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## THE DARK SIDE OF INTRACTABLE CONFLICTS: UNVEILING THE CAUSES AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE ISRAEL – HAMAS WAR

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### Abstract

The long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the foundation of the Israel-Hamas War. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict began toward the end of the 1800s. Israelis and Palestinians created separate movements to protect their own interests as they fought for sovereignty over the region and the right to self-determination. Israel's independence in 1948 expanded its control resulting to large displacement of Palestinians which was considered as “Nakba,” or “catastrophe” in the Arab World. This study attempts to explore the current Israeli-Hamas war and its causes and implications. The escalation theory was used as the theoretical underpinning. The study was based on a documentary research design. Findings showed that Hamas's perception of “Israeli excesses” was what set off the current Israeli-Hamas conflict. The implications of the conflict were identified to include economic upheavals, the potential of contagion, increased political polarization, novel strategic challenges, and the evolving character of warfare as a result of aggressive non-state players. The study recommends the adoption of a two-state solution as the most trenchant resolution of the Israeli-Hamas war.

### Key words

conflict, internal displacement, military, terrorism, two-state solution.

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### 1. Introduction

The long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the foundation of the Israel-Hamas War. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict began toward the end of the 1800s. The Partition Plan, or Resolution 181, was adopted by the UN in 1947 with the intention of dividing the British Mandate of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states. With the establishment of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, the first Arab-Israeli War began. Israel won the war in 1949, but 750,000 Palestinians were forced to flee their homes, and the

land was split into three states: the Gaza Strip, the West Bank (across the Jordan River), and the State of Israel (Council on Foreign Relations [CFR], 2024).

Tensions in the area increased during the ensuing years, especially between Israel and Jordan, Syria, and Egypt. Egypt, Jordan, and Syria inked mutual defense agreements after Israel had invaded the Sinai Peninsula and after the Suez Crisis in 1956, raising the possibility of an Israeli force mobilization. Israel launched a preemptive strike on the air forces of Egypt and Syria in June 1967, sparking the Six-Day War, in response to a series of maneuvers carried out

by Egyptian President Abdel Gamal Nasser. Following the conflict, Israel annexed territory from Syria, Jordan, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip (CFR, 2024; International Crisis Group [ICG], 2021; Westfall et al., 2023).

Six years later, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise two-front attack on Israel in what is known as the Yom Kippur War, also known as the October War, to reclaim their lost territory. Although neither country gained much from the conflict, Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat declared it a victory for Egypt because it gave the two countries an opportunity to negotiate over previously ceded territory. After several cease-fires and peace talks, the thirty-year battle between Egypt and Israel was finally resolved in 1979 when representatives from both countries signed the Camp David Accords (CFR, 2024; Westfall et al., 2023).

Although the Camp David Accords led to better ties between Israel and its neighbors, there was still no agreement on the issue of Palestinian self-determination and self-governance. The first intifada began in 1987 when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians residing in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip rebelled against the Israeli authorities. The Oslo I Accords of 1993 served as a mediator in the conflict, allowing the Palestinian Authority to be recognized by Israel's government and providing a framework for Palestinian self-governance in the West Bank and Gaza. The Oslo II Accords, which were signed in 1995, included clauses to the original accord requiring Israel to completely evacuate six cities and 450 towns in the West Bank (CFR, 2024; Westfall et al., 2023).

Palestinians began the second intifada in 2000, which would last until 2005. It was partly instigated by Palestinian complaints about Israel's control over the West Bank, a stalled peace process, and former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit to the al-Aqsa mosque – the third holiest site in Islam – in September 2000. In response, the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice opposed the Israeli government's 2002 approval of the building of a barrier wall surrounding the West Bank (CFR, 2024).

Palestinian factionalism erupted in 2006 after Hamas ousted the long-standing dominant party, Fatah, in the legislative elections held by the Palestinian Authority. This gave the militant and political Hamas movement, which draws its inspiration from the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, authority over the Gaza Strip. There was bloodshed between Hamas and Fatah when Hamas took control. An agreement to reconcile was reached between 2006 and 2011, following a string of fruitless peace negotiations and violent clashes. Hamas and Fatah formed a unity government in 2014 (CFR, 2024).

