

Escalation Barometer (November 2025)

Weekly Update (17-23 November 2025)

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24 November 2025

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Hot Spots	Russia – NATO (1)	Ukraine-Russia (2)	Syria (3)	Yemen – Houthis (4)
Key Trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NATO SG Rutte reiterated NATO's support for UKR until a long-lasting peace, calling the war a strategic failure for Putin due to FIN/SWE accession. He also warned of RUS's five-year timeline for NATO attack readiness. NATO released footage about recent exercises in which a NATO submarine fired a torpedo during an exercise that sank a target frigate, showcasing preparedness of anti-submarine capability. From 17–23 November NATO fighter jets conducted 36 sorties including low-altitude flights over EST from as part of demonstrations of strength to deter RUS incursions. ROM and POL scrambled (Nov 19) fighter jets after drone breach during RUS strike on UKR. Explosions damaged key rail lines in POL (Lublin-Warsaw and Warsaw-Rzeszów) used for UKR aid deliveries, which POL attributed to RUS "state terrorism." NATO announced the establishment of a Forward Land Force in FIN, alongside SWE, to reinforce deterrence on the eastern flank. LIT FM Budrys said that the Arctic remains a key strategic area for RUS, adding that Moscow's activities there pose a direct threat to NATO infrastructure and the security of its allies. NATO initiated the planning and logistics phase for its largest military exercise since the Cold War, <i>Steadfast Defender 2026</i>, involving over 40,000 troops. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RUS forces continued advances in Donetsk Oblast, particularly around Pokrovsk, where they consolidated gains and pressured UKR defenses toward encirclement. UKR deep strikes and RUS drones barrages continued to critical infrastructure, testing resilience of each other. UKR signed a major defense procurement deal with FRA to purchase up to 100 Rafale fighter jets, eight air defense systems, radar systems, munitions and drones over the next ten years. The U.S. circulated a 28-point peace plan for UKR that would require UKR to cede territory, reduce its armed forces and limit long-range weapons Kyiv and Western capitals publicly expressed deep reservations. U.K., FRA and GER rapidly drafted a counter-proposal that amends many U.S. draft provisions. UKR Pres. Zelenskyy described the plan as forcing a "difficult choice between dignity and U.S. support," warning of risks to Kyiv's freedom. UKR, U.S., and EU delegations met in Switzerland, with Zelenskyy noting "constructive" elements aligned with UKR interests but emphasizing the need to end bloodshed. Putin (Nov 21) visited a Western Command post and reaffirmed that RUS forces will continue efforts to seize the remainder of the Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson Oblasts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IMF staff completed (Nov 17) a Damascus visit and publicly reported "signs of recovery," noting improved consumer and investor sentiment and plans for intensified technical engagement on budget and banking reforms. FM Asaad al-Shaibani met PRC counterpart Wang Yi in Beijing, pledging adherence to the "One China" principle and assuring no SYR territory would harm Chinese interests, including against Uyghur militants. China signaled interest in reconstruction participation, prioritizing counterterrorism. The Central Bank removed (Nov 18) two zeros from the lira for easier transactions. SWIFT reconnection resumed after 14 years, aiding international finance. ISR PM Netanyahu toured IDF positions in southern SYUR (Mount Hermon, Golan buffer), condemned by Damascus as a "violation of sovereignty." Clashes were reported (Nov 18) between the SDF and STG units in eastern SYR involving the SDF killing two soldiers and shooting down government-operated drones. Officials identified 60+ mass graves nationwide, with new finds ongoing (e.g., Najha near Damascus) as part of war crimes probes. ISR forces raided (Nov 22) SYR's Quneitra countryside with military vehicles and tanks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UAE-backed Yemeni Coast Guard (YCG) intercepted multiple dhows carrying IRN arms (drones, missiles) via Somalia, detaining Houthi operatives. Yemeni Network for Rights and Freedoms exposed Houthi use of fabricated female social media profiles for propaganda, including smear campaigns; accounts vanished post-update, confirming state orchestration from Sana'a. Heavy fighting reported late November 22 in al-Khub wa al-Sha'af district as Houthis advanced on Yemeni army positions; artillery exchanges reported, no casualty figures. On November 23, a Houthi criminal court in Sana'a sentenced 17 people to death on charges of spying for foreign governments including the U.S., ISR and SAU.
What to Monitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The tone, elements, and scope of rhetoric (whether pointing out towards peace or prolongation of war), NATO's military posturing, inc. along the eastern flank, arms transfers and inflicted outcomes, and RUS reactions The level of solidarity among NATO and within Europe, The nature of the transatlantic divide and its reflections Consolidation of RUS's relations with IRN and CHN, RUS's steps to increase its geopolitical and military posturing Resilience of NATO and RUS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Military situation on the ground, frontline dynamics RUS reactions and follow-up actions over the NATO backing The illicit weapon (mines and chemical) use, including its effects on civilian casualties and resistance capability. The introduction, delivery, and impact points of sophisticated weapons to build deterrence, along with the European countries' stance to provide forces for a possible ceasefire implementation Peace talks on the war in Ukraine Resilience of RUS and UKR to continue the War 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International engagement and recognition of the STG, The US positioning with regards to PKK/YPG and the level of support, and the future of PKK/YPG in Syria, after the call The level of consolidation of STG and its public approval from different sects and ethnic groups ISR threat perception from STG actions and developments in SYR, as ISR retains disruptive instruments DAESH's attempts to capitalize and the STG's ability to repel The future of Iranian and Russian presence and influence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The effectiveness of Houthi Strikes in ISR, Movements and actions of the Western task groups, IDF's effectiveness to eliminate the leadership and degrade Houthis Acquisition of hypersonic missiles and mil.support The quest for deterrence building over each other Maritime security, restoration of the Red Sea maritime traffic, SA and UAE's posturing against the developments in Yemen
What to Expect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NATO's commitment to 5% spending and expanded logistics indicates a sustained and deepening strategic competition with Russia (<i>likely</i>). An outright kinetic conflict between NATO and Russia remains <i>unlikely</i>. However, smaller airspace incidents or military standoffs <i>likely</i> may rise, risking escalation out of miscalculation. NATO's industrial acceleration may <i>likely</i> prompt counter-responses in Russian defence planning, potentially including accelerated production or deployment announcements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The outcomes of the deep strikes in RUS <i>will highly likely</i> test the resilience of RUS. The impact of the imposed sanctions <i>will likely</i> increase as the US is pressing for sanction enforcement, with direct impact on resilience. <i>Likely</i> continuation of massive drone/missile barrages by RUS, with retaliatory UKR deep strikes into RUS, targeting resilience. Return to diplomatic negotiations <i>will highly likely</i> be determined with decreasing RUS resilience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The future of PKK/YPG/SDF <i>will highly likely</i> be the critical indicator of a unified SYR, though the debates over the scope of integration are still unfolding. ISR <i>will likely</i> leverage the occupied territories to trade-off its support to the PKK/YPG/SDF. ISR <i>likely</i> prefers a fragmented, instable, and weak SYR to actualize its interests and keep its freedom of action in SYR. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The killing of a senior Houthi civilian/military leadership tier <i>will highly likely</i> end up with a near-term surge in Houthi attacks (maritime strikes, missile/drone launches), both as retaliation and as signaling to domestic and regional audiences. After the intensified airstrikes, the Houthis' capability and capacity to conduct large scale attacks have <i>likely</i> been degraded, curbing the ability to respond escalation with escalation. The attacks on the ships enroute to ISR ports <i>will highly likely</i> resume if the Gaza ceasefire fails.

