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## Multiplier Effects of the Israeli-Hamas War on other Armed Non-State Actors in the Middle East

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Iroro S. IZU

### Abstract

This paper examines the multiplier effects of the Israeli-Hamas war on non-state actors, emphasizing how the conflict has reshaped regional security dynamics and militant strategies. Situating the study within Conflict Diffusion Theory and New Wars Theory, the research explores how the war has not only escalated hostilities between Hamas and Israel but has also influenced broader geopolitical alignments, radicalization patterns, and proxy engagements in the Middle East. The study employs a qualitative analytical approach to interrogate how the war has served as a catalyst for the expansion of asymmetric warfare tactics, ideological mobilization, and external state sponsorship of militant groups. Several interrelated conclusions emerge from the analysis. First, the war has enhanced Hamas's strategic visibility, legitimizing its role as a resistance movement despite suffering significant military losses. Second, the conflict has provided a tactical and ideological blueprint for other violent non-state actors (VNSAs), including Hezbollah, the Houthis, and Iran-backed militias, enabling them to expand their operational scope and influence. Third, the war has intensified regional proxy confrontations, disrupting the security architecture of the Middle East and challenging Western strategic interests. To mitigate these challenges, the study recommends a restructured counterterrorism approach that prioritizes intelligence-driven operations over broad military campaigns, an internationally mediated diplomatic framework for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and targeted humanitarian interventions to prevent Gaza's collapse into a perpetual conflict zone.

**Keywords:** Asymmetric Warfare, Humanitarian Crisis, Israeli-Hamas War, Non-State Actors, Middle East, Regional Security.

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## Introduction

The state of security across the globe in recent times has become quite precarious, and central to the dynamics of these conflicts are non-state actors, increasingly contending for an interest or dominance of some sort. In this age, many conflicts are shaped by the activities of armed groups whose operations are not in tandem with the legal framework of the state, as they spring up in different variations such as, terrorist organizations, militias, and transnational criminal networks. The growing role of non-state actors in contemporary warfare has been extensively explored in security studies literature (Hoffman, 2007; Staniland, 2012; Florea, 2020), highlighting their capacity to influence state sovereignty, regional stability, and international security. It is within these classes that Hamas belongs, and looms prominently with a reputation for engaging Israel in a form of guerrilla warfare, with activities that have ignited broader regional and international security concerns.

The Israeli-Hamas war, being one of the most recent and violent escalations in the Middle East, reflects a broader regional instability and the increasing role of non-state actors in modern conflicts (Izu, 2024). The war particularly presents a compelling case for interrogating how a range of multiplier effects (indirect, amplified, and often unintended consequences) are produced by the actions and influences of non-state actors like Hamas, whose activities not only influence immediate battlefield outcomes but also alter governance structures, social fabrics, and economic conditions far beyond their localized territories (Florea, 2020).

The current wave of fighting erupted on October 7th, 2023, after Hamas launched a coordinated armed incursion on Israel from the Gaza Strip, killing 1,200 people and capturing over 250 hostages (Selján, 2024; Izu, 2024). However, the history of fighting between Israel and Hamas predates this ongoing conflict. The broader Israeli-Palestinian struggle traces back to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. For the purpose of this paper, it is worthy of note stating that both the "Israeli-Hamas war" and "Israeli-Palestinian conflict" will be used interchangeably to describe the ongoing hostilities, recognizing that while they are not entirely synonymous, both reflect the same underlying conflict and sentiment.

There is a plethora of ways through which the multiplier effects of war on non-state actors can manifest: through enhanced recruitment, ideological proliferation, strengthened alliances, improved military capabilities, and shifts in political legitimacy. These effects are neither limited to the warring parties nor the geographic confines of the conflict. Rather, they cascade beyond, influencing a wider spectrum of other non-state and state actors. The ongoing conflict serves as a credible case study for interrogating how Hamas' operational strategies, ideological stance and political dispositions are affected by the war. In addition, it provides a leeway for examining how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict stimulates or

destabilizes other non-state actors such as Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and globally affiliated jihadist groups (Frisch, 2021). Furthermore, the involvement of external state sponsors and how transnational networks impact the war will be brought to fore, to determine how they contribute to these multiplier effects through the provision of resources, ideological support, and political backing.

