



Hamas-Israel War: A Brief Analysis of First Two Phases of War

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Abstract

At the end of 2023, the Middle East experienced some new challenges. Among these new challenges, one of the most important of them all is the Hamas-Israel war. After almost four months of war and no end in sight, there are now growing questions about whether Israel will be able to accomplish its stated goals in Gaza. The brutality of the Hamas's attack on October 7, the extent of the cruel massacre, shocked both the Israeli society and foreign public opinion. To better understand the factors of Hamas's operational success, the strategic surprise attack on Israel from Gaza, on October 7, 2023, needs a thorough analysis to understand all its political, intelligence, and operational failures aspects. It goes without saying that many elements of Hamas's brutal but largely successful attack are still unknown. Taking this into account, this paper focuses on only three elements of the ongoing war. Firstly, based on the qualitative methodology of research, this study evaluates and highlights the political background of the bloodiest attack in modern Israel's history which happened on October 7, 2023. Secondly, using the research methodology of data collection and analysis, this paper seeks to answer the still open-ended question, how was Hamas able to attack a country which operates one of the best intelligence organizations in the world by an extreme surprise? Finally, by using the narrative and historical models of qualitative research and the available data, this paper focuses on assessing the first and second phases of the war. Furthermore, the study formulates conclusions regarding the expected directions of change in the Israeli security system and

some aspects of regional security implications of the ongoing Hamas-Israeli conflict. The potential result of the current paper is to present the reasons for the ongoing Gaza conflict based on the historical background. In addition, it provides a primary analysis, based on currently available information, of the first two phases of the obviously protracted Hamas-Israel conflict for the benefit of the community of researchers, scholars, and academics.

Keywords: Terrorism, war in Gaza, Israel, Palestine Authorities, Palestine terrorism

Introduction

It is quite likely that international security research institutes, various practitioners of military science, experts on security issues, and think tanks dealing with the Middle East will discuss and analyze why and what happened in Israel on October 7. Furthermore, the extent to which Israel's military actions in Gaza were proportionate and in accordance with international law will also be a subject of debate. This war between IDF and Iran-backed proxy forces would have their regional and international political effects for a long time to come.

The conflict between the Arabs and Israel – although the modern Jewish state has only officially existed since 1948 – has been going on since the beginning of the 20th century in the form of clashes between the Jewish and Arab populations in British-controlled Mandatory Palestine with varying intensity on the military, political, and economic levels. It should be noted that Mandatory Palestine was divided by the United Kingdom in September 1922 into the Emirates of Transjordan and Palestine. During two decades after 1922, more than 150,000 (Morris, 2008, p.145-154) Jews emigrated from Europe into Palestine.¹

Just between 1933 and 1936, 130,000 (Morris, 2008, p. 156) Jews settled in Palestine.² The British Army's operations in Palestine during this period were mainly directed against militant Arab groups who were opposed to this mass Jewish immigration. In 1936 and 1937, the United Kingdom's army heavily fought against Arab rebel factions of the Arab Higher Committee, which was led by Hitler-fun Amin al Husayni, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem.

The Israeli-Arab conflict became more violent after the UN partition of Mandatory Palestine (Caridi, 2023, p. 85) and the subsequent declaration

¹Benny Morris (1948). A History of the First Arab Israeli War, 2008, Yale University Press. ISBN: 9780300151121. pp. 145-154

²Benny Morris (1948). A History of the First Arab Israeli War, 2008, Yale University Press. ISBN: 9780300151121. pp. 156-158

of the Jewish state in 1948.³ Five Arab country's armies attacked Israel, and the elimination of Israel was almost evident. Interestingly, the Stalinist Soviet Union supported politically and with arms transfer from Czechoslovakia the newly born Jewish state. Stalin also accepted a limited emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union into Israel to invest in what he hoped for would be a socialist Israel. These three steps, political recognition, arms transfer, and the new wave of immigrants (Kochavi, 1998, p. 146), were lifesavers for Israel.⁴ Due to the war, around 700,000 Arabs left or were expelled from their homes.