A military conflict between the Israeli military and Hamas occurred in the summer of 2014 as a result of hostilities in the Palestinian territories. Hamas fired about three thousand rockets toward Israel, and Israel responded with a large offensive in Gaza. After 2,251 Palestinians and 73 Israelis were murdered, the conflict came to an end in late August 2014 when Egypt mediated a cease-fire. Following a wave of violence in 2015 between Israelis and Palestinians, Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah – the Palestinian President – declared that the Oslo Accords' territorial divisions would no longer apply to the Palestinian people (CFR, 2024; ICG, 2021).

Following some Palestinians' storming of the perimeter fence separating Israel and the Gaza Strip and their throwing of rocks during an otherwise peaceful march, Israeli soldiers killed 183 Palestinians and injured 6,000 others in March 2018. During a twenty-four-hour flare-up, Israel retaliated to over one hundred rockets fired by Hamas terrorists into Israel, within months. Israel hit over fifty targets in Gaza. A return to division between Fatah and Hamas was the outcome of the hostile political climate; Hamas de facto ruled the Gaza Strip, while Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party controlled the Palestinian Authority from the West Bank (CFR, 2024).

## 2. Review of related literature

### 2.1. Conceptual clarification

#### 2.1.1. Hamas

The Islamic Resistance Movement is known by its Arabic acronym, Hamas. It was established in 1987 amid the initial revolt of Palestinians against Israeli occupation, known as the intifada. It was a branch of the Islamist religious, social, and political movement known as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. It started off as a popular movement among Palestinians by creating a network of charitable organizations that tackle poverty, health issues, and educational needs. It later became well-known for a series of attacks on Israelis, including suicide bombers. A survey done in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in late November and early December indicated that the war had improved Hamas's popularity (Beyer, 2023; Voice of America [VOA] Middle East, 2023).

#### 2.1.2. The Gaza Strip

Enclosed between Israel, Egypt, and the Mediterranean Sea, the Gaza Strip is home to 2.2 million Palestinians, most of whom are considered refugees, who live in

cramped and destitute circumstances. Under the Oslo peace agreements, which Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) signed, Gaza was ruled by the Palestinian Authority for around ten years. The Authority was tasked with granting limited Palestinian self-rule. Israel pulled its forces out of Gaza and closed its settlements there in 2005. The next year, Hamas won the Palestinian legislative elections over Fatah, which controls the Palestinian Authority. In 2007, following months of hostilities between the two factions, Hamas seized authority over Gaza (Beyer, 2023).

### **2.1.3. The West Bank**

Presently home to 3.2 million Palestinians, the West Bank is a landlocked region situated west of the Jordan River. Approximately 500,000 Jewish Israelis reside there as well, in so-called settlements that were built following the occupation. Israeli security forces are also still stationed in the West Bank, unlike in Gaza. According to some Israelis, Israel ought to annex the West Bank since it was a part of the ancient Jewish homeland and is known by its biblical name, Judea and Samaria. According to the terms of the Oslo Accords, Israel maintains comprehensive sovereignty over the West Bank while the Palestinian Authority enjoys certain autonomy. Until the two parties worked out a final status agreement, these terms were only intended to set up temporary measures. The final status agreement was widely presumed to mean a so-called 'two-state solution', entailing the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel (Beyer, 2023).

## **2.2. Examining the root cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

Before the British were awarded dominion over the majority of the region following World War I, the Ottoman Empire had ruled that portion of the Middle East since the early 16th century. Israelis and Palestinians created separate movements to further their own interests as they fought for sovereignty over the region and the right to self-determination. The Great Powers made a number of contentious diplomatic attempts, some of which contradicted one another, to redraw the boundaries of the contemporary Middle East, including the Palestinian lands, as World War I got underway.

The McMahon-Hussein Correspondence, a correspondence between the emir of Mecca and the British high commissioner in Egypt from 1915 to 1916, is cited by Palestinians as a guarantee of an

independent Arab state (Beauchamp, 2023; Westfall et al., 2023).