The growing influence of non-state actors in shaping modern warfare calls for a deeper understanding, to comprehend how wars involving such actors transform the larger global security landscape. While existing literature has extensively discussed the role of non-state actors in asymmetric warfare, few studies have systematically explored how localized conflicts (particularly the Israeli-Hamas war) serve as catalysts for broader transformations among other armed groups in the region. The concept of multiplier effects, though acknowledged, remains under-theorized in the context of modern Middle Eastern conflicts. This study departs from prior works by providing a focused analysis on how the Israeli-Hamas war generates ripple effects that reshape the operational, ideological, and strategic dynamics of other armed non-state actors across the region. By addressing this gap, the paper contributes a nuanced perspective to the scholarly discourse on regional security, asymmetric warfare, and the evolving character of non-state actors in global conflict ecosystems.

This paper adopts a qualitative analytical approach, relying on secondary data to conduct a retrospective assessment of the Israeli-Hamas war as a catalyst for broader transformations among non-state actors. Thus, providing insights into the mechanisms through which localized conflicts can produce far-reaching consequences. Through this analysis, the study will contribute to existing debates in international relations, security studies, and counter-terrorism, and offer practical recommendations for mitigating the adverse multiplier effects of such conflicts.

## Conceptual Clarifications

### *War*

Traditionally, war has been viewed as a conflict between sovereign states, a complex social phenomenon involving organized, inclusive and most times, prolonged conflict between political communities. To Baylis et al. (2017), it is viewed as a state of armed conflict between different countries or different groups within a country, typically involving organized groups and characterized by extreme violence, aggression, destruction, and mortality. It has also been conceptualized as an open confrontation that occurs between or among parties as a result of certain conflict of interest that could not be compromised by parties involved (Halidu & Ukhamsi, 2019). Classical theorist Carl von Clausewitz

described war as "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will" (Clausewitz, 1832), emphasizing the political nature and organized use of violence in conflict.

War can be classified into various types, including civil war, conventional war, nuclear war, cold war, guerrilla war, world war among others (Halidu & Ukhani, 2019), all of the above and by extension all other kinds of warfare can be categorized into two broad categories namely, interstate wars (between states) and intrastate wars (within a state), typically driven by political, territorial, or economic motives. The Israeli-Hamas war fails to fall under the categorization of an interstate war because Hamas is not a recognized state (though it claims to be acting in the interest of the Palestinian state), but a non-state actor that is in control of the Gaza strip region of Palestine. Hence, the conflict can be said to be an asymmetric conflict, one in which belligerents possess unequal military capacities, strategies and resources, resulting in the weaker side (in this case Hamas) adopting unconventional methods to exploit the vulnerabilities of the stronger opponent (Arreguin-Toft, 2001). Also, it cannot be completely referred to as a war in which the weaker party makes exclusive use of guerrilla tactics, because Hamas in addition to hits and runs also makes use of conventional war techniques such as launching of rockets, drones and even large scale coordinated assaults, thus giving it the coloration of a Hybrid war. Therefore, the Israeli-Hamas war is an asymmetric war involving state and a non-state warring parties, in which Hybrid as well as guerrilla tactics are used, especially by the non-state actor in this case, Hamas.

### ***Non-State Actors***

Against the realist believe that state is the unitary actor in the international system (Halidu & Ukhani, 2019), non-state actors (NSAs) have emerged as active players in contemporary international politics, thereby limiting the complete sovereignty of the state within global politics. Non-state actors are defined as entities that participate or act in international relations and politics without being affiliated to, directed by, or funded through any sovereign state (Kaldor, 2012). In a broader sense, non-state actors can either be non-violent such as individuals, multinational corporations, intergovernmental organisations and non-governmental organisations, or violent groups which include terrorist organizations, insurgencies and militias. In the context of the Israeli-Hamas conflict, however, this paper's emphasis is specifically on violent non-state actors (VNSAs), which are on a more general sense armed groups who seek to achieve their political, religious or ideological goals through force. Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas and transnational jihadist networks like ISIS and Al-Qaeda are classical examples of these sorts of groups. Their mode of operation usually involves asymmetric tactics such as guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and cyber operations to counterbalance the superior military capabilities of state actors (Biene & Daase, 2015; Izu, 2021, 2024).

The complexity of dealing with VNSAs is well situated in Weiss & Daws (2007) clarification, as they operate both within and beyond state boundaries, often shaping global political dynamics and security challenges. This transnational mode of operation further enriches their resource sharing, intelligence gathering and strategizing capabilities. The foregoing is carried out with a high degree of stealth. Moreso, as they are frequently embedded in local populations, an idea according to Smith (2000) that further presents the state with a greater conundrum, that is, the odd choices between causing significant collateral damage and neutralizing the threat. Understanding these dynamics essentially brings to bear the broader implications of war on non-state actors, particularly in protracted and asymmetric conflicts such as the Israeli-Hamas war.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The concept of "multiplier effects" of war refers to the idea that conflicts involving non-state actors produce rippling effects that extend beyond the immediate participants. These effects more often than not amplify the reach, capacity, and influence of non-state actors in challenging the traditional state-centric understanding of war and security, while also reshaping regional and global environments. Thus, an interrelated theoretical perspective encompassing the Conflict Diffusion Theory and New Wars Theory will be used.

Conflict diffusion theory posits that wars are rarely contained within the borders of their origin; instead, they spread through ideological inspiration, refugee flows, arms proliferation, and the mobilization of sympathetic groups. Salehyan and Gleditsch (2006) clarify that refugee flows serve as a mechanism through which conflict spreads, noting that refugee flows are identified as a key factor in this process, with the presence of refugees from neighboring countries increasing the likelihood of conflict in host states. In the same vein, the dynamics of war, especially those involving non-state actors often radiate outward, as other actors replicate tactics, form alliances, or escalate tensions based on observed outcomes elsewhere" (Lake & Morgan, 1997). The Israeli-Hamas war, though geographically focused on Gaza and Israel, has generated widespread reactions from other militant groups, including Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen. These groups have either launched attacks in solidarity with Hamas or leveraged the conflict to advance their own agendas. The diffusion of conflict, therefore, illustrates how a localized war can activate dormant or distant non-state actors, expanding the scope of insecurity.

Furthermore, Kaldor's (2012) New Wars theory provides a useful prism for understanding how contemporary conflicts (the Israeli-Hamas war inclusive) are fundamentally different from traditional interstate wars. The role of non-state actors in contemporary conflicts is well-theorized within the frameworks of new wars theory and asymmetric warfare, which emphasize how these actors thrive in

fragmented, globalized conflict environments (Kaldor, 2012; Hoffman, 2006). New Wars involve a mix of state and non-state actors, decentralized violence, and identity-based mobilization, often targeting civilians and relying on irregular tactics. Hamas, as a non-state actor engaged in asymmetric warfare, exemplifies this model. Their innovative tactics, such as rockets attacks and sophisticated tunnel networks, aim to exploit Israel's vulnerabilities (Watkins & James, 2016).

The asymmetric nature of these conflicts (through a combination of irregular warfare, ideological mobilization, and strategic alliances), disrupt conventional military doctrines and force states into costly and prolonged engagements" (Münkler, 2005), hence generating multiplier effects based on observed successes or failures. For instance, Hezbollah or other groups may adjust their strategies by learning from Hamas's experiences, thereby indirectly "participating" in the war without direct engagement. Non-state actors thus, leverage the asymmetry of modern conflicts to challenge established military powers.

In effect, Conflict Diffusion Theory explains how violence and mobilization spread, while New Wars Theory provides insight into the tactical and strategic transformations adopted by non-state actors. Together, these frameworks enable a holistic understanding of the multiplier effects of war, showing how non-state actors are influenced not only by direct engagement but also through indirect mechanisms such as transnational solidarity, tactical imitation, and ideological mobilization.

The application of both theories is particularly apt for this study due to their unique ability to capture the dynamic, transnational, and decentralized nature of modern warfare involving non-state actors. Unlike traditional conflict theories that prioritize state-centric frameworks or balance-of-power calculations, Conflict Diffusion and New Wars theories offer analytical tools to examine how contemporary conflicts proliferate and evolve. Conflict Diffusion Theory enables the tracing of conflict spillovers (ideologically, materially, and strategically) across borders, while New Wars Theory illuminates how actors like Hamas reshape the very fabric of warfare through decentralized and identity-driven violence. Combined, these theories provide a conceptual rigor that is well-suited to unpack the indirect and wide-reaching impacts of the Israeli-Hamas war on other armed non-state actors in the Middle East.

## Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative, historical-analytical research methodology that focuses on the critical review of existing literature, scholarly analyses, and historical records relating to the Israeli-Hamas war primarily, and the Israeli-Palestine conflict on a broader scale. Given the nature of the research topic (which seeks to examine the amplified and often unintended consequences of war on non-



state actors), a qualitative approach is appropriate for understanding the underlying dynamics, patterns, and elements that quantitative data alone may not fully capture.