The issue gained world political weight thanks to the Cold War, as the Soviet Union started to support the Arab states against Israel militarily, economically, and politically, which enjoyed the unconditional support of the United States of America. However, the disintegration of the bipolar world order and some ultimately ineffective peace initiatives did (Camp David, Oslo I, II.) not put an end to the conflict, in which both sides used means that are objectionable from the point of view of human rights. Therefore, the result of the conflict largely played a role in the formation of the national consciousness of the Palestinians (Khalidi, 2020, p. 138). In addition, it also helped in the forging of the diverse Jewish people coming from different European and even African countries into a nation.⁵

Methods

A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches was used in conducting this study. Moreover, the present research was carried out using the method of data collection, analysis, systematization, induction, hypothesis creation, and deduction. To achieve the scientific goals, the present scientific work has been divided chronologically and according to cause-and-effect relationships.

Consequently, to fulfil and satisfy the scientific requirements of the dissertation, data was collected using empirical articles as secondary research sources. In many cases, data provided by governmental and well-respected news portals was taken over and this information was analyzed using comparative evaluation methods. Finally, all available confirmed information and data were incorporated into the database, categories, and subcategories. Also, manual thematic analysis was then conducted for the identification and interpretation of patterns within the data.

Literature Review

³Paola Caridi (2023). *Hamás: From Resistance to Regime*. Publisher: Seven Stories Press, NY, USA. ISBN: 9781644211892. p. 85

⁴Arieh J. Kochavi (1998). *The Struggle against Jewish Immigration to Palestine Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34, No.3, July. p. 146

⁵Rashid Khalidi (2020). *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017*. Metropolitan Books. ISBN: 9781627798556 p 138.

The available literature on the subject is both extremely rich and at the same time very poor. On the one hand, the literature dealing with the history of the topic is the size of a library in terms of the Israeli-Arab conflict.

On the other hand, a comprehensive and credible analysis of Hamas' attack of surprising size and wild brutality from a technical point of view, revealing human errors, has not yet been done from an Israeli point of view. Hence, the related literature is poor. When reviewing the literature of the Arab-Israeli conflict, of course, both the works of Israeli academics and the works of Arab authors and the works of the staff of many Western research centres were analyzed. Given the limited opportunities provided by the paper, this literature review part of the current paper only shows a few examples and reflects on the fact that different academics sometimes express rather opposite opinions.

Arie Arnon (Israeli professor) in his essay titled "Israeli Policy towards the Occupied Palestinian Territories: The Economic Dimension, 1967-2007" gave a comprehensive description of the economic background of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Interestingly, he argued about the division of the land into two states and two economic (and political) sovereign entities, while also negating the "One," i.e., the establishment of a single political and economic entity. Rashid Khalidi (Palestinian-American historian) in his book titled "The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance" claims that the colonial war on the Palestinians is still ongoing, waged first by the Zionist movement and then Israel, but backed by Britain and the United States.

Italian journalist and historian, Paola Caridi, in her novel book titled "Hamas: From Resistance to Regime", which was published in 2023, gave an extremely detailed overview of the way of changing Hamas from a charitable organization into a repressive and killing-machine regime.

One of the Arab world's leading journalists, Zaki Chehab, in his book titled "Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of the Militant Islamic Movement" describes the modus operandi of Hamas. Surprisingly, he states that the Hamas operatives bought their first weapons cache from the Shin Bet (Israel's domestic security agency) who wanted to weaken Fatah.

1. Political Background of Hamas' Massacre on October 7

The Hamas massacre was an extremely shocking, earthquake-like, creepy, and horrifying serial event. The scale of the attack and extreme brutality shocked and outraged not just Israeli sociality but the entire civilized world. How did Hamas, which was established in 1987 focusing mainly on charity activities, transformed into a monster, ISIS-like killing machinery?

It is well-known that Hamas was founded by Ahmad Yassin, and from the very beginning he considered the organization as the armed wing of the

Muslim Brotherhood. Yassin opposed the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, and in his opinion, "Palestine is a Muslim land, which an Arab leader has no right to give up," and "Israel must disappear from the face of the Earth."⁶

Hamas is not the only terrorist organization in Gaza. Currently, 17 different terrorist organizations are known in the Gaza Strip, which have a rather diverse ideological background.

