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# The Israel– Hamas War: Causes, Humanitarian Impact, and Global Reactions

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## Abstract

The Israel– Hamas war represents one of the most complex and enduring conflicts in the Middle East, with profound humanitarian, political, and geopolitical implications. This study examines the underlying causes, humanitarian consequences, and global responses to the 2023 escalation, adopting an integrated analytical framework informed by realist and constructivist theories. The paper begins by contextualising the conflict within its historical roots, highlighting territorial disputes, nationalist movements, and the emergence of Hamas as a political and military actor. Empirical evidence demonstrates the severe impact of the war on civilians, including widespread casualties, displacement of approximately 1.9 million people in Gaza, and extensive damage to infrastructure, healthcare systems, and educational facilities. International humanitarian organisations such as the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and non-governmental agencies have played critical roles in providing relief, although their efforts are constrained by ongoing hostilities and logistical challenges. The study further examines global diplomatic responses, revealing divergent positions among major powers, including the United States, China, and Russia, as well as the limitations of multilateral institutions such as the United Nations Security Council in achieving consensus. Public opinion and global advocacy movements are also analysed, emphasising the role of social media, protests, and digital campaigns in shaping international engagement. The paper concludes by highlighting the broader political and security implications of the conflict, emphasising the need for integrated humanitarian, diplomatic, and reconstruction strategies. Findings underscore that sustainable peace and regional stability require addressing both structural and identity-driven dimensions of the conflict, reinforcing the importance of coordinated international intervention and long-term conflict resolution mechanisms.

**Keywords:** Israel– Hamas conflict, humanitarian impact, international responses, Gaza Strip, peacebuilding, Middle East geopolitics

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinian territories represents one of the most protracted and politically complex disputes in contemporary international relations. Rooted in competing national aspirations, territorial claims, and historical grievances, the Israeli– Palestinian conflict has generated recurring cycles of violence and diplomatic stalemate for more than seven

decades. Scholars widely regard the conflict as a multidimensional struggle involving nationalism, security dilemmas, colonial legacies, and regional geopolitics (Gelvin, 2021; Khalidi, 2020). The most recent escalation, involving Hamas and the Israel Defence Forces, has once again brought the conflict to the forefront of global political discourse.

The war that intensified following the October 7 attacks marked one of the most significant escalations in the conflict in recent decades. The attacks resulted in large numbers of civilian casualties and triggered a massive Israeli military response in the Gaza Strip. As the conflict expanded, it generated widespread humanitarian consequences, including displacement, infrastructure destruction, and severe shortages of essential resources such as food, water, and medical supplies (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], 2024). The events have also reignited global debate regarding international humanitarian law, the legitimacy of military responses, and the responsibilities of international institutions in conflict resolution.

Understanding the causes and implications of the Israel– Hamas war requires an examination of historical developments, political dynamics, and humanitarian outcomes. This study therefore investigates the roots of the conflict, the immediate triggers of the recent escalation, and the humanitarian and geopolitical consequences that have followed. By situating the war within the broader historical and political framework of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the research aims to provide a balanced and comprehensive analysis of the crisis.

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

The contemporary conflict between Israel and Palestinian actors is deeply embedded in the historical transformations that shaped the Middle East during the twentieth century. The establishment of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent Arab–Israeli wars fundamentally altered the political and demographic landscape of the region, leading to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and the emergence of unresolved territorial disputes (Pappé, 2006). These developments laid the foundation for enduring tensions between Israelis and Palestinians, which have periodically erupted into armed confrontations.

One of the most consequential turning points in the conflict occurred during the Six-Day War, when Israel captured territories including the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. The occupation of these territories created new political realities and intensified debates surrounding sovereignty, self-determination, and international law (Gelvin, 2021). Over time, Palestinian political movements evolved in response to these developments, ranging from secular nationalist organisations such as the Palestine Liberation Organization to Islamist groups such as Hamas.

The emergence of Hamas in the late 1980s during the First Intifada significantly reshaped Palestinian politics. Founded as an Islamist resistance movement, Hamas combined political activism, social welfare programmes, and armed resistance against Israel (Milton-Edwards & Farrell, 2010). Following internal Palestinian political divisions and elections in 2006, Hamas eventually assumed control of the Gaza Strip, creating a separate political authority from the Palestinian

Authority in the West Bank. Since then, relations between Israel and Hamas have been characterised by repeated military confrontations, blockades, and fragile ceasefire agreements.

These historical developments have produced a volatile environment in which structural grievances and unresolved political questions continue to fuel cycles of violence. The persistence of these tensions provides crucial context for understanding the outbreak of the recent Israel–Hamas war.

## **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The escalation of violence following the October 7 attacