

[Home \(/\)](#) / [Global Taiwan Brief \(/issues\)](#) /

Vol. 8, Issue 21 [Special Issue] Implications of the Israel-Hamas War for Taiwan Strait Security / (<https://globaltaiwan.org/issues/vol-8-issue-21/>)

An Israeli Perspective on the Gaza War and Its Broader Implications

November 15, 2023(<https://globaltaiwan.org/2023/11/15/>)



An Israeli Perspective on the Gaza War and Its Broader Implications

November 15, 2023(<https://globaltaiwan.org/2023/11/15/>)

DOWNLOAD FULL ISSUE PDF
(<https://globaltaiwan.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/GTB-11.13.23-1.pdf>)

The war (<https://abcnews.go.com/International/timeline-surprise-rocket-attack-hamas-israel/story?id=103816006>) imposed on Israel by Hamas on October 7, 2023, is of crucial importance. It is not just another round of violence between Israel and Hamas, the radical Islamist terror organization that took over Gaza (<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/battle-for-gaza-hamas-jumped-provoked-and-pushed/>) in 2007. The barbaric atrocities (<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/08/world/middleeast/hamas-israel-gaza-war.html>) planned and executed by Hamas, and the magnitude of the destruction in the communities along the Gaza border, which was accompanied by rapes, killings, and mutilations of bodies—leaving 1,200 Israelis dead, over 4,000 wounded, and 240 kidnapped, including women, children and the elderly—require a strong response. It is not just about the administration of justice and retribution, which is in itself justified, but about deterrence and defending the civilized world with implications far beyond the region.

Israeli Deterrence under Threat

The Middle East, where Israel is located, is a tough neighborhood. Israel, a Jewish state surrounded by hostile Muslim entities, cannot survive unless it is militarily strong and its neighbors understand that an attack on it would be very costly. This is the essence of deterrence. Moreover, fear is the best political currency in the Middle East, and probably in other conflict-ridden regions.

The successful surprise attack perpetrated against Israel by Hamas has eroded the deterrence of the Jewish state. Perceived weakness invites aggression. Accordingly, it is imperative for Israel to restore deterrence. Only by exacting a very heavy price against Hamas can Israel signal a message of deterrence to the region. The need to rebuild lost deterrence explains the Israeli government's decision to send the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) into the Gaza Strip to dismantle Hamas' military capabilities. The IDF mission will be a grand effort to decapitate the political and military leadership of Hamas, destroy its military arsenal, and dismantle its industrial capability to manufacture missiles and other types of armaments.

Israel's leadership, its army, and its people understand this. Moreover, there is a clear realization that operating in an urban environment—and the inevitable tunnel warfare that these operations will entail—will be costly and lengthy. In light of the importance attributed to this war, Israel is ready to pay the price—whatever it may be. After 16 years of continuous attacks on Israel's population, during which Israel has tried to contain Hamas and to deter it, the presence of such an aggressive and violent terrorist entity along its border is no longer tolerable.

The declared military mission cannot be accomplished without a large-scale ground operation. Airpower is important in destroying Hamas installations, but it has limitations, particularly when the enemy is hiding among a supportive population and finds refuge in well-designed and fortified tunnels. The presence of many Gaza civilians is a complicating factor, as well. Hamas' strategy (https://stratcomcoe.org/cuploads/pfiles/hamas_human_shields.pdf) aims at maximizing the casualties among the Gazan population. Through the use of force, it prevents attempts by Gazan citizens to leave the war zone as they have been instructed by the IDF. Moreover, Hamas uses civilians as human shields—in violation of international law—hoping that the pictures coming from Gaza will create international pressure on Israel to stop its advance.

US Involvement in the Israel-Hamas Conflict

Israel has been encouraged by the American support rendered from the outset of the war. President Joseph Biden promised (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2023/10/20/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-united-states-response-to-hamas-terrorist-attacks-against-israel-and-russias-ongoing-brutal-war-against-ukraine/#:~:text=And%20most%20movingly%2C%20I%20met,Israelis%2C%20Americans%20%E2%80%94%20taken%20hostage.>) unconditional support for Israel, and compared Hamas to ISIS—a civilizational enemy. He announced additional military aid to Israel, including armaments and interceptors for the Iron Dome missile defense system, and emphasized that the United States would make sure that Israel would not run out of resources vital to the war effort. The United States dispatched a task force (<https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-american-carrier-strike-force-mediterranean-db05d535a9ebb931f684f758c9b6f628>) headed by an aircraft carrier to the eastern Mediterranean, and later sent another carrier (<https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/14/middleeast/us-aircraft-carrier-eisenhower-israel-gaza-intl-hnk-ml/index.html>) to deter Iran and Hezbollah from joining the war against Israel. Washington also decided to deploy a nuclear submarine (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/6/us-sends-nuclear-sub-to-middle-east-amid-gaza-war>) to the region. The US secretaries of defense and state visited Israel, followed by the unprecedented visit of President Biden himself, demonstrating a high level of friendship.