The study draws exclusively on secondary data sources, including academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, policy documents, and credible reports from international organizations. These materials provide insight into both the historical foundations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the use of historical analysis allows for a critical interrogation of how it has degenerated to what it is today. Furthermore, a comparative perspective is employed to assess the impact of the war on other non-state actors in regions detached from the Israeli-Hamas battlefield.

### **Historical Overview of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has evolved from a secular nationalist struggle to one increasingly dominated by religious fundamentalism on both sides (Perliger, 2019), with irreconcilable and most volatile confrontations in the modern Middle East. Following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, Britain assumed control over Palestine, a region inhabited by an Arab majority and a Jewish minority alongside other ethnic groups. Tensions between Jewish and Arab populations escalated after the 1917 Balfour Declaration, in which Britain expressed support for the establishment of a "national home" for the Jewish people in Palestine (Friedman, 1991), while also committing to protect the rights of existing Arab inhabitants. Jewish immigration increased substantially between the 1920s and 1940s, especially as Jews fled persecution in Europe, culminating in a Jewish population of approximately 600,000 (around one third of the total population) by 1947 (Wright, 1970). In response to rising violence and political conflict, the United Nations proposed a partition plan in 1947 to create separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem designated as an international city (Slonim, 1991). The partition was seen as violating Article 80 of the UN Charter, which protected the rights of Palestinian peoples under the Mandate (Wright, 1970). Following Britain's withdrawal, Israel was established in May 1948, leading to hostilities and the displacement of Arab populations (Wright, 1970).

While Hamas may have emerged as a distinct and powerful actor in 1987 during the First Intifada Palestinian uprising (Sari, 2020), various Palestinian groups have engaged in resistance against Israel since its establishment in 1948, the origin of the entire conflict. Founded on an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, Hamas, an acronym for Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyya (Islamic Resistance Movement), employs both Palestinian nationalism with Islamist ideology, advocating for the liberation of all Palestinian territories and rejecting Israel's right to exist as a state. Hamas has been designated a terrorist organization by Israel, the United States, the European Union, and several other countries due to its use of suicide bombings, rocket attacks, and other violent tactics against civilian

populations. Since its founding, Hamas has steadily grown from a grassroots movement to a formidable military and political force. After a landslide victory in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections and following violent clashes with rival faction Fatah, Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip in 2007, and has since governed Gaza, while the Fatah-dominated Palestine Authority controls parts of the West Bank (Pestana, 2020). This division has in no small measure repeatedly complicated peace negotiations with Israel. At this juncture, it is worthy of note stating that the Israeli-Hamas conflict has escalated into recurrent rounds of warfare, particularly in 2008–2009, 2012, 2014, 2021, and most recently in 2023–2024, each involving thousands of deaths, widespread destruction, and deepening humanitarian crises.

The latest and most intense round of hostilities erupted on October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched an unprecedented large-scale attack on Israel, firing thousands of rockets and infiltrating Israeli territory through land, sea, and air. Hamas fighters targeted civilian communities near the Gaza border, resulting in mass casualties, hostage-taking, and widespread destruction. This attack marked the deadliest day in Israel's history, with over 1,200 Israelis killed and hundreds taken hostage. In response, Israel launched Operation Swords of Iron, a massive military campaign aimed at dismantling Hamas's military infrastructure, neutralizing its leadership, and recovering hostages. Israel's counteroffensive included aerial bombardments, artillery shelling, and a sustained ground invasion of Gaza. The Israeli military targeted Hamas's network of tunnels, command centres, and rocket launching sites but also caused substantial civilian casualties and destruction of infrastructure, leading to widespread international concern over humanitarian conditions in Gaza. As of early 2024, the war had resulted in over 35,000 Palestinian deaths (Dardona et al., 2024), according to sources in Gaza. On the gravity of the impact on human life, Balkhy (2024) claims that 78 000 injured have been injured as at the same period. Shockingly, 72% of those killed are women and children, and around 10 000 people are reported missing, many of whom are presumed dead under the rubble Balkhy (2024).