For example, the Palestine Islam Jihad, created in 1979, is more militant faction; it operates primarily in Gaza, but it also has some underground cells in Cis-Jordan. Interestingly, Hamas was created at the beginning as a rival organization, counterbalancing Iranian influence among the Palestinians in Gaza (Tamini, 2007, pp. 25-27). This is especially because the Palestine Islam Jihad operated completely under Teheran influence.⁷ Thus, it is important to note that the Palestine Islam Jihad has been established by two former Palestinian members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Fathi Shikaki and Abd al Aziz Awda.⁸ Several terrorist organizations have indeed grown out of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, in addition to the ones already mentioned. For example, there is also the Egyptian Islamic Jihad which in 2001 merged with al-Qaida. Furthermore, there is also an opinion that at the beginning, the Israelis also supported Hamas (Chehab, 2007, p.87) even with the possibility of acquiring weapons.⁹

In 1992, after the Gulf War, Teheran decided to support Hamas with around 30 million USD annually and to provide weapons and training for Hamas terrorists.¹⁰ "The enemy of my enemy is my friend" logic worked in this case as well. Iran was able to cross the religious divide, as both Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad are Sunni organizations. To build its regional

⁶Bridgett Kendell and Sheikh Yassin (2024). Spiritual figurehead, BBC, 22 March 2004. Downloaded from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/middle_east/2001/israel_and_the_palestinians/profiles/1695470.stm on 11 January

⁷Azzam Tamini (2007). Hamas: a history from within. Publisher Northampton, Mass. Olive Branch Press. ISBN 9781566566896 pp 25-27

⁸Holly Fletcher (2008). Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Council on Foreign Relations, 10 April. Downloaded from <https://www.cfr.org/background/palestinian-islamic-jihad> on 12 January 2024.

⁹Zaki Chehab (2007). Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of the Militant Islamic Movement. New York: Nation Books. ISBN: 9781560259688. p.87

¹⁰Daniel Levin (2023). History of Iran, Hamas and Islamic Jihad Ties. United States Institute for Peace. 11 October 2023. Downloaded from <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2018/jul/09/iran-hamas-and-palestinian-islamic-jihad> on 12 January 2024

Islamist power, Teheran provided financial and military support to both organizations (Nashr, 1996, p.98).¹¹

In 1997, Hamas proclaimed a jihad against Israel, and Ahmad Yassin gave his authorization for the execution of previously unknown new forms of terrorist attacks, such as suicide bombings, even those carried out by women or children. In 2005, when Israel liquidated its 21 colonies, the Israeli government had high hopes for lasting peace. Even so, some Israelis believed that the Gaza Strip under the leadership of Arafat-led Palestinian Authority would be able to convert that enclave into “Singapore in the Middle East” (Amon, 2007, p.573).¹² Unfortunately, Hamas the “children” Muslim Brotherhood had a different agenda. Hamas, the so-called “resistance movement,” was initially a charitable organization, but it later established its military wing and started to organize suicide bombings against Israeli targets.

Hamas gained popularity among the Palestinians in Gaza by creating schools, medical complexes (Caridi, 2023, p.113), and even hospitals that provided free services for poor families.¹³ The money came from rich Gulf States and individuals. Hamas’ policy is still based on the old three NOs, dating back to the Arab League summit held in Khartoum on August 29, 1967. "The Three No's" were: No peace with Israel, No recognition of Israel, and No negotiations with Israel. Furthermore, the final communiqué of the summit underlined the right of Palestinians not just to retake the whole of Palestine, “from the sea to the river,” but also to destroy the State of Israel.¹⁴

For Hamas, Arafat-led Fatah became a “traitor” when they started to negotiate with the Israeli government. Hence, from 2005, they also confronted Palestinian Authority law enforcement officers in Gaza and galvanized a mass movement among the Palestinians against Israel and Fatah. Hamas pose the primary challenge to Fatah and generally the secular nationalists (Lybarger, 2007, pp. 30-32). Their growing strength lies in their alternative cultural-political milieu, which includes independent financial, social, political, and paramilitary structures.¹⁵