The United States has become deeply involved, even directly influencing the conduct of the war itself. A corridor for humanitarian aid from Egypt was the result of American prodding, as was the restoration of the telephone and internet systems in Gaza, which were disrupted by Israel. Such American benevolence has been characterized by some as a “bear hug,” which might negatively affect Israel's freedom of action. One concern based on past experience is whether Washington will impose a ceasefire before Israel attains its objectives. Moreover, the naïve obsession of the current American administration (<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/biden-pushes-mideast-leaders-to-consider-two-state-solution-after-israel-hamas-war-ends>) with a two-state solution—as well as its preference to bring the Palestinian Authority (PA) into power in Gaza, when it is hardly able to exercise its authority over Ramallah—is problematic.

Washington signaled through its involvement that the Gaza war is more than a just local Israeli-Palestinian armed conflict. It is about the struggle for supremacy in world politics. Hamas is a tool for Iran—which is backed by Russia and China—to push the United States out of the Middle East. These revisionist powers oppose the community of democratic nations, whose strongest representative in the Middle East is Israel. Iran wants Israel's demise, not only due to religious fervor, but also its recognition that it is the only state in the region that can prevent Iranian hegemony.

Despite the misguided American policy toward Iran (the attempt to reach a nuclear understanding), the military and political presence of the United States alongside Israel in the eastern Mediterranean is an effort to preserve the status quo—and to halt Iran's attempt to erase the existence of America's best and strongest ally in the region. Isolating the conflict in Gaza has become a cardinal American interest.

Containing the Conflict and Implications for Taiwan

It seems that the Biden Administration believes that the reverberations of the war on Hamas in Gaza might lead to a regional conflagration affecting other arenas, potentially including Ukraine and the South China Sea. Indeed, the war in Gaza is an important test of American leadership and credibility. America's allies around the world look at its behavior for clues to how Washington might react to a crisis in their region. For example, Taiwan should be heartened by the quick American decision to dramatically increase its military presence in the Middle East. As noted, the United States started an airlift to provide Israel with ammunition and other military equipment (<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3555389/austin-says-us-will-supply-military-necessities-to-israel-ukraine/#:~:text=The%20United%20States%20will%20supply,at%20NATO%20headquarters%20in%20Brussels.>). Similarly, Washington's high-profile and vigorous diplomatic support for the Israeli government was very impressive. Significantly for Taiwan, Israel does not have a formal defense treaty with the United States that requires such American intervention on its behalf. Despite the absence of formal obligations, however, the United States has decisively stepped in to help its embattled ally.

The whole world is watching how effective American deterrent power is in this latest conflict in the Middle East. American success in deterring Iran from instigating a multi-front campaign has only had limited success. Hezbollah, Iran's proxy in Lebanon, has initiated a low-intensity operation (<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/hezbollah->

iran-attacks-israel-gaza-war-death-toll-rcna123959) aimed at restraining Israeli advances in Gaza. The Houthis in Yemen, another proxy of Iran, have also opened an additional front by launching long-range missiles (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/9/why-did-yemens-houthis-launch-attack-on-israel-will-it-help-gaza>) (with little accuracy) toward Israel, with American ships in the Red Sea and Israel's anti-missile defenses intercepting most of them. Iran-supported Shiite militias have also attacked American bases in the region. Iran and its proxies are eroding the American ultimatum issued by President Biden (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/10/25/biden-iran-proxy-attacks-us-troops/>), and testing the American determination to respond militarily. The outcome of this confrontation will affect the reputation of the United States as a reliable ally and the thinking of its friends and foes.

Beijing, the primary rival of the United States in the international arena, has closely followed the Gaza war. The image projected by Washington during the war on Hamas will inevitably factor into future Chinese strategic calculations. Moreover, as the war crystallized the lines dividing the West and its opponents, China opted to side with Hamas—a civilizational enemy of the West. China's voting at the UN National Security Council (<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/china-says-will-work-restore-peace-palestinian-territories-2023-11-06/>) and the content of its media (<https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/19/middleeast/chinese-social-media-debate-israel-hamas-war-intl-hnk/index.html>) have shown a clear preference for Hamas. It has proven that it is in the same camp as Iran and Russia. This position has been very problematic for China, causing it to lose much goodwill in Europe and in the United States. Moreover, the more pragmatic Arab states that view Hamas—the Palestinian offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, which has a significant presence in Arab states such as Egypt—as a danger to their regimes are very displeased with the Chinese stance. (<https://ecfr.eu/article/how-the-israel-hamas-war-is-testing-chinas-diplomatic-ambitions-in-the-middle-east/>) Informally, they wish good luck to Israel in destroying the Islamist terrorist organization. In parallel, they are getting closer to the United States while simultaneously growing more suspicious of Chinese attempts to encroach on the Middle East.