### **Multiplier Effects of the Israeli-Hamas War on Non-State Actors**

One of the most immediate multiplier effects of the Israeli-Hamas war is the transfer and diffusion of tactics and strategies among violent non-state actors (VNSAs). The war has showcased Hamas's use of advanced warfare techniques, including rocket barrages, drone attacks, subterranean tunnel networks, and coordinated raids across borders. These methods have been carefully observed by other militant groups in the Middle East and beyond, particularly by organizations such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and various Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria (Grossman, 2018). For instance, Fabian (2024), writing for *The Times of Israel*, estimates that approximately 1,300 drones have been launched at Israel from all fronts since the start of the war, including from



Lebanon, Gaza, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Iran. This statistic underscores how swiftly other non-state actors are learning and replicating the feasibility of asymmetric warfare tools that can effectively challenge technologically superior state militaries (Veilleux-Lepage & Archambault, 2022). In particular, the Houthis in Yemen have capitalized on the conflict's momentum, launching over 100 drone and missile attacks on Red Sea shipping lanes (Baird Maritime, 2025) and Israeli targets. This response reflects a clear pattern of tactical imitation and adaptation, where groups co-opt successful strategies to serve their own regional and ideological agendas. This tactical learning and imitation enhance the capabilities of non-state actors, increasing regional instability and expanding the geography of conflict.

Beyond tactics, the Israeli-Hamas war has also served as a powerful ideological catalyst, galvanizing non-state actors that share anti-Israel, anti-Western, or broader Islamist ideologies. Hamas's attack on Israel in October 2023 and its continued resistance despite massive Israeli retaliation have been celebrated in various militant circles as a model of jihad and steadfastness (*sumud*) against a militarily superior enemy, particularly exploiting her internal divisions over judicial reforms (Levy, 2024).

Groups such as Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and others within the "Axis of Resistance" have publicly declared solidarity with Hamas. Official statements from Brigadier General Ismail Qaani, commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force, emphasized the war as a collective struggle against Zionist and Western aggression (Tehran Times, 2023). This ideological convergence has led to an increase in online recruitment propaganda across affiliated networks, according to Al Jazeera, the Houthis have recruited and trained more than 200,000 new fighters between October 2023 and January 2024 (Al Jazeera, 2024). As Drăgan (2024) notes, this ideological momentum may be linked to the spike in extremist activity or terror-related arrests in the Middle East, signifying that the war's symbolic resonance is potentially fueling global radicalization.

Additionally, the war has intensified regional proxy dynamics, with Iran playing a central role. Tehran has long supported Hamas, Hezbollah, and other non-state proxies and has used the conflict to strengthen coordination among these actors. Following the outbreak of hostilities, Hezbollah reportedly launched over 200 rocket and 20 drone attacks on Israel's northern front (Times of Israel, 2024) raising fears of a wider regional conflict. Simultaneously, Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria have (between October 18, 2023 and December 3, 2024) carried out 223 attacks on U.S. military installations, citing solidarity with Gaza (Knights et al. (2024). Likewise, the Houthis claimed responsibility for at least 100 attacks on Israeli-linked or Western vessels in the Red Sea between October 2023 and March 2024 (Nandini et al., 2024), further internationalizing the effects of the war.

Another critical multiplier effect is the shift in political legitimacy and public support for non-state actors involved in or aligned with the conflict. Widespread civilian casualties in Gaza, along with perceived Western complicity, have sparked mass protests across the Arab and Muslim world. In cities like Amman, Cairo, Istanbul, and Jakarta, rallies reportedly drew crowds exceeding 6,000 participants in Amman (Al Arabiya, 2023), tens of thousands in Cairo (Al-Monitor, 2023), tens of thousands in Istanbul (AP News, 2025), and hundreds in Jakarta (AP News, 2023), with demonstrators chanting pro-Hamas slogans and condemning Israeli actions.

This upsurge of support may translate into increased financial contributions, political legitimacy, and recruitment potential for VNSAs. As Hroub (2004) affirmed in “*Hamas after Shaykh Yasin and Rantisi*,” such moments of heightened conflict tend to expand Hamas’s popular appeal, even among communities previously distanced from the group. According to Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (2023), favorable public sentiment toward Hamas increased by 44% and 42% across West Bank and Gaza respectively, within three months of the conflict’s escalation. As Safdar (2024) notes, these developments have undermined recent normalization efforts between Israel and several Arab states, prompting a recalibration of diplomatic positions and pushing regional alliances back toward solidarity with the Palestinian cause.