¹¹Kamel B. Nashr (1993). Arab and Israeli Terrorism: The Causes and Effects of Political Violence, 1936-1993. McFarland Publishing. NC. USA. ISBN: 978-0786402809. p.98

¹²Arie Arnon (2007). Israeli Policy towards the Occupied Palestinian Territories: The Economic Dimension, 1967-2007. Published By: Middle East Institute, Middle East Journal, Vol 61. No4 , p 573

¹³Paola Caridi (2023). Hamas: From Resistance to Regime. Publisher: Seven Stories Press, ISBN: 978-1644211892 p.113

¹⁴Tamara Zieve (2012). This week in History: The Arab League Three Nos. Jerusalem Post. 26 August. Downloaded from <https://www.jpost.com/Features/In-Thespotlight/This-Week-In-History-The-Arab-Leagues-three-nos> on 10. 01. 2024.

¹⁵Loren D. Lybarger (2007). Identity and Religion in Palestine: The Struggle between Islamism and Secularism in the Occupied Territories, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, pp. 30-32

Subsequently, Hamas took full advantage of Fatah's corruption, carelessness, and unpopularity due to the charitable activities of Hamas. From 1993-2000, Palestinians expected their lives to improve regarding freedom of movement and socioeconomic standing. When both worsened, significant resentment built up in the Palestinian society. This discontent, further fed by the failure of the Camp David summit in July 2000 (Pressman, 2006, pp. 114-115), laid the groundwork for popular support for a more aggressive approach with Israel.¹⁶ Hamas turned to its advantage two major event in 2000, namely: the failure of the Camp David negotiations in July 2000 and Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to the al-Aqsa Mosque in September (Byman, 2011, p. 115). However, both events triggered the Second Intifada.¹⁷

Hamas had just participated in the First Intifada in 1987 (Milton-Edwards, 2010, pp. 54-56), but the organization had already initiated and led the Second Intifada in the year 2000.¹⁸ The Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigade, established in 1991, is the military wing of Hamas and has launched continuous attacks against Israeli civilians and military targets. Attacks against civilian targets mostly included rocket attacks and, since 1993, suicide bombings. After the death of Arafat, Mahmood Abbas became president of the Palestine Authority. In 2006, they held a legislative election but surprisingly Hamas received 44.45% of the vote and won 74 of the 132 seats.¹⁹ This electoral victory of Hamas divided the otherwise not-very-united Palestinian leadership. Moreover, the following year, the rift became final when Hamas militarily liquidated Fatah in Gaza. At the same time, Tehran increased its arms deliveries and financial support, already supporting Hamas with 250 million USD in 2006.

At the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, a short-term decrease in Iran's support was caused by statements of Hamas supporting the Sunnis in Syria. Hamas was expelled from Syria (Kapitan, 2004, p. 187), and it was Qatar that took in the terrorist organization's top management.²⁰

¹⁶Jeremy Pressman (2006). The Second Intifada: Background and Causes of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. *Journal of Conflict Studies*. 23 (2). ISSN 1715-5673. pp 114-115

¹⁷Daniel Byman (2011). *A High Price: The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism*. Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780199830459 p 115.

¹⁸Beverley Milton-Edwards and Stephen Farrell Hamas (2010). *The Islamic Resistance Movement*, Published by Polity Oxford UK, ISBN: 978-0745642963 pp. 54-56.

¹⁹Al Jazeera (2006). Hamas wins huge victory, 26 January, Downloaded from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2006/1/26/hamas-wins-huge-majority> on 11 January 2024

²⁰Tomis Kapitan (2004). *Terrorism in the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (in Igor Primoratz ed., *Terrorism: The Philosophical Issue*) Publisher Palgrave, London UK. ISBN: 9781403918161. p 187

In 2019, the Iranian financial support to Hamas already reached 360 million USD per year.²¹ By 2023, Iran's arms exports, transfer of weapons manufacturing technology, training, and high-level financial support have turned Hamas into a powerful terrorist organization (Lewitt, 2007, p.156), which has completely become a regional servant of Tehran in its political goals.²²