Looking toward the Future

President Biden, by comparing Hamas to ISIS, clearly sees the war on Hamas in civilizational terms. He believes that the civilized world is challenged by the barbaric actions of Hamas. Iran unleashed Hamas as part of its struggle against the West, viewing the Western democracies as weak and riven by internal fractures. Israel looked vulnerable when domestic strife paralyzed its government (<https://apnews.com/article/israel-politics-justice-minister-judicial-overhaul-netanyahu-b93481650524a63c4e85199c0ea3fb4d>). It looked weak when Washington emphasized its differences with Jerusalem. The fall of 2023 seemed an opportune time to attack Israel – the Western bastion in the Middle East. And in the United States, polarization and partisan bickering have hindered foreign policy decision making. Elsewhere, the West is faced with an almost-nuclear Iran; a nuclear North Korea; and an expansionist Russia, all while China is extending its malign influence over the globe. With these challenges in mind, President Biden decided to let Israel administer the same unforgiving treatment to Hamas as the United States did in its crusade against ISIS.

Yet, eradicating Hamas by force is not a realistic goal. Hamas represents a radical Islamist ideology that is utterly opposed to Western civilization and denies the right to the existence of a Jewish state. Unfortunately, this ideology has many adherents in the Muslim world. Moreover, Hamas has established kindergartens, schools, social services, and mosques, ensuring that it is firmly entrenched in Palestinian society. Its messages are popular and fall on responsive Palestinian ears. In the 2005 election (the last and only one) Hamas mustered a majority in the Palestinian parliament. Among Palestinians, a poll (<https://pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/Poll%2089%20English%20Full%20Text%20September%202023.pdf>) as recent as September 2023 showed that the Hamas candidate for Prime Minister has a 60 percent support rating in the Palestinian territories. All Israel can do is take out the accumulated military assets of Hamas in order to leave it harmless for the time being.

This means that even after the destruction of Hamas' military capabilities, dormant cells belonging to the Islamist movement will aim to regain control of Gaza and continue the terrorist campaign against Israel that is its *raison d'être*. The struggle against any Western presence will continue indefinitely.

For many Israelis, the war on Hamas confirms their view that it is their destiny to live on their sword. Having a Jewish state requires sacrifice and determination. The murderous attack of Hamas has also elicited the best qualities of Israelis. Outnumbered Israeli soldiers and civilians fought courageously and ingeniously to limit the consequences of the Hamas slaughter. Israelis reported in great numbers to their reserve units, and long lines of young Israelis have gathered at overseas airports, queuing to get a seat to return home as soon as possible to report for combat duty. Volunteers go to the fields to replace farmers called for military duty and take care of the many displaced Israelis who had to leave their residences in the border communities.

Israel will eventually prevail, and by doing so it will also do a great favor to the civilized world—including Taiwan.

The main point: While Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel was undoubtedly devastating, Israel—bolstered by US support—has already launched an effective counterattack. US involvement in these efforts is particularly crucial, as it serves as a deterrent against further authoritarian attacks against democratic states like Taiwan.



(<https://globaltaiwan.org/member/efraim-inbar/>)

Efraim Inbar (<https://globaltaiwan.org/member/efraim-inbar/>)

Prof. Efraim Inbar is president of the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security (JISS) and the head of the program on Strategy, Diplomacy, and Security at Shalem College.

Tags[China \(<https://globaltaiwan.org/tag/china/>\)](https://globaltaiwan.org/tag/china/)[China invasion \(<https://globaltaiwan.org/tag/china-invasion/>\)](https://globaltaiwan.org/tag/china-invasion/)[cross-strait relations \(<https://globaltaiwan.org/tag/cross-strait-relations/>\)](https://globaltaiwan.org/tag/cross-strait-relations/)[Deterrence \(<https://globaltaiwan.org/tag/deterrence/>\)](https://globaltaiwan.org/tag/deterrence/)[Israel-Palestine \(<https://globaltaiwan.org/tag/israel-palestine/>\)](https://globaltaiwan.org/tag/israel-palestine/)[Russia \(<https://globaltaiwan.org/tag/russia/>\)](https://globaltaiwan.org/tag/russia/)[US-Taiwan relations \(<https://globaltaiwan.org/tag/us-taiwan-relations/>\)](https://globaltaiwan.org/tag/us-taiwan-relations/)**You Might Also Be Interested In:**