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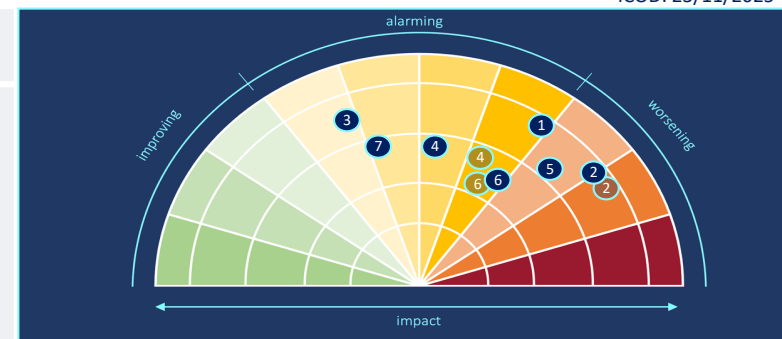
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Hot Spots	Israel – Palestine (5)	Israel – Lebanon (6)	Israel – Iran (7)
Key Trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNSC authorized (Nov 17) stabilization force for Gaza adopting a resolution, envisioning a pathway to Palestinian statehood, establishing an international stabilization presence and provisions for a trained, vetted Palestinian police force and mechanisms to secure aid deliveries and border areas. The resolution emphasized coordination with EGY and ISR. Hamas rejected “foreign guardianship,” while ISR far-right figures decried the statehood clause as a betrayal. ISR airstrikes killed 56 in Gaza City, Rafah, and Khan Younis. The Gaza Health Ministry reported 113 shootings at civilians, 17 raids beyond safe zones, 174 bombings, and 85 demolitions since October 10. In West Bank, UN and humanitarian monitors recorded a surge in settler attacks, property seizures and home demolitions tied to clearance/annexation pressures. Pope Leo XIV met PA President Mahmoud Abbas, stressing Gaza aid and a two-state solution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDF stepped up strikes on southern LBN targets described as Hezbollah infrastructure or operatives, with civilian casualties in some raids. Hezbollah publicly condemned ISR strikes and warned of consequences, but showed limited retaliatory rocket or missile barrages compared with full-scale exchanges in earlier phases of the conflict. LAF Com.Haykal proposed suspending disarmament if attacks persist. OHCHR verified 108 civilian casualties (71 men, 21 women, 16 children) from post-ceasefire strikes, urging investigations. Ahead of the ceasefire’s one-year mark, Pres. Aoun signaled direct ISR talks, while U.S. envoy Barrack called withdrawal the “next step” post-LAF disarmament progress (10,000+ rockets seized). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reportedly, IRN continues denying IAEA access to June-struck sites like Natanz and Mount Kolang Gaz La, complicating damage assessments. IAEA Director Grossi urged immediate inspections, noting no report on enriched uranium stockpiles. The E3 (UK, FRA, GER) passed a resolution demanding IAEA access highlighting IRN’s non-cooperation. ISR media reported Hezbollah smuggling “hundreds” of IRN rockets via SYR, prompting IDF alerts to the U.S. Reportedly, Hezbollah trains new recruits with IRN weapons. LAF criticized for “cooperation” in smuggling. IRN Intelligence Ministry warned of U.S.-ISR plots to assassinate Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. IRN reportedly asked Saudi Crown Prince MbS to influence Trump for nuclear talks revival, fearing renewed war. Tehran seeks sanctions relief without curbing missiles/proxies.
What to Monitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The talks on/implementation of ceasefire IDF Operations in Gaza TRUMP’s positioning on ISR-Palestine Debates over the success of IDF in Gaza Domestic and International pressures on Netanyahu government, including the implementation of ICJ Arrest Warrant HAMAS’ effectiveness, casualty infliction, and ability to conduct coordinated attacks Intensity of IDF operations in West Bank 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disarmament of non-state actors in southern Lebanon and possible related internal unrest HEZBOLLAH efforts to restore its fighting capacity Restoration of supply lines from IRN The implementation of the ceasefire agreement IDF ineffectiveness against Houthis (encouraging factor to resume fighting) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ISR/US acts of escalation/de-escalation Diplomatic negotiations Regionalization and globalization of the conflict Potential IRN strategic escalation Unintended and unprecedented repercussions The pace and scope of internal tensions IRN and ISR consolidation of alliances and mil posturing Posturing of the Arab States Rhetorical escalation
What to Expect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The US will <i>almost certainly</i> continue support ISR, though the US is not willing to be distracted from other global priorities due to the heavy involvement in the ME. Israel will <i>highly likely</i> seek pretexts to resume its attacks in Gaza, while will focus on West Bank during the ceasefire. The Israel actions/operations in West Bank will <i>highly likely</i> intensify. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LBN government will <i>likely</i> continue the disarmament of the Hezbollah, however ISR’s continued attacks will hamper the LBN government efforts, legitimizing Hezbollah. ISR will <i>highly likely</i> continue its strikes to prevent the restoration of HEZBOLLAH supply lines. Resumption of fights between ISR and HEZBOLLAH is <i>plausible</i> unless ISR completely withdraws from LBN. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The US will <i>likely</i> continue its efforts to find a negotiated solution to IRN after the ceasefire. Out of the airstrikes, IRN nuclear program <i>highly likely</i> could not be destroyed but delayed 1-3 years. IRN will <i>likely</i> seek recognition of its nuclear enrichment activities Due to the ISR/US strikes, the IRN society has consolidated itself leaving lesser room for a regime change in the near term (<i>unlikely</i>).