2. Factors Behind a Successful Surprise Attack by Hamas

In 2006, Hamas surprisingly won the Palestinian legislative election and took control of the Gaza Strip in the following year from the secular rival, Fatah. After the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip, Israel declared Gaza under Hamas a hostile entity, introduced a series of sanctions, and implemented a strict blockade with Egyptian assistance. Since then, multiple wars have taken place between Hamas fighters and Israel, including in 2008-2009, 2012, 2014, and 2021.²³

On October 7, the Palestinian militants launched an attack on Israel in combination with a massive barrage of rockets fired from the Gaza Strip with armed militiamen breaching security barriers. This surprise attack happened almost the same day when 50 years ago the Egyptian and Syrian forces launched a coordinated attack against Israel during the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur. According to Ely Karmon, the strategic goals of Hamas in its attack on Israel were the disruption of the normalization process between Saudi Arabia and Israel and the weakening of the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.²⁴

Many analysts questioned how this could happen when Israel has one of the best intelligence services in the world. The Gaza Strip was monitored at a very high level, and a high-tech defence system was installed around the zone.

Nonetheless, the full picture is not yet known and presumably the post-war Commission of Inquiry investigation is still yet to come, but based on the available information, the causes can be classified into three large groups:

²¹Michael Banchner and Toi Staff (2019). Iran said increasing Hamas funding to \$30m per month, wants intel on Israel. the Times of Israel, 5 August 2019 Downloaded from <https://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-agrees-to-increase-hamas-funding-to-30-million-per-month-report/> on 12 January 2024.

²² Matthew Lewitt (2007). Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad. Yale University Press. London UK. ISBN: 978-0300122589. p. 156.

²³ For historical context on Israel's war against Hamas, see Prof Dr Mária Bordás: Islamic Caliphate in the 21st Century (?) - Issues of State Effectiveness in the Middle East and Africa, 2015 Ludovika Kiadó. pp 151-157.

²⁴Ely Karmon (2023). The Goals of Hamas' Terrorist Attack on Israel from Gaza. International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT). October. special report Downloaded from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep53546> on 02 February 2024

1. Excessive reliance and faith in technology.
2. Incorrect threat assessment on the level of Israeli political, military, and intelligence leadership.
3. Successful deception operations by Hamas.

Regarding the first point, it has been clear that Israel has used extensive human networks in Gaza and several types of electronic intelligence to detect any potential attack, including Signals intelligence (SIGINT) gathered by interception of signals, communication (COMINT) or electronic signals (ELINT). Even though there were some signals that Hamas were preparing a surprise attack, for example, training for Hamas in Iran, Lebanon even in Gaza, the intelligence services failed on their part to avoid the October 7 attack.

Reportedly, members of Israel's domestic security service, the Israel Security Agency, also called "Shin Bet", responsible for the monitoring of Hamas activity in the Gaza Strip on the eve of October 7, assumed at first that the Palestinian organization was only conducting an exercise. Additionally, the English Translation of the Official Strategy of the Israel Defence Forces from 2015 mentioned that "Hamas is interested to maintain peace and quiet and not to bring about escalation" (Allison, 2016, p.11). However, this means that the IDF must have believed that Hamas had no interest in carrying out terrorist attacks against Israel anymore.²⁵

Moreover, Unit 8200, sometimes also named as "Israel SIGINT National Unit," suspended controlling Hamas' communications in 2022 because they deemed it unnecessary, and the unit even was not operational near the Gaza borderline on the morning of October 7.²⁶ It is worth mentioning that the Unit 8200 is the largest and one of the most secretive units of the Israeli Defensive Forces. Primarily, this organization is responsible for different clandestine operations, collecting signal intelligence (SIGINT) and code decryption, counter-intelligence, cyberwarfare, military intelligence, and surveillance as well. Moreover, this unit is the foremost technical intelligence agency in the world.²⁷

²⁵Graham Allison (2016). *Deterring Terror English Translation of the Official Strategy of the Israel Defence Forces*, Belfer Center Science and International Affairs. Cambridge, MA, USA. page 11.