### **Summarized Case Illustrations of Non-State Actors Affected by the Israeli-Hamas War**

The Israeli-Hamas war has significantly influenced a range of non-state actors across the Middle East and beyond, demonstrating the conflict’s far-reaching impact. Hezbollah in Lebanon has engaged in limited military action against Israel while leveraging the war to reinforce its “resistance” credentials. In Yemen, the Houthis have escalated both missile attacks toward Israel and maritime assaults in the Red Sea, globalizing the conflict’s effects. Iran-backed militias in Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen and Syria, such as Hezbollah, Houthi rebels, and various Shi’a militias, have intensified attacks on U.S. forces under the guise of supporting Palestinians (Khan & Han, 2020). This reflects how state-aligned groups are exploiting the war to advance broader regional agendas. Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) has emerged as a key operational partner of Hamas, while Hamas remains the dominant Islamist group in Palestine, PIJ’s influence has grown, particularly in Gaza (Bartal, 2022; Poljarevic, 2013). Furthermore, emerging and peripheral groups, including radical elements in neighboring countries and diaspora communities, have mobilized in support of Hamas, raising the risk of wider regional instability and transnational violence. Collectively, these cases highlight how the Israeli-Hamas war has acted as a catalyst for operational escalation, regional alliance-building, and the mobilization of new militant actors.

## Role of External State and Non-State Sponsors in the Israeli-Hamas War

### *Iran*

Iran remains the primary state sponsor of Hamas and other anti-Israel militant groups, including Hezbollah in Lebanon and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza. This support is driven by a shared opposition to Israel and the United States, as well as Iran's broader strategy of projecting regional influence through proxy warfare and non-state actors (Rezeg, 2020). Both before and during the current conflict, Iran has provided Hamas with substantial financial aid, advanced weaponry, and military training (AlMadani & Muttaqien, 2018). Intelligence reports indicate that Iranian funding has been crucial for Hamas's development of domestic rocket production and the construction of extensive tunnel networks beneath Gaza. Despite sectarian divisions between Iran's Shia leadership and Hamas's Sunni identity (Rezeg, 2020), their alliance reflects a pragmatic partnership rooted in their common goal of confronting Israel. Moreover, during the Israeli-Hamas war, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has reportedly exported Iran's Islamic Revolution to neighboring countries, antagonizing Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United States, and supporting proxy terrorist groups in the Greater Middle East region (Silinsky, 2021).

### *Qatar*

Qatar has played a critical role as a political patron and financial supporter of Hamas, though its involvement differs from Iran's in both nature and scope. While Qatar publicly frames its assistance as humanitarian and aimed at reconstruction in Gaza, significant financial contributions from Doha have been linked to sustaining Hamas's governance and social control over the territory. Through regular fund transfers (often coordinated with Israeli approval), Qatar has provided cash payments for civil servant salaries, fuel, and aid packages to prevent economic collapse in Gaza (Zureik, 2017). However, these funds have indirectly reinforced Hamas's rule (Qarmout & Béland, 2012) by allowing the group to allocate other resources to military activities. Beyond financial aid, Qatar also offers diplomatic protection to Hamas, with senior leaders such as Ismail Haniyeh residing in Doha. Furthermore, Qatar actively defends Hamas on international platforms, helping to shield the group from diplomatic isolation and shape favourable narratives, particularly within the Arab world.

### *Turkey and others*

Turkey has been a prominent political supporter of Hamas, with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan openly defending the group as a legitimate resistance movement. Although Turkey's backing is more of public diplomacy, challenging its terrorist

designation internationally plays a crucial role in legitimizing Hamas on the international stage (Jeong, 2021). Additionally, Turkey has reportedly provided a safe haven for some Hamas operatives, allowing them to organize and coordinate activities beyond Israeli reach, thereby strengthening Hamas's international position and complicating efforts to classify it solely as a terrorist organization in diplomatic contexts.

Beyond state sponsors, transnational Islamist networks and diaspora organizations have also bolstered Hamas's resilience. These non-state networks contribute financial resources, ideological propaganda, and recruitment channels, particularly in Europe, North America, and parts of Asia. Some organizations, operating under charitable or humanitarian covers, have been accused of funneling funds to Hamas, using religious and political solidarity campaigns to collect donations that are allegedly diverted for militant use. Additionally, these networks disseminate propaganda through social media, satellite channels, and publications, amplifying Hamas's ideological narratives, mobilizing international protests, and recruiting sympathizers, thereby extending Hamas's influence beyond the Middle East.

Furthermore, other regional states have played more ambiguous or covert roles in relation to Hamas. Egypt, while officially acting as a mediator between Hamas and Israel, has been accused at times of overlooking smuggling activities through the Sinai Peninsula (Dickstein, 2014). The Arab Spring led to significant changes in regional dynamics, affecting Egypt's relationships with Palestinians and Israelis (Dickstein, 2014). The same could be construed of Syria, though less directly engaged due to its internal conflict, remains ideologically aligned with Hamas. These indirect forms of support further complicate the regional dynamics surrounding Hamas and the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### **Security and Political Implications for the Region**

One of the most notable political outcomes of the Israeli-Hamas war has been the deepening polarization among Middle Eastern states, resulting in the realignment of existing alliances. The war has forced many regional actors to reassess their diplomatic stances and security postures, leading to a more fragmented political landscape.

Countries such as Iran, Qatar, and Turkey have firmly aligned themselves in support of Hamas, emphasizing the narrative of resistance against Israel and leveraging the conflict to bolster their regional influence (Stein, 2019). On the other hand, states like Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, despite expressing concern over the humanitarian situation in Gaza, have also shown caution in fully supporting Hamas, given their fears of empowering Islamist movements that could destabilize their regimes (Stein, 2019).

Additionally, the conflict has complicated the normalization process between Israel and several Arab states under the Abraham Accords (Madani, 2024), threatening to undo fragile diplomatic gains and reinvigorating anti-normalization sentiments within Arab populations. This seems to align with Abdullayev's (2024) view that the normalization efforts were driven by Arab states' desire for deeper military and technical cooperation with the U.S., rather than regional stabilization. Public outrage over Israel's military actions in Gaza has pressured governments that had previously sought rapprochement with Israel to have a rethink, making diplomatic balancing acts increasingly difficult.

The Israeli-Hamas war has heightened the risk of proxy conflicts across the region, as Iranian-backed groups such as Hezbollah, Iraqi militias, and the Houthis have used the war as a justification to attack Israeli and Western interests. This escalation has created multiple interconnected flashpoints, from Lebanon's southern border to the Red Sea and Iraq-Syria theatre, where U.S. troops and interests are also present. Such spillover effects risk turning a localized Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a broader regional war, with grave implications for Middle Eastern stability. For instance:

- i. Hezbollah's engagement with Israel along the Lebanese border raises the spectre of a two-front war for Israel, which could drag Lebanon into yet another devastating conflict.
- ii. Houthi missile and drone attacks targeting Israel and commercial vessels in the Red Sea have already disrupted global trade, with ripple effects on energy markets and international shipping.
- iii. Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and Syria have increased attacks on U.S. bases, potentially dragging the United States deeper into regional hostilities and complicating efforts to contain Iran's influence.

### **Threat to Regional Security Architecture and U.S. Interests**

The Israeli-Hamas conflict has challenged the existing regional security architecture, which had been increasingly shaped by U.S.-brokered normalization agreements and a loose coalition of moderate Arab states seeking to contain Iran. The war threatens to unravel these fragile arrangements, as Washington finds itself caught between supporting Israel and managing the broader fallout from the war. With American military assets and personnel targeted by Iranian proxies in Iraq and Syria, and U.S. naval assets deployed to deter wider escalation, the conflict has re-inflamed anti-American sentiments across the region. This complicates U.S. strategic goals, including efforts to relocate the Palestinians in Gaza and rebuild it as a US owned territory as proposed by the current U.S. President, Donald Trump. Additionally, the war has exposed the limitations of existing security mechanisms in preventing the empowerment of non-state actors and ensuring regional stability. If left unaddressed, the undermining of U.S.-backed security arrangements could

embolden hostile actors, including Iran and its proxies, to further challenge American interests and regional allies.

### ***Increased Risk of Terrorism, Radicalization and Humanitarian Implications***

Another dangerous implication of the conflict is the potential resurgence of terrorism and radicalization, both within and beyond the Middle East. The intensity of the Israeli military response in Gaza, coupled with civilian casualties, has fuelled grievances and anger that extremist groups can exploit to recruit new members and inspire attacks. Groups such as ISIS remnants, Al-Qaeda affiliates, and emerging jihadist cells may leverage the situation to frame the war as part of a broader struggle between Islam and the West, encouraging lone-wolf attacks, cross-border terrorism, and the mobilization of foreign fighters. This risk is particularly acute in areas where governance is weak, such as parts of the Sinai Peninsula, Iraq, Syria, and even among disenfranchised communities in Europe and parts of Africa. Furthermore, the glorification of Hamas's attacks in some militant circles could set dangerous precedents, encouraging copycat tactics, including rocket attacks, hostage-taking, and mass casualty operations against both civilian and military targets.

On the humanitarian angle, the prolonged nature of the Israeli-Hamas war has resulted in severe humanitarian crises, particularly in Gaza, where infrastructure collapse, medical shortages, and displacement have reached catastrophic levels (Farhat et al., 2023). This has generated regional concerns about the potential influx of refugees into neighbouring countries such as Egypt and Jordan, which are already burdened with economic and political pressures (Abumbe et al., 2024). The conflict has led to refugee migrations, lack of basic necessities, and allegations of sexual violence (Mbah et al., 2024). Hospitals and infrastructure have been strained, making it difficult for humanitarian agencies to provide aid (Rinku, 2024). Gaza faces a prolonged humanitarian crisis, exacerbated by Israeli-imposed restrictions and blockades, resulting in high unemployment, poverty, and poor health outcomes (Farhat et al., 2023).

### **Countermeasures, Policy responses and Limitations**

The war has prompted a wide range of countermeasures and policy responses from Israel, regional actors, global powers, and international organizations aimed at containing violence and managing broader security implications. Israel has responded with intensive military operations to weaken Hamas's military capabilities, including airstrikes, targeted assassinations, and destruction of infrastructure. While these efforts have inflicted damage on Hamas, they have also caused high civilian casualties, leading to international criticism and potentially strengthening Hamas's support among Palestinians. Diplomatic mediators like Egypt and Qatar have worked to broker ceasefires and facilitate humanitarian aid,



though their efforts are frequently undermined by recurring violence, political divisions among Palestinians, and Israel's refusal to negotiate directly with Hamas. The United States has provided strong political and military support to Israel while facing domestic and global pressure to advocate for humanitarian considerations. International organizations, including the UN and EU, have called for ceasefires and coordinated humanitarian efforts but have been limited by divisions and lack of enforcement mechanisms. Regional security cooperation, including intelligence sharing and border control between Israel, Egypt, and others, has aimed to curb arms smuggling and militant threats, while humanitarian organizations continue to provide essential aid under extreme conditions.

Despite these measures, significant limitations and gaps persist. The overwhelming focus on short-term military and security responses has failed to address the root causes of the conflict, including the blockade of Gaza, occupation-related grievances, and the lack of a path to Palestinian statehood. The Gaza blockade has shown little lasting impact on support for militant groups (Loewenthal et al., 2022). Diplomatic efforts remain fragmented, reactive, and lack a sustainable political framework. Counter-terrorism cooperation, though effective at a tactical level, does not tackle the ideological and political drivers of militancy. Furthermore, humanitarian aid, though critical, is insufficient without a long-term ceasefire and reconstruction plan. Military actions have not decisively neutralized Hamas or eroded its popular base, and diplomatic, security, and humanitarian responses have fallen short of creating durable peace. Therefore, there is an urgent need for comprehensive, multi-dimensional strategies that combine political solutions, security measures, and socio-economic initiatives to achieve lasting stability.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The Israeli-Hamas war represents more than a localized military confrontation, it is a conflict with extensive multiplier effects on non-state actors and regional stability. As this paper has shown, it has been recurring in nature and has intensified non-state actors' activities, emboldened regional militant groups, and reshaped the security and political dynamics of the Middle East. The conflict has also exposed the limitations of current state-centric responses to asymmetric warfare and highlighted the growing role of non-state actors in shaping the trajectory of regional conflicts. Thus, a reorientation of policy thinking is urgently required, one that moves beyond short-term military solutions and instead embraces comprehensive, multi-dimensional strategies aimed at conflict resolution, state-building, and counter-radicalization.

Among the key findings in this research are the following:

- I. Non-state actors have leveraged the war for legitimacy and visibility, reshaping the regional security landscape.

- II. State and international responses have prioritized short-term containment while neglecting the deeper structural causes of the conflict.
- III. The war has divided international opinion, with strong support for the Palestinian cause across the Muslim world and strategic ambivalence in the West.
- IV. The humanitarian fallout in Gaza has exacerbated local grievances and could fuel further extremism.

In light of these findings, the following integrated recommendations are proposed:

- I. Launch an internationally mediated peace initiative (led by a neutral and credible actor such as the UK) to facilitate structured dialogue between Israel and legitimate Palestinian representatives.
- II. Support humanitarian access and reconstruction in Gaza, ensuring aid is delivered under international supervision to prevent its diversion and to address the deepening crisis that risks escalating instability.
- III. Tie international development assistance to local governance reforms and peacebuilding, helping dismantle the conditions that allow militant groups to thrive and gain legitimacy.
- IV. Encourage a more balanced international diplomatic stance, especially from influential actors like the U.S., to avoid deepening political divides and to reestablish trust in global mediation efforts.
- V. Strengthen international legal mechanisms for investigating human rights abuses and war crimes, to ensure accountability and support justice for victims, reinforcing the rule of law in conflict zones.

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