In 1916, the Sykes-Picot Agreement secretly negotiated between Britain and France planned to carve up the Middle East into spheres of influence and determined that the land in question was to be internationalized. In 1917, Britain's foreign secretary, Lord Arthur Balfour, expressed his government's support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people" in a letter to Baron Walter Rothschild, the head of the British wing of the influential European Jewish banking family. To Israelis, the missive marks a formal utterance of the Israeli state's right to exist; while to Palestinians, it was an early sign of their dispossession.

A reference to the predominately Arab population of the area at the time – roughly 90% of people were Muslims in 1850 and 80% in 1914 – the proclamation also stated that it was "clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine" (Beauchamp, 2023; Sharma, 2022; Westfall et al., 2023).

In the decades that followed, Jewish immigration significantly increased, especially during the Holocaust and the persecution by the Nazis. In the Post-World War II period, both parties persisted in claiming their right to form a state. In 1947, as the British Mandate for Palestine came to an end, the UN General Assembly issued Resolution 181, calling for the division of the region into two sovereign states: an Arab state and a Jewish state. Jerusalem, a holy city, was to come under special international management. The Arab side opposed the plan, claiming it would not benefit their majority population, and it was never carried out. As a result, the level of violence in the regional conflict increased (Beauchamp, 2023; Sharma, 2022; Westfall et al., 2023).

In May 1948, Israel was proclaimed to be an independent nation. As a result, in what turned out to be the first of multiple Arab-Israeli conflicts, a coalition of Arab powers joined forces with Palestinian factions to attack Israeli soldiers. Ultimately, Israel took possession of an even greater region, excluding the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which were kept by Jordan and Egypt, respectively. This sphere of influence persisted till 1967 (Sharma, 2022).

But in what Palestinians called the "Nakba," or "catastrophe" in Arabic, an estimated 700,000 Palestinians were forced to flee or were driven from their land (Beauchamp, 2023; Westfall et al., 2023). The Israeli-Palestinian conflict entered a new phase with this displacement.

### 3. Theoretical framework

The escalation theory was adopted as the theoretical underpinning of the study. Proponents of the theory include Schelling (1960; 1966), Kahn (1965), Young (1968) and Snyder (1972). Advocates assert that states employ escalation as a tactic in negotiations. One or both parties start the negotiation process in order to settle differences of opinion over certain contentious matters. In order to start the bargaining process, actors present their ideas for a negotiated resolution, which the other participant has the option to accept or reject. Actors obtain the advantage they identify with the suggested outcome if one party agrees to the parameters of the agreement. The negotiation process continues if the offer is turned down, and neither party gains anything until one of the parties gives in to a demand. Giving the opposition a reason to compromise is the issue that both actors must deal with. In order to incentivize the opponent to desist from rejecting demands, actors can make it expensive for them to do so (Carlson, 1995; Carroll, 1983; Cross, 1969; Morgan, 1990). Actors can make bargaining expensive by using escalation as one strategy.

Escalation comes at a cost to both parties. For example, the receiving state bears the expense of reconstructing industrial hubs and similar infrastructure, while the escalating state bears the burden of using resources and endangering lives. When one of the parties chooses to escalate, the benefits of a negotiated resolution diminish for both parties. Players are more inclined to accede to their opponent's demand when the expense of a dispute (or the amount of a settlement) rises. An actor concedes if the cost of sustaining further escalation will outweigh the benefits of giving in to the opponent (Carlson, 1995). Thus, as Schelling (1966) points out, escalation is the coercive side of negotiation in which the prospect of even larger cost imposition encourages governments to capitulate.

The players' cost tolerance is the highest level of cost escalation they are willing to accept in order to meet a demand. How much the actors are willing to pay for a role depends on how important they believe the subject to be. Players should be prepared to incur higher expenses in order to obtain the opponent's concession if they believe the matter at hand is more important than any other issue that may come up. On the other hand, when the matter at hand is thought to be significantly less important, players will accept paying less to meet a need. According to Carlson (1995), players will only keep negotiating if they think their opponent has a lower cost tolerance than they do.

### 4. Research methodology

A documentary research design was used for the study. In documentary research design, a research question is investigated by utilizing pre-existing materials as primary sources of information. It is a technique that can be applied in a variety of contexts and can be qualitative, quantitative, or mixed (Ahmed, 2010; Mogalakwe, 2006). This study is, however, based on qualitative documentary research design. Data for the study was derived from publications of institutions such as the Council of Foreign Relations, Congressional Research Service, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, International Bar Association, Brookings Institution, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, as well as various internet media sources.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis. Content analysis is a research technique for identifying the existence of specific words, themes, or concepts in a given qualitative data set (i.e., text). It entails analyzing data in a methodical and structured manner to guarantee dependability and replication. Researchers can measure and examine the frequency, significance, and connections of specific words, themes, or concepts by using content analysis. It enables researchers to assess an article's content in order to look for prejudicial views or partiality. They can then draw conclusions about the text's substance, the author or authors, the readership, and even the culture and historical context (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Harwood, Garry, 2003).

### 5. Discussions and findings

#### 5.1. The recent Israel-Hamas war

On October 7, 2023, Israel was the target of many unexpected strikes by the Palestinian Sunni Islamist organization, Hamas, a Foreign Terrorist Organization [FTO] proscribed by the United States. Hamas launched these attacks from the Gaza Strip. Other FTOs, such as Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ), asserted that their men took part in the attacks. There was also possible participation from other militants not affiliated with PIJ or Hamas. The attack occurred on the last Jewish high holiday, focusing on Israeli military installations and residential areas. In the sixteen years since Hamas took over Gaza, the scope and ferocity of the October 7 strikes were unprecedented. Many people, including Israelis, were shocked by the nature of the violence, which included claims of sexual assault (Shaath, Owda, 2023; Verbruggen, 2023; Zanotti, Sharp, 2024).



There are discussions and debates in Israel and elsewhere on the apparent operational and intelligence shortcomings in stopping the attack or lessening its effects. According to some observers, Israel might have misinterpreted Hamas's goals, overlooked clues, or depended too much on technology (Bergman, Goldman, 2023; Center for Strategic & International Studies [CSIS], 2023). It is still unclear if Iran was involved in the attack. Iran is claimed to give material support to Hamas and may be broadly complicit, according to U.S. sources; however, President Joe Biden stated in October that "there is no evidence" to substantiate Iran's role in the attack (Pelley, 2023).

Following the attacks, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu formed an emergency unity government with an opposition party, and the Israeli cabinet declared war on Hamas. At first, Israel also stopped supplying food, fuel, and electricity to Gaza from Israeli territory. Since the start of the conflict, Israel and Egypt have coordinated the use of Egypt's Rafah crossing with Gaza and later Israel's Kerem Shalom crossing in an effort to prevent Hamas from diverting aid from abroad (Zanotti, Sharp, 2024). This coordination has been done through consultation with U.S. and U.N. officials.

Thousands of troops were recruited by the Israeli military, which also conducted ground operations in addition to aerial bombardment of Gazan targets. Of Gaza's estimated 2.1 million residents, about 1.7 million have been forced from their homes (some more than once), and the majority are dealing with serious humanitarian issues. Throughout the fighting, terrorists based in Gaza, including Hamas, have fired rockets into Israel without targeting anything specific. In an effort to target Hamas and its top commanders, including those who operate inside the organization's extensive network of tunnels, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) seized control of certain above-ground regions in northern Gaza at the beginning of February (Zanotti, Sharp, 2024).

As of February 5, 2024, over 27,000 Palestinians and over 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals—including 35 American citizens living in Israel—had reportedly died in Gaza, and over 60% of the city's housing units had been damaged or destroyed (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [UN-OCHA], 2024). On October 7, over 240 Israeli and foreign hostages, including several Americans, were purportedly taken by Hamas and other factions. The release of hostages has been a top priority for both the US and Israel. In the last week of November, Israel and Hamas agreed to a multiday ceasefire, which was made possible by Qatar, Egypt, and the United States. During the pause, 250 Palestinian inmates detained

by Israel and 110 hostages held in Gaza – including two dual citizens of the United States and Israel – were freed (Banco, 2023). It is alleged that over 130 people, including six Americans, are still being held captive in Gaza by Hamas and other organizations; however, some of these hostages may have since died in such precarious conditions (Zanotti, Sharp, 2024).