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Assessment:

- Overall, the de-escalation trajectory with the Gaza ceasefire remained alive but fragile due to Israel’s violations, as it is seeking pretexts for renewed aggression. However, due to the international pressure the relative calm prevails.
- In Palestine, the adoption of UN Resolution 2803 and the Brussels donor-governance meeting indicate a shift from kinetic conflict toward institutional reconstruction and governance in Gaza. That means the Israel-Palestine dynamic is entering a phase where diplomacy, governance, and reconstruction might define the next 12-24 months rather than only fighting. However, the continuation of strikes and ceasefire violations by Israel in Gaza and the surge of settler violence in the West Bank show latent instability remains high.
- The Russia–NATO relations are likely to remain tense. Military posturing increases the likelihood of escalation though an outright kinetic confrontation between NATO and Russia remains unlikely. Mutual military posturing along the Russia-NATO borders will highly likely bears the risk of miscalculation.
- In Ukraine, the return to diplomacy with the US plan has increased hopes for a negotiated resolution, though European and the US perspectives keep substantial differences. The pressures on resilience pushed parties to restart the negotiation, while neither side shows flexibility in its respective position to reach a compromise. The battlefield success and resilience remain central in determining the future trajectory of the conflict.
- Syria remains at a critical juncture. Israel’s possible restraint from prolixification (Druzes and PKK/YPG/SDF) will almost certainly increase the possibility of success, ensuring the territorial integrity of Syria.
- Israel’s renewed escalation in Gaza will highly likely trigger a renewed escalation against Israel from different proxies. Despite Israel has succeeded in degrading them, none has been eliminated and they still retain capability to resume attacks. In case of renewal, the proxies will likely resume attacks in a coordinated manner, forcing Israel to fight along multiple fronts and aiming to paralyze Israel. The US, being aware of the associated risks, will likely pressure Israel to act with restraint.
- Iran will highly likely continue to its low-profile posture and openness to diplomatic negotiations, which are considered as the venues to advance its negotiation position on nuclear enrichment and sanction reliefs. However, further pressures, renewed sanctions, and military actions will highly likely backfire, narrowing down the diplomatic window.