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One year on: The geopolitical earthquake behind Al-Aqsa Flood

The events of 7 October 2023 are best understood as a calculated operation by the Palestinian resistance to push back against the geopolitical machinations of both regional and global opponents – set against a backdrop of declining US influence, the rise of China, and evolving alliances across West Asia.

Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, which shook the world [a year ago today](#), was not an isolated event; it was the culmination of years of [geopolitical shifts](#), global power realignments, and mounting tensions across West Asia.

The operation was not only a bold move by the Palestinian resistance but also a calculated response to the seismic changes in international politics that had been unfolding for years.

At the heart of these changes was the [2021 US withdrawal from Afghanistan](#), which signaled a weakening of US influence. This withdrawal sent shockwaves through Washington's allies in the Persian Gulf, particularly Saudi Arabia, which began questioning the reliability of US protection.

The contrasting US stance in the Ukraine war only deepened these concerns, pushing Persian Gulf states to explore new alliances and security arrangements. One notable consequence was

Chinese President Xi Jinping's [2022 visit to Saudi Arabia](#), which resulted in \$30 billion in trade agreements and underscored Beijing's new influence in the region.

This growing Chinese presence and shifting regional dynamics paved the way for the landmark March 2023 [normalization](#) agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, brokered in Beijing. While this agreement cooled some regional tensions, it didn't fully resolve long-standing conflicts.

Instead, it reflected West Asia's efforts to adapt to the shifting balance of power and prepare for potential new alliances that could transcend deep-seated rivalries. Regional powers were positioning themselves to deal with the evolving international order, one marked by increasing [multipolarity](#) – itself arguably triggered by the illegal [US invasion of Iraq](#) two decades ago.

War in Ukraine and global realignments

The war in Ukraine, which erupted in February 2022, sent shockwaves beyond Eastern Europe. The conflict triggered economic crises, intensified conflicts, and even spurred military coups in Africa. The geopolitical sorting that followed created a noticeable [alignment between east and west](#), with the US and its Atlanticist allies on one side and Eurasian powers Russia, supported by China, on the other. Proxy wars soon emerged in strategic hotspots across the globe.

For Russia, the war was seen as a necessary defense of its national security, a reaction to perceived western encroachment in its sphere of influence. The Kremlin viewed the Ukraine conflict not merely as a territorial struggle but as a broader battle over control of resources, trade routes, and spheres of influence in a world where western dominance in science, technology, and industry had begun to wane. This war, in Moscow's eyes, was part of a larger contest to redraw the boundaries of global power.

The rise of China and India has shifted the world's industrial, economic, and demographic weight towards the east. This has intensified the struggle for influence, with Russia attempting to reclaim its global role from Europe to Central Asia. Meanwhile, the US-led international "[rules-based order](#)" is under pressure as China seeks to establish its own economic and geopolitical dominance.

Reviving the Palestinian cause

The decision by Palestinian resistance forces to launch Al-Aqsa Flood on 7 October 2023 was not taken in isolation from these global currents.

Hamas and other Palestinian factions recognized the strategic moment: the US was preoccupied with its confrontations against China and Russia, according to its National Security Strategy, while Washington sought to contain Iran.

A secret assessment by Hamas in Gaza, written after the Ukraine conflict erupted, noted a global shift in priorities and vulnerabilities, including divisions within Israel itself:

The possibility of shifting the position and breaking the cycle of evasion and tightening the siege on the Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem by an extreme right-wing government announced in its program and the ideas of its president and his ministers based on the idea of increasing the Minister of Replacement Settlements and working to end the Palestinian cause in order to eliminate its vital titles such as the issue of refugees, the state, independence, Jerusalem as the capital and the land as a witness to the Palestinian right.

The assessment concluded that the global climate, alongside internal Israeli political strife, provided a rare opportunity for a decisive strike. Israel's far-right government, led by Benjamin Netanyahu and his extremist partners, had openly pursued policies aimed at deepening the occupation, expanding settlements, and marginalizing Palestinian rights. With Tel Aviv's internal divisions and the west's distraction in Ukraine, the time seemed ripe for a bold move to challenge these threats.

Regionally, the US was working to advance the Abraham Accords with an eye on brokering a normalization deal between Israel and Saudi Arabia. This effort was seen as crucial to forming an [Arab-Israeli bloc](#) that could help safeguard US interests in West Asia, particularly the security of Israel.

But Palestinians saw these normalization efforts as a grave danger to their national aspirations. They feared that Saudi Arabia's involvement without securing significant concessions for the Palestinian cause would green-light Israel to push forward with its "final solution" – increasing illegal Jewish settlements, tightening the siege on Gaza, and erasing any chance for Palestinian statehood while [Judaizing Jerusalem](#).

The resistance believed that if Saudi Arabia continued on the path of normalization, other Arab and Muslim-majority countries might follow, further isolating the Palestinian cause. Facing a potential geopolitical reality where Arab and Islamic solidarity with Palestine would erode, the resistance saw Operation Al-Aqsa Flood as a last-ditch effort to shift the trajectory.

After the Flood

Israel's response to the Al-Aqsa Flood has been far from proportionate. What began as a reaction to the Palestinian resistance operation quickly escalated into an ethnic cleansing

campaign likened to genocide and a wider regional war, with devastating aggressions against Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen.

Israel's brutal military aggressions, however, appear to serve more than just Tel Aviv's immediate goals. It fits within the broader US strategy to secure its regional interests while countering the [growing influence of powers](#) like China, Russia, and Iran.

Israel's aim of destroying the Palestinian resistance and displacing Gaza's population is intertwined with Washington's larger geopolitical ambitions, which were quick to be revealed after Israel's assassination rampage against Lebanese resistance leaders in September: the reshaping of West Asia.

It was a plan Tel Aviv had set into motion *well before* 7 October 2023, when Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stood at the UN General Assembly podium and held up a map of the "[new Middle East](#)" he envisioned – one that could launch once Saudi–Israeli normalization had been secured for him by Washington.

Via its proxy in Tel Aviv, the US seeks to maintain control over the region's resources, trade routes, and alliances as part of a [broader strategy](#) to counter Chinese and Russian influence. This conflict is part of a larger contest over global dominance, extending from Ukraine to the Red Sea.

The global response to Gaza's suffering highlights a stark contradiction. As the US and its allies claim to defend liberal values, human rights, and democracy, their actions often tell a different story. During the Ukraine conflict and the genocide in Gaza, western states abandoned many of the ideals they had long championed in favor of cold, hard geopolitical interests.

A war beyond Al-Aqsa

The ongoing Israeli war on Gaza, and now Lebanon, is not just about the immediate fallout of the Al-Aqsa Flood resistance operation. It is part of a broader US project for the region, reminiscent of the so-called "[Deal of the Century](#)."

This is evident in the scale of the aggression, which extends beyond Gaza and other flashpoints. The ultimate goal appears to be a radical transformation of the region's geopolitical order – one that secures control over resources, ports, and trade routes while subjugating populations to ensure western dominance.

This war is about more than just borders or territories; it's about control over the global economic geography and influence in a world where the old order is being contested. In this grand struggle for influence, the people on the ground often pay the price – whether in Ukraine, Gaza, or elsewhere.

The Palestinians, facing an existential threat, launched Al-Aqsa Flood in an attempt to change the course of history. But as the war drags on, it has become clear that this conflict is part of a much larger global power game, with consequences that will ripple far beyond the region.

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