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Israel faces new, growing challenges

Since October 7, when Hamas attacked Israel, the Jewish state has been in a state of war, carrying out military operations against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank while expanding operations in Lebanon and Syria, as well as threatening Iran.



This time around Israel is fighting on its own terms and with full US support, however this does not guarantee its safety. Its claimed military superiority is fraught with the danger of an excessive expansion of the fierce struggle within the country. As the English magazine The Economist noted at the end of March, “as its government charges ahead, it risks turning hubris into disaster”.

A clear majority of Israelis support negotiations with Hamas and the withdrawal of troops from Gaza in order to bring the remaining hostages home

After killing tens of thousands of civilians in Gaza, the Israeli government has again denied aid to the Palestinians and cut off basic services in the enclave – which looks like a blatant violation of international law – while preparing for a new occupation via a ground operation.

Plans for ethnic cleansing are gaining momentum. Encouraged by President Trump's vision for the capture of Gaza and the resettlement of the enclave's population, the Israeli government approved the creation of an agency for the 'voluntary departure' of Palestinians. Since last year, it has engaged in a rapid de facto annexation of the West Bank, expanding Israeli settlements, forcing tens of thousands of Palestinians to flee their homes and allowing aggressive settlers to rampage. The movement for formal annexation is gaining popularity.

Repeated Israeli strikes in the region will lead to a popular reaction; Arab leaders will gradually begin to reflect the hostility of their peoples towards Tel Aviv's expansion. Over time, this could jeopardise Israel's regional alliances with Egypt and Jordan, as well as with several other Arab countries within the framework of the Abraham Accords.

The ideological settlers movement and extreme right-wing nationalism, which dictates Jewish sovereignty from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea (i.e. complete rejection of Palestinian aspirations for self-determination), continues to grow. In July, 2024, the Knesset voted against Palestinian statehood, a resolution that received overwhelming support from Jewish parties in Parliament (68 members in favour, 9 against – and the ones against were exclusively Arab).

At the end of last year, another law was passed, effectively prohibiting the UNRWA from operating in Israel and the occupied territories (two resolutions formalised this: 92 for, 0 against, and then 87 for, 9 against).

The official annexation of Palestinian lands will either lead to ethnic cleansing, to the existence of non-citizens without full rights or to the further imprisonment of Palestinians in tiny non-viable territories, i.e. apartheid. If such a policy is adopted, it will go against all the values on which Israel was founded.

Overexertion could become the most devastating scenario for Israel. The trauma of October 7 was supposed to unite Israeli society, but the country is divided again. A clear majority of Israelis support negotiations with Hamas and the withdrawal of troops from Gaza in order to bring the remaining hostages home. They believe that Prime Minister Netanyahu is waging a war to satisfy the extreme right, whose support he needs to prevent the collapse of his government and new elections.

At the same time, the government is employing aggressive tactics to limit the independence of Israeli institutions. In recent days, the cabinet approved the dismissal of the head of the internal security agency and the attorney general, who are involved in investigating Netanyahu and his assistants on charges of bribery and other offenses.

Perhaps Israel looks strong in the eyes of the international community, but its army has tired and its policy split. A number of countries condemn Israel for its genocide against Palestinians.

On October 7, more Jews were killed than on any other day since the end of the Holocaust, undermining Israelis' trust in their military and intelligence services. This was a big blow to the diaspora, as it called into question the main reason for Israel's existence, namely to be a refuge for a long-persecuted nation.

Growing rejection of Netanyahu's aggression in many countries

With the number of Palestinians killed and injured approaching 200,000, Israeli war crimes in Gaza have sparked widespread condemnation of Netanyahu's actions. The number of anti-Semitic incidents has notably increased even in the US. Meanwhile, it was in the United States that Jews became a successful and protected minority, fully integrated into the American state. The largest Jewish diaspora in history has defined a significant part of American culture, from Hollywood to Wall Street. They have secured not only equality, but also notable success, given their political influence and 2% share of the population.

It should be recalled that on the eve of World War II, there were 16.5 million Jews in the world. Today, their numbers are estimated at 15.7 million despite the world's population having quadrupled in the same period.

Assimilation in the West has begun to blur the lines of Jewish identity outside of Israel.

Trump has increased support for Israel and Jewish-American communities, lifted restrictions imposed by the Biden administration on arms sales and made it clear that he would not tolerate any international criticism of Israel by sanctioning the International Criminal Court in The Hague for issuing an arrest warrant for Netanyahu. Recently, the US president signed a decree on mobilising all federal resources to combat the surge of anti-Semitism on campuses and in the streets. The government has cut federal funding to Columbia University, where some of the fiercest anti-Israel protests took place, by \$400 million (a quarter of students at this university are Jewish).

The war in Gaza affects Israelis' mood. According to a survey conducted by a Jerusalem institute, over the past year, a third of Israelis have experienced mental disorders (which is 9% more than in 2021) and 80% of respondents associate their disorders with the ongoing Israeli war with Hamas.

There have been many US articles stating that the plan proposed by 22 Arab countries to resolve the issue of Gaza is rather realistic. On March 8, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy issued a joint statement welcoming the Arab League's project to rebuild

Gaza. In addition, a number of political scientists underline that Hamas will not be completely eliminated, and new generations of Israelis may therefore face another wave of terrorist attacks if the current extremist policy continues.

There is a growing movement in a number of European states demanding that their governments put pressure on Israel to reach an agreement with the Palestinians. Some media outlets are publishing articles explicitly saying that the internal conflict in Israel is fraught with the most serious consequences for the future of the country. The Arab News newspaper noted on March 31, 2025, that the words ‘civil war’ are among the most common used by Israeli politicians today, and this is becoming a real possibility.

Vladimir Mashin, April 09, 2025

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