It has been claimed that a humanitarian disaster arises from the Israeli-Hamas conflict. Several public health problems related to overcrowding, severe shortages of food, fuel, and water, inadequate sanitation, and issues with hospitals' safety and functionality were brought up by the U.N. and the World Health Organization experts as early as February (UN-OCHA, 2024). Observers argue about who is to blame for the deterioration of the already terrible humanitarian situation in Gaza and the risks to people. While critics of Israel claim that Israeli actions have resulted in casualties and reduced access to life-sustaining supplies, critics of Hamas contend that militants and Hamas personnel in Gaza have allegedly contributed to the unsafe operation of civilian areas and facilities by operating in or near them (Crowley, Wong, 2023; Zanotti, Sharp, 2024).

## **5.2. Examining the arguments of Hamas in the war**

The 50th anniversary of the Hamas attack brings to light Israel's lack of readiness as it grapples with internal political matters once more. The opposition movement, which Netanyahu's attempts to restructure the nation's legal system have sparked, draws comparisons between Israel's current government and Golda Meir's in its infancy in 1973. The surprise attack by Hamas coincided with a period of intense political and social unrest in Israel as the government was pushing through a divisive plan to curtail the authority of the nation's judiciary. The military was also offended by the move, and many reservists, who are the backbone of Israel's army, warned that they would refuse to report if called up in protest of the court system's alterations (Cordesman, 2023; VOA Middle East, 2023).

One of Hamas's justifications for intensifying the war with Israel is Israel's 16-year blockade of Gaza. According to Mohammed Deif, the enigmatic head of Hamas's military wing, the attack was a reaction to the blockade, Israeli raids within West Bank cities during the previous year, violence at the Al Aqsa Mosque, the disputed Jerusalem holy site revered by Jews as the Temple Mount, an increase in settler attacks on Palestinians, and the expansion of settlements (VOA Middle East, 2023).

Hamas contended that throughout time Israelis have treated Palestinians unfairly. According to Mohammed Deif, the attack on Israel in the morning was simply the beginning of “Operation Al-Aqsa Storm.” He urged Palestinians living in northern and eastern Israel to join the conflict. In his words, he maintained that “today the people are regaining their revolution.” After one of the worst times in the Israeli-occupied West Bank in over 20 years, Hamas launched their onslaught. It maintains that Israeli military assaults in Palestinian towns and cities have been the main cause of the bloodshed. Israel, however, justifies these raids arguing that they are a required response to an increase in Palestinian militant attacks on Israelis (Cordesman, 2023; VOA Middle East, 2023).

### 5.3. Examining the arguments of Israel in the war

On January 12, 2024, the International Court of Justice heard Israel’s defense against South Africa’s accusations that it had committed acts of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. Since October 7, about 24,000 individuals have died in Gaza, nearly 10,000 of whom were children. Thousands more are thought to be dead and missing beneath debris. Israel’s war on Gaza, according to South Africa, violated the 1948 Genocide Convention. Thus, the South African legal team asked the court to impose emergency orders in order to halt the ongoing airstrikes and ground invasion of the Gaza Strip (Corder, Casert, 2024; Lawal, 2024).

In arguments made by British lawyer and scholar Malcolm Shaw KC, Israel’s delegates countered that South Africa had “distorted” and “de-contextualized” Israel’s military actions in Gaza and that by accusing Israel of genocide, South Africa was “diluting” the crime. Israel maintained that the Gaza War began on October 7 as a result of Hamas’s onslaught on army outposts and neighboring villages in southern Israel, as well as the organization’s capture of hundreds of prisoners, and that Israel is entitled to self-defense under international law (Corder, Casert, 2024; Lawal, 2024).

