

Israel's effort to reshape West Asia

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Context: Israel is currently in conflict with Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran. Lasting peace in the region depends on addressing the Palestinian issue.

Jake Sullivan's 2023 Assessment of the Middle East:

- In October 2023, U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan described the Middle East as more stable than it had been in decades, despite tensions, especially in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, days later, Hamas launched a large-scale attack on Israel, killing 1,200 people and taking 250 hostages, reigniting the conflict.

Why Israel Believed It Had a New Status Quo:

- Israel thought it had established a new norm where it could occupy Palestinian territories without major consequences. Meanwhile, Arab nations like Saudi Arabia and the UAE were moving toward normalizing relations with Israel, as seen in the 2020 Abraham Accords.
- The U.S. also encouraged stronger ties between Israel and Sunni Arab states to isolate Iran.

How the Status Quo Changed:

- Hamas's October 2023 attack shattered Israel's belief in the status quo, triggering a broader conflict and showing that peace in West Asia is impossible without addressing the Palestinian issue.
- Israel responded with heavy military actions in Gaza, killing over 41,000 Palestinians and displacing most of Gaza's population.

Israel's Three-Tier Strategy:

1. Destroy Hamas in Gaza and rescue hostages.
2. Push Hezbollah back from Israel's northern border.
3. Weaken Iran, which Israel sees as the root of regional instability.

Iran's Role:

- Iran backs groups like Hezbollah and Hamas, making it a central player in the conflict.
- Despite Israeli strikes, Iran's support for its allies remains strong, and further escalation could lead to a direct confrontation, especially over Iran's nuclear policy.

What's Needed for Stability in West Asia:

- Address the Palestinian issue, as lasting peace in the region depends on resolving this

conflict.

- A ceasefire in Gaza is essential to de-escalate and pave the way for long-term peace.

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