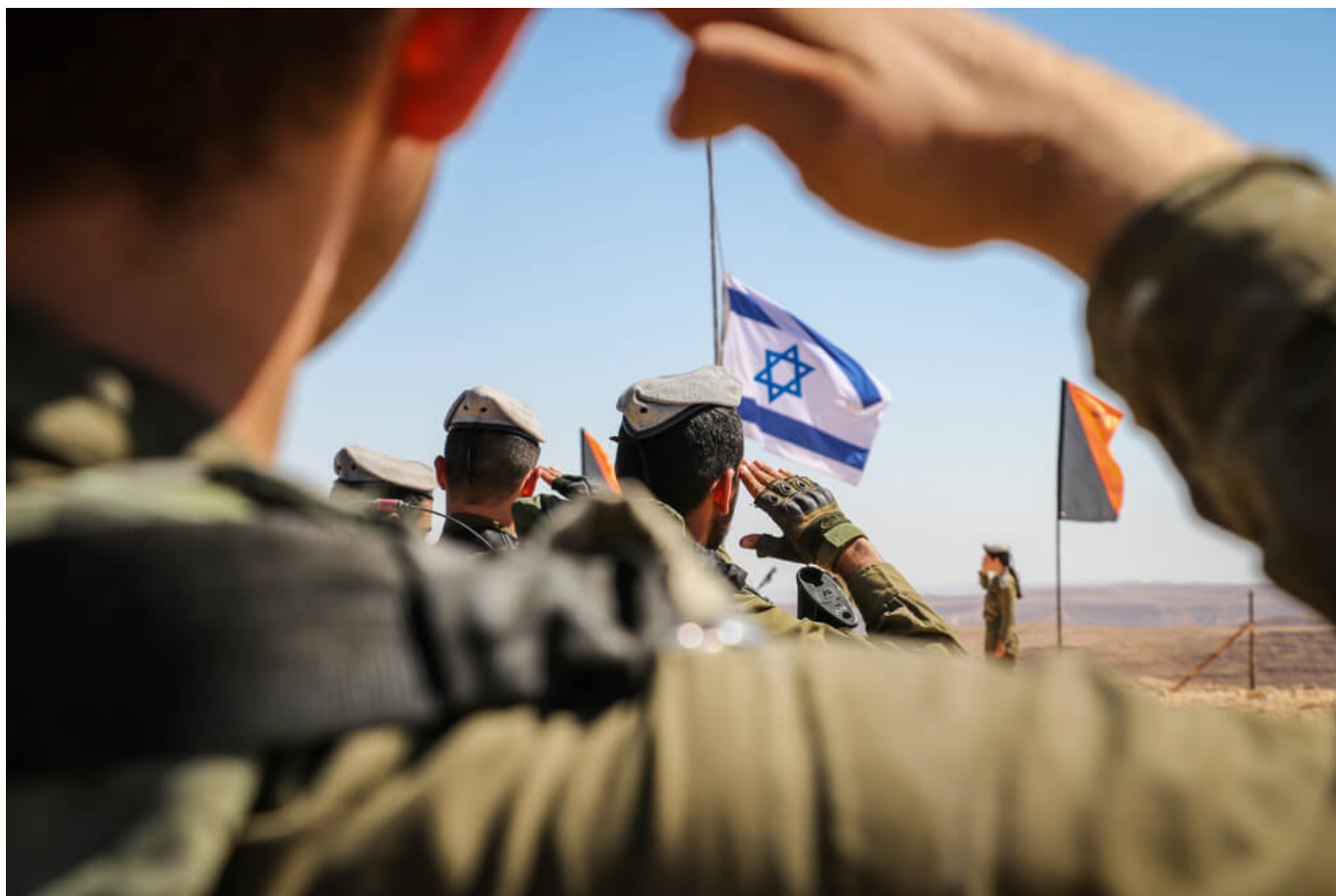




By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

Gaza after Hamas - bypassing the UN - a solution within the circle of Israel, Arab and Western countries



The peace summit in Cairo last Saturday was a fiasco. It showed just how extensive the division is between Arab countries and supporters of Israel over the war in Gaza.

The participants of the summit in Cairo were probably aware that it would not be able to bring about progress towards peace or even provide humanitarian aid to the population of Gaza because of the connection between that issue and a political solution following the conflict.

The summit was premature and served only as another demonstration of Arab solidarity since all leaders from the region condemned the Israeli action in Gaza once again and demanded its end.

If the Cairo summit served any purpose, it allowed for the post-conflict planning of Gaza's and the Palestinians' overall position without Hamas.

The interlocutors in Cairo (leaders from Arab and European countries, the UN and the EU) did not reach any conclusion or joint statement. Given the differences in their view of the conflict, this was not realistic.

However, repetition of previous positions defined that long-term peace measures could only be discussed after a military solution on the ground. The Israeli military objective of destroying Hamas is the only thing that is now on the table as being realistic.

It is time for post-conflict plans

Even though some Israeli officials said they were focused only on the success of the military operation and that a post-conflict framework for Gaza would be considered later, Dennis Ross, Middle East envoy to several US

administrations, said "The time to be thinking about the day after is not when you get there."

Israel and the Palestinians, and their Arab friends and neighbours, are thinking about the day after, even though this was not explicitly stated at the Cairo summit.

The opposition of Jordan and Egypt to admitting Palestinian refugees from Gaza, which they repeated at the summit in Cairo, reflected their concerns about extremists moving from Gaza to their territory.

But it was, above all, their position on the future solution for the status of the Palestinians. They do not want Palestinians to leave the territories where they currently live.

Israel's potential position for the period that would come after the military operation, which they believe will be successful and remove Hamas from Gaza, has started to emerge.

Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said before the parliamentary committee last Friday that the long-term goal of the military campaign in Gaza is to sever all links with the territory.

Describing it as the third phase of the military operation, the minister said Israel will end its "responsibility for life in the Gaza Strip".

This means there will be no return to the regime that ruled Gaza from 2005 until the terrorist attacks on Israel 3 weeks ago. Israel withdrew from Gaza under that regime, but was responsible for providing basic needs for the residents.

How to prevent the return of

extremism?

Due to the brutal terrorist actions on October 7, Hamas lost all credibility as a potential peace factor. Israel's goal of Gaza being without Hamas constitutes an implicit approval of development for the neighbouring Arab countries.

The question is how to avoid a security vacuum and some new extremist movements within the Palestinian population.

"After the destruction of Hamas, we have no desire to control 2 million Palestinians in Gaza, but we have an obligation to ensure that a catastrophe like the 7th of October never happens again," Amos Yadlin, former Israeli military intelligence chief, told Politico.

He is not the only one who believes the future administration in Gaza would be under "an Arab mandate - perhaps a consortium of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE".

Some similar proposals regard this kind of post-conflict administration as a temporary solution, which would introduce Gaza into the democratic declaration of its inhabitants on local governance.

This would represent a path leading back to Gaza being governed by the Palestinian Authority, as it was until 2007 when Hamas overthrew it.

Uncertain return of the PA to Gaza

The Arab neighbours could support such a solution, because it would pacify the Gaza Strip and restore the administration with international legitimacy and, above all, preserve the Palestinians as a factor that would participate in shaping the long-term position of their community.

But the population would not approve of the PA returning to Gaza because they do not trust it and regard it as corrupt and dysfunctional, burdened by internal conflicts over power. In addition, the PA would be considered an Israeli puppet, which returned to Gaza with the help of its tanks.

The option of establishing an international mission in Gaza under the mandate of the UN, even though it is often in circulation, still has many more disadvantages than advantages.

In conflicts like the one in Gaza, the UN is the first diplomatic choice, given the historic role of the World Organisation in establishing and maintaining peace in crisis hotspots.

However, over time, the UN lost that ability. It is currently almost impossible to decide on a possible mission in Gaza due to the blockade in decision-making coming from Russia.

The UN could not be part of the solution

Two-thirds of the UN members condemned Russian aggression against Ukraine, and it was accused of gravely violating the UN Charter. Regarding the crisis in the Middle East, Russia

is essentially not inclined to a peaceful resolution. It wants the conflict to spill over or, at least, remain frozen until a new escalation.

process of defining the position of Palestine.

At the same time, Israel, in addition to Russia because of its pro-Hamas attitude, also created animosity towards the UN as a difficult-to-accept mediator after the statement of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that the attack by Hamas "did not happen in a vacuum", which is why Israel requested his resignation.

Professor Steven Simon from the University of Washington advocates a transition after the end of the Israeli intervention in several steps, starting with the Contact Group (Arab neighbours, the US, and the EU) and ending with a UN mission that would ensure peace stabilisation, reconstruction and the preparation of democratic elections.

But even this series of moves has its backbone in UN decisions, which Professor Simon said were uncertain because of the positions of Russia and partly of China.

The only space with the potential for an effective post-conflict transition of Gaza and the West Bank is the forum of regional actors (Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and the UAE) with Western partners (US, EU, and the UK).

This circle could reach decisions that would satisfy both blocs, including the Palestinians, at summits like the recent one in Cairo or a similar international conference, with the active role of all political actors in Israel, not only its government.

Their mandate for long-term decisions stems from their strategic interest in the stabilisation of the region, which could not be found within the UN, but also from their role as principal actors that would participate in the reconstruction of Gaza, providing security guarantees to Israel and continuing the