game to the old-age revilement between the two countries. Besides, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates are key strategic stakeholders that cannot be isolated or ignored in the normalisation process with Israel in the Middle East. The war-hawkish experts who argue the U.S. and Israel should directly engage Iran in military confrontations should consider the broader picture of the Middle East's political and security nuances. Such an attack on Tehran amid the ongoing Israel-Hamas war is highly likely to draw Russia, China, and North Korea into the Middle East imbroglio. The results may be catastrophic to humanity and costly to the global economy.

Finally, it is highly recommended that global political leadership restrain Israel from reoccupying the Gaza Strip in post-Hamas control or governance. The world needs to denounce the call by far-right Israeli officials for the "resettlement of Gazans outside Gaza" (Nasser, et al, 2024). The IDF's incessant bombardment and flattening of civilian homes is an attempt by Israel to force Gazans to flee their

homeland to another country to enable the expropriation of the territory for Israeli settlements. This maximalist intent by the Jewish state if allowed by the international community to happen, the world will probably witness the gnarl conflict between Israelis and Palestinians transform into global metastasis bedlam with its accompanying dire political, economic, and social consequences for the world. The Western world needs to end the politics of the two-state solution phantasy in the post-Gaza war to ensure an enduring peace between Israel and her neighbours in the Middle East. For, it is better to have enduring peace and security between Israel and Palestine than to have one state (i.e. Israel) laden with continuous violence

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