Tal Becker, an Israeli team representative, stated at the floor of the court that one of “the highest moral obligations” for Israel is to “never again” accept the ugly reoccurrence of history and that the Genocide Convention was drafted in the wake of the mass murder of Jews during the Holocaust. According to him, South Africa was attempting to prevent Israel from fulfilling its duties to the Israelis who had been relocated by the October 7 bombings and to the captured Israelis by asking for an interim injunction against Israel’s invasion (Lawal, 2024).

The Israeli legal team further claimed that South Africa’s charges that Israel is fundamentally motivated to “destroy” the Palestinian people are based on “random assertions.” Israel’s attorneys responded to accusations of genuine genocidal acts, such as the wholesale and random slaughter of people, by arguing that Israeli troops were attempting to “minimize” harm to civilians and that Hamas was using civilians as human shields. Israel’s Deputy Attorney General for International Affairs, Gilad Noam, concluded Israel’s arguments by stating that the court should not impose temporary measures (to stop the attack on Gaza) since Israel views Hamas as a terrorist organization and because Israelis would be harmed by such measures (Lawal, 2024).

### 5.4. Implications/ consequences of the Israel – Hamas war

The consequences of the war between Israel and Hamas, which began on October 7 in vicious waves of violence, is already being felt on a global scale. Economic upheavals, the potential for contagion, increased political polarization, novel strategic difficulties, and the evolving character of warfare as a result of aggressive non-state players are the threats facing the entire world.

#### 5.4.1. Economic upheavals

Firstly, the World Bank issued a dire warning on October 30 in a shocking new report, stating that the confrontation between Israel and Hamas might lead to a worldwide economic “shock” that would cause millions of people to go hungry as a result of rising food costs and oil prices to rise to \$150 per barrel. It might resemble the 1973 wartime crisis, in which Saudi Arabia and other Arab members of OPEC put an embargo on oil sales to the US government as payback for Washington’s decision to resupply the Israeli military.

The official State Department account of the situation states that the 1973 oil embargo “contributed to an upward spiral in oil prices with global implications. The price of oil per barrel doubled, then tripled, putting consumers’ costs through the roof and posing structural risks to the stability of entire countries’ economies” (Corbett, 2013; United States Department of State, n.d.). Additionally, it “acutely strained” the US economy, which was becoming increasingly reliant on imports of oil. The most significant shock to commodities markets since the 1970s precedes the most recent conflict in the

Middle East. Gill (cited in Wright, 2023) states that if the fighting does not stop, the world economy would experience a dual energy shock for the first time in decades from both the Middle East and the war in Ukraine.

#### **5.4.2. The potential of contagion**

Secondly, the conflict might extend beyond Gaza and Israel, resulting in further tragedies and having an effect on the economies of both Middle East and North Africa (MENA) nations and other nations. It is possible to fight Hezbollah, a militant fundamentalist organization with roots in south Lebanon that fought Israel for many years until the early 2000s. This would probably ruin Lebanon's already fragile economy. Another option is to go straight to war with Iran, a main global energy supplier and an adversary of Israel. Although it does not currently seem likely, Iran has long been the primary supporter of both Hezbollah and Hamas. Should a direct conflict between Iran and Israel break out, it may have a significant effect on the global economy. Other nations, including the United States and its western allies, may become engaged in an Iranian confrontation (FocusEconomics, 2023).

#### **5.4.3. Increased political polarization**

Thirdly, the battle has spread to far-off cities, continents, and divided college campuses in an already sharply divided globe. It has stoked divisive sentiments that go beyond being either pro-Palestinian or pro-Israel. The number of antisemitic incidents in the US is rising, and threats of death against Jewish organizations and groups are among them.

In the meantime, pro-Palestinian protests drawing thousands of participants have taken place from London to Kuala Lumpur. NATO partners have also become divided over the war; although the US denounces the horrific murders committed by Hamas, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan refers to Israel as an occupying force and disputes that Hamas is a terrorist organization. In the face of competing public ire, diplomacy's ability to establish a new Middle East through the Abraham Accords and increased ties between Israel and its Arab counterparts is currently beset by significant obstacles. Leaders in the region who have interacted with Israel are under pressure to withdraw or sever connections. The division of opinions around the world might not come to an end with hostilities (Wright, 2023).

