

The free world should support Israel out of self-interest, not sympathy

The ripples go far beyond the region, burdening US resources and benefiting adversaries, including Russia and China

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FILE - Weapons personnel work on a weapons elevator on the flight deck of the nuclear powered aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford Thursday, Oct. 6, 2022, off the Virginia Coast. (AP Photo/Steve Helber, File)

By Raphael Benaroya

Most of the world is outraged by Hamas's attack on Israel, particularly by the massacre and kidnapping of civilians. Hamas's brutality is hard to fathom – President Biden called it “pure, unadulterated evil” – and it elevates the conflict beyond Israel to the entire world.

For Hamas and its benefactor Iran, no matter how badly they are punished in response, the attack is already a brilliant operation and stunning success from their point of view. The history books of extremist Islam will surely, and forever, depict this attack as a great David-vs.-Goliath triumph.

Hamas's aggression has given millions in the region cause to feel euphoric and invincible. This sentiment will inevitably expand the pool of extremist recruits for Iran's jihad against the West, particularly against the Great Satan (US) and Little Satan (Israel). These recruits could well be the next mutation of Al Qaeda and ISIS.

Amplifying the violence that Hamas perpetrated on Israel in 2021, Hamas has again:

- capitalized on Israel's internal societal divisions, political upheaval, and turbulent governance to project itself as Israel's most formidable adversary in the region;
- positioned itself at the forefront of the Palestinian cause, to extend its political power and usurp the leadership role of the Palestinian Authority; and
- elevated the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to the center of Middle East dynamics – this time in a naked attempt to disrupt a US-brokered accord between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Undermining an Israeli-Saudi détente also bolsters Iran's regional influence, solidifying its established corridor of power through Iraq and Syria to the Mediterranean. Hamas's attack also aids Iran by inspiring its other proxies in the Middle East: Jihadists in Syria, Houthis in Yemen, and Hezbollah militants in Lebanon. As a fringe benefit, the war in Gaza diverts attention away from Iran's continuing effort to build a nuclear weapons program.

But Hamas's attack ripples far beyond regional adversaries. The conflict represents a significant problem for the free world.

The US must now refocus resources on the Middle East, potentially diminishing its concentration on Ukraine, to keep Russia in check, and on the Pacific, to thwart China's expansionist agenda. The US has already repositioned the USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier task force to the Eastern Mediterranean, and the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower carrier group seems likely to follow.

Considering Iran's unholy alliance with Russia, it would be no surprise if both countries were aware of Hamas's plans for war. Russia acquires drones from Iran that are essential for its war on Ukraine, and igniting the Middle East benefits Russia by diverting the world's attention away from Ukraine.

China also greatly benefits from a Middle East in turmoil and US-Israeli-Saudi diplomacy on hold. China seeks to expand its influence in the Middle East and clearly benefits from any diversion of US military resources to the Mediterranean.

Israel will fight its own war, as it always has, though the cost in blood and treasure will be high. Prime Minister Netanyahu vowed to dismantle Hamas, promising that Israel's response "will resonate with Israel's enemies for generations and change the Middle East."

But the free world should take careful note. The radical ideology that perpetrated the terrorism of 9/11 is alive and well. The legacy of Al Qaeda and ISIS persists in Hamas, Hezbollah, and other Iran proxies.

The US must continue to prioritize the security and safety of its citizens, both at home and abroad, and rally the West – as it did in the global war on terror – to defeat Hamas.

Israel must also do its part to bring the world together against Hamas – it knows full well that sympathy and goodwill are fleeting. Israel must do everything it can through diplomacy and public relations efforts to convince the free nations of the world that they should support the defeat of Hamas out of their own long-term self-interest.

Hamas is no longer just Israel's problem, and vanquishing Hamas as quickly as possible is an imperative for the entire free world, not only for Israel.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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