(<https://globaltaiwan.org/2021/08/fighting-with-the-army-you-have-an-alternate-vision-of-taiwan-defense-reform-and-us-taiwan-security-cooperation-part-2/>)

Fighting with the Army You Have: An Alternate Vision of Taiwan Defense Reform and US-Taiwan Security Cooperation (Part 2) (<https://globaltaiwan.org/2021/08/fighting-with-the-army-you-have-an-alternate-vision-of-taiwan-defense-reform-and-us-taiwan-security-cooperation-part-2/>)

By: Eric Chan

Continue Reading

(<https://globaltaiwan.org/2021/08/fighting-with-the-army-you-have-an-alternate-vision-of-taiwan-defense-reform-and-us-taiwan-security-cooperation-part-2/>)

(<https://globaltaiwan.org/2021/08/fighting-with-the-army-you-have-an-alternate-vision-of-taiwan-defense-reform-and-us-taiwan-security-cooperation-part-2/>)

然台灣人民並未因此民心動盪，也未有民意要求兩岸協商討論，在無民意基礎下至對岸無論理由為何，均容易被有心人士操弄，而失去正當性。

二、合理性：

中共軍演持續進行不停，在可能侵犯中華民國領土之際，依舊運行帶團赴陸僅為關心在陸國人，並無合理說法讓人民支持本黨作為。

三、重要性：

國民黨在面臨八二三砲戰、中美斷交、石油危機等，都成功凝聚台灣人民一同禦敵當下最重要的是應發揮領航精神，著眼在對內完善共識對外為中華民國發聲與尋求協助，渡過此次難關。

(<https://globaltaiwan.org/2022/09/kmt-vice-chairmans-prc-tour-highlights-partys-difficult-balancing-act/>)

vice-chairmans-prc-tour-highlights-partys-difficult-balancing-act/)

KMT Vice Chairman's PRC Tour Highlights Party's Difficult Balancing Act (<https://globaltaiwan.org/2022/09/kmt-vice-chairmans-prc-tour-highlights-partys-difficult-balancing-act/>)

By: Russell Hsiao

Continue Reading (<https://globaltaiwan.org/2022/09/kmt-vice-chairmans-prc-tour-highlights-partys-difficult-balancing-act/>)

(<https://globaltaiwan.org/2022/09/kmt-vice-chairmans-prc-tour-highlights-partys-difficult-balancing-act/>)



Global Taiwan Institute

(<https://globaltaiwan.org/2018/02/a-preliminary-assessment-of-cmc-membership-and-pla-personnel-changes-following-the-19th-ccp-congress/>)

A Preliminary Assessment of CMC membership and PLA personnel changes following the 19th CCP Congress (<https://globaltaiwan.org/2018/02/a-preliminary-assessment-of-cmc-membership-and-pla-personnel-changes-following-the-19th-ccp-congress/>)

By: Ying Yu Lin

Continue Reading (<https://globaltaiwan.org/2018/02/a-preliminary-assessment-of-cmc-membership-and-pla-personnel-changes-following-the-19th-ccp-congress/>)

(<https://globaltaiwan.org/2018/02/a-preliminary-assessment-of-cmc-membership-and-pla-personnel-changes-following-the-19th-ccp-congress/>)

GTI is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to insightful, cutting-edge, and inclusive research

Our vision is to raise awareness, deepen affinity, and create opportunities for strengthening the relationship between Taiwan and the international community

Subscribe to Our Newsletter
(<https://globaltaiwan.org/subscribe/>)

Donate
(<https://globaltaiwan.org/donate/>)



Global Taiwan Institute (<https://globaltaiwan.org>)

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/1836+Jefferson+Pl+NW,+Washington,+D.C.,+DC+20036,+USA/@38.9062568,-77.0452998,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x89b7b7b86e85b43f:0x61db3b80928b77.0431111>

☎ 202-807-1800(tel:%20202-807-1800)

©2025 Global Taiwan Institute. All Rights Reserved.

Privacy Policy(<https://globaltaiwan.org/privacy-policy/>) Website by Pronto(<https://www.prantomarketing.com/>)

f (<https://www.facebook.com/globaltaiwaninst/>) t (<http://twitter.com/globaltaiwan>)
✉ (<mailto:contact@globaltaiwan.org>)