#### **5.4.4. Novel strategic challenges**

Fourthly, in the current complicated Middle East conflict, China is considered one of the "winners," which is a questionable notion at best. The US has been preoccupied with arming and supporting Ukraine for nearly two years. Such obligations to Israel now confront it. In the meantime, Russian military resources are being used in the exhausting conflict in Ukraine. Comparable strategic obstacles do not confront China. With unhindered access to financial resources and diplomatic clout, it can continue to bolster its military and extend its influence well beyond Asia toward a long-term goal. In the 21st-century race for worldwide dominance, China has been delving deeply into developing countries referred to as the Global South. According to Aboudouh (cited in Wright, 2023), a lot of countries in the Global South support Palestine; therefore, China can utilize the conflict to garner support for its leadership among these nations.

#### **5.4.5. The evolving character of warfare as a result of aggressive non-state players**

Finally, the Gaza War highlights the evolving nature of non-state actors, particularly militia groups, who although lack the resources, expertise, and means of arming themselves – to the same extent as states with official navies, air forces, and armies – have used war experiences to beef up their activities. Between 1948 and 1973, Israel fought four conventional conflicts with neighboring states. However, throughout the previous fifty years, it has fought three wars with Hamas and twice with Hezbollah in Lebanon, all of which were against militias. First, it was fighting the PLO. They have proven more difficult to overcome in many ways. In Afghanistan throughout its longest war, which lasted from 2001 to 2021, as well as in Iraq, from 2003 to 2011 and again from 2014 to 2017, the US confronted many of the same difficulties. The world's strongest military (the United States) was driven out by the rabble Taliban, who lacked an air force or navy. Another militia group has startled Israel, the Middle East's most well-armed state, which might incite other non-state players. It is no longer always possible to calculate the power differential between conventional and unconventional forces, or large and small armies, using a formula based on the quantity of soldiers and weapons. After Hamas broke through Israel's defense wall in 2023, the war has already had an impact on the entire world. The likelihood of wider repercussions that extend well beyond the Israeli or Palestinian borders increases with the length of the war in Gaza (Wright, 2023).

## 6. Summary of findings

The current Israeli-Hamas war was triggered by what Hamas considered as “Israeli excesses,” which forced the group to launch attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. In response to the attacks, Israel declared a war on Hamas. The implications of the conflict were identified to include economic upheavals, the potential of contagion, increased political polarization, novel strategic challenges, and the evolving character of warfare as a result of aggressive non-state players.

## 7. Concluding remarks

Adopting a two-state solution for the groups – both of which have strong and ancient roots in the region – remains the most effective way to resolve the conflict between Israel and Hamas, which claims to speak for the Palestinian people. This will allow both states to coexist in harmony and safety, completely upholding the equal rights of their people and enjoying comparable levels of freedom. In addition to satisfying the fundamental aspirations of Jews and Arabs for their own states, proponents of the two-

state solution contend that it needs support because its alternatives are just not feasible.

The Jews would become a minority in a single state that combined Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel. Jews would also constitute a sizable minority in such a state, which would annoy the Arab majority. Numerous academics contended that since Hamas seized power in Gaza, a three-state solution with Gaza as a separate state is now the reality. However, it remains untenable due to the fact that a recognized terrorist organization cannot be given legitimacy by acting as a state and entering into negotiations (Sharma, 2022).

In addition to pragmatic justifications, a two-state solution makes moral sense. It is argued that one people’s objectives should not take precedence over those of another group (Asad, 2024; Clavijo, 2024; Human Rights Watch, 2021; Sharma, 2022). It has previously been determined that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is a fight for collective rights between two different groups of people, is the source of the Israeli-Hamas war. Removing the possibility of a Palestinian state or denying Israeli Jews a Jewish state would amount to putting the goals of one group below those of another.

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