²⁶TOI Staff (2023). Top Israeli intel unit wasn't operational on October 7 due to personnel decision, *Time of Israel*, 28 November Downloaded from <https://www.timesofisrael.com/top-israeli-intel-unit-wasnt-operational-on-october-7-due-to-personnel-decision/> on 21 January 2024

²⁷John Reed (2015). Unit 8200, Israel's Cyber Spy Agency. *Financial Times*, 10 July. Downloaded from <https://www.ft.com/content/69f150da-25b8-11e5-bd83-71cb60e8f08c> on 02 February 2024

Nevertheless, the head of Shin Bet, Ronen Bar, thought that Hamas might attempt a small-scale attack. He ordered a group of elite counterterrorism forces to deploy to Israel's southern border, who soon found themselves in the middle of a battle with thousands of Hamas gunmen.²⁸

Another fascinating question: why did Israel's Iron Dome air defence system fail? It was well-known that the Iron Dome missile defence system could destroy about 90% of the rockets and missiles that Hamas and other terrorist organizations were firing into Israel. To understand the failure of the Israeli air defence strategy on the tactical level, we first need to understand the basics of air defence systems. Any air defence system has a sub-system of detections, which is commonly known as radars.

According to Raytheon, the ELM-2084 MS-MMR Multi-Sensor Multi Mission Radar System, which was used in the Iron Dome air defence weapon system, is capable of detecting effectively a missile launch or hostile artillery shell between 50 and 90 km (the effective over distances from 4 to 70 km).²⁹ The Iron Dome is a highly advanced missile defence system made up of 10 mobile batteries deployed across Israel, and each battery includes launchers with Tamir interceptor missiles. Each battery can defend up to 155 square kilometers and is strategically placed around cities and populated areas.³⁰

A battery includes three to four launchers, and each launcher can hold up to 20 interceptors. This is simple maths and the system can capture and destroy a maximum of 800 targets in the case of missiles launched in the first series, assuming 100% capture.

All air defence systems can only track and target within their limitations. In other words, all systems can be overwhelmed. Their limit is called the saturation point, and the Palestinian terrorists understood this weakness.

Reportedly, on October 7, the Hamas and the Palestine Islamic Jihad launched around five thousand rockets into Israel.³¹ With thousands of rockets

²⁸Ronen Bergman and Patric Kingsley (2023). How Israel's Feared Security Services Failed to Stop Hamas's Attack. *The New York Times*, 10 October. Downloaded from <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/10/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-security-failure.html> on 24 January 2024

²⁹Israeli Aerospace Industries (2024). ELM-2084 MMR. Downloaded from <https://www.iai.co.il/p/elm-2084-mmr> on 02 February

³⁰Annika Burgess (2023). What is Israel's Iron Dome air defence system, and did it fail during the Hamas attack? ABC Net. 09 October. Downloaded from <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-10-10/what-is-israel-iron-dome-air-defence-gaza-rockets/102952172> on 02 February 2024

³¹Alex Hollings and Stavros Atlamazoglou (2023). Was Israel's IRON DOME overwhelmed, overhyped, or right on target? Sandboxx 12 October. Downloaded from <https://www.sandboxx.us/news/was-israels-iron-dome-overwhelmed-overhyped-or-right-on-target/> on 23. January 2024

pouring in from Gaza, Israel's Iron Dome batteries often reached saturation points that allowed rockets to pass through without being intercepted due to the physical limitations of the system itself. For overwhelming the Iron Dome system, Palestinians used homemade Qassam rockets and Type-63 (old Soviet BM-12) 107mm mini rocket launchers having 12 tubes. They used asymmetric assets against the most sophisticated air defence around the world, in this case quite effectively.

3. First and Second Phases of War

After the October 7 attack, Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel, formally declared war on Hamas in Gaza on 8 October 2023, and the first phase of the war began. Practically, the first phase was marked by mass airstrikes, targeting terrorist installations, mainly concentrated in northern Gaza. The targeted and destroyed terrorist installations were weapons production plants, Hamas Intelligence Headquarters, and rocket launcher sites. In addition to air campaign, Israeli Defence Forces mobilized 300,000 reservists.

According to the Israeli Prime Minister's Office, the military goals of the "Operation Iron Sword" are the destruction of the military and governmental capabilities of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.³²

Before the land operation started, the IDF conducted extremely high intensity of air reconnaissance activity in combination with high-precision air strikes. The precise number of airstrikes is unknown. However, according to Turkish information, the executed strikes could be around 12,000, and this number does not include the artillery strikes.³³

On 9 October, Israel announced a so-called "total blockade", including water, electricity, fuel, food, and medicine supplies.³⁴ Moreover, nearly 60,000 Israelis were evacuated from the Gaza envelop towns, and Israeli military units, including some armoured brigades, have been tasked to guard the destroyed fence and entering point to Gaza to establish a security zone around the Gaza Strip.

On 13 October, the IDF issued an evacuation warning for northern Gaza to leave a place within 24 hours. Finally, on 27 October, the IDF

³²TOI Staff (2023). Security cabinet says Israel will destroy military, governmental abilities of Hamas, Islamic Jihad. The Times of Israel, 8 October. Downloaded from https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/security-cabinet-says-israel-will-destroy-military-governmental-abilities-of-hamas-islamic-jihad/ on 28 January 2024

³³Abdel Rauf Arnaut (2023). Israel has launched over 12,000 airstrikes in Gaza since October 7. 02.11.2023. Downloaded from <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/israel-has-launched-over-12-000-airstrikes-in-gaza-since-oct-7-army/3041404> on 04 February 2024.

³⁴Al Jazeera (2023). Israel announces 'total' blockade on Gaza, 9 October. Downloaded from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/9/israel-announces-total-blockade-on-gaza> on 25 January 2024

launched a large-scale ground invasion into northern Gaza by deploying armoured and mechanized units. Surprisingly, the IDF first attacked the Hamas positions on the seaside. The Israeli army first allowed the civilians to leave the area and only later cut the Gaza Strip into two parts. The army of the Jewish state was in no hurry to capture the densely populated, tunnel-filled cities of Gaza and Beit Hanoun. However, on 1 November, after difficult and complex negotiations and Qatar's mediation, at least 355 foreign passport holders – including confirmed British, US, French, Italian and Austrian nationals – and 76 wounded Palestinians crossed into Egypt via the Rafah border crossing point.

Clashes between terrorists of the Izz el-Deen al-Qassam Brigades and the IDF regularly took place near hospitals and schools. Unfortunately, many youths, adolescents, and women lost their lives due to the inhumane policy and tactics of using human shields by Hamas.

Fierce fighting between Palestinian terrorists and the IDF continued through the middle of November but on 22 November, Israel and Hamas reached a temporary ceasefire agreement.

Again, Qatar was the main negotiator and mediator. However, the success was an outcome of a joint effort of Qatar, Egypt, and the United States.³⁵ In the Israeli government, the ceasefire was opposed by three ministers from the extremist, anti-Arab, Jewish far-right parties such as “Jewish Power”. The signed ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian terrorist groups, including Hamas, Palestine Islamic Jihad, and Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine, in the Gaza Strip took effect from 24 November 2023 to 30 November 2023. The central element of the agreement was the exchange of Israeli and other hostages held by Palestinian terrorists for prisoners who had committed various crimes held in Israeli prisons.

Even though there was hope that the ceasefire would become permanent, unfortunately, the ceasefire collapsed on the 1st of December. The main reason was the terrorist attack in Jerusalem on 30 November and the renewed missile attacks by Hamas.³⁶ However, the seven-day ceasefire had some positive outcomes because the Palestinian terrorist groups released 150 hostages, including 78 Israeli women and children, and 240 Palestinians were also released from Israeli jails. The next day, on 1st December, the third phase of the war began.

³⁵Amr Hazawy (2023). The Political Impact of the Israel-Hamas Ceasefire. Carnegie. 06 December. Downloaded from <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/12/06/political-impact-of-israel-hamas-ceasefire-pub-91177> on 24 January 2024

³⁶Emanuel Fabian (2023). Four killed, 5 injured in Hamas-claimed terror shooting at Jerusalem bus stop. Jerusalem Post, 30 November. Downloaded from <https://www.timesofisrael.com/three-killed-6-injured-in-terror-shooting-at-jerusalem-entrance-bus-stop/> on 05 February 2024

Conclusion

This paper begins with an introduction that briefly presents the historical background of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Then, in the first chapter of the study, the political background of the Hamas attack was revealed. Here, Hamas' development path from an initially charitable organization to a brutal terrorist organization has been detailed and dissected with particular attention. In the second chapter, the circumstances and some technical elements of the successful attack by Hamas, which caused strategic surprise, were analyzed. In the next part of the study, the military-political implementation of the war events, which the Israelis call the first and second phases of the war, was explored.

Based on the research outcomes, it could be concluded that before the October 7 attack, the Israeli intelligence apparatus, military commanders, security officials, and more importantly, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu himself, regarded Hamas as a second-tier threat, ranking below Iran and its premier proxy, Hezbollah, and settlements' issue in the West Bank.

Hence, despite intense surveillance of Gaza, Hamas was able to plan its elaborate assault in full secrecy, hacking through Israel's high-tech "smart fence" with bulldozers, motorbikes, and bolt-cutters. Reportedly, Israeli intelligence and security officials tried for months to alert Benjamin Netanyahu, the country's prime minister, to the fact that the political turmoil brought on by his domestic policies was undermining national security and giving Israel's enemies more confidence. Despite these warnings, Netanyahu disregarded them and persisted in pursuing his policies, which likely left Israel vulnerable and exposed to an attack.

In this regard, Israel's political and security leadership has a lot to answer for. Although the full details have not yet been revealed, serious findings have already come to light. Potential warning signs were ignored, dismissed, or downplayed, and misplaced security priorities could have made the attack even more lethal. In addition to a comprehensive investigation into what went wrong, the Israeli public will demand a full accounting from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for his role in the disaster.

On October 7, the prime minister moved quickly to declare war on Hamas in Gaza, and he later repeatedly stressed that Israel will not stop its military operations until it accomplishes all its objectives, chief among them being the destruction of Hamas. Three months after the launch of the Israeli ground invasion of the Gaza Strip, as a new phase of the war just begun, it was still not clear if the main objective of the military response was even realistic, and what has the IDF achieved so far in Gaza.

Israel should realize that the slaughter of at least 1,400 Israelis by Hamas death squads represented a catastrophic collapse of Israel's existing security strategy. The failure of Israel's intelligence and security forces and

their overseers within the government cannot be overemphasized. The old deterrence model—which assumed that Hamas could be contained through technological defence and occasional, limited deterrence operations in the Gaza Strip—has failed. We still do not know, when and how the war will end but once the war is finished, Israel must deal with more serious issues.

The first is how to stabilize Gaza. Israel cannot be responsible for running Gaza, but the Israeli government must act responsibly and allow stakeholders and partners to take care of the needs of the Palestinian civilian population there and prevent the re-emergence of terrorist threats. Secondly, Israel must develop a new security approach and a new policy to protect its borders and keep its people safe.

The potential for destabilization in the region is currently significant, especially in the immediate neighbourhood of Egypt, the West Bank, and Lebanon. The conflict is multi-dimensional, as it is largely affected by Iran's proxy forces striving for regional hegemony. At the same time, Israel proposed that the Palestinians from Gaza should be relocated to the Sinai Peninsula. It was rejected in Egypt, but also in other countries of the region, the United States and the EU opposed this idea of forced displacement. The humanitarian situation of the Arabs in Gaza and the inflexibility of the Netanyahu government will greatly test Israeli-American relations. The moral capital that Israel had at the start of war operations is dwindling.

The possibility of escalation of the Israel-Hamas war, the possibility of regional and, in this case, military action against Iran, as well as efforts to counter these possibilities and military-political de-escalation are present at the same time. For now, the difficult question to answer is whether American policy will be able to control the conflict and maintain its influence in the region.

Consequently, the activities of the Houthis in the Red Sea and the potential war against Hezbollah are examples of regional escalation that could cause significant turmoil in the Middle East, risking access to vital energy resources, especially oil and gas, which could even cause global economic problems. There is no doubt that Israel's war in Gaza will profoundly influence the geopolitical landscape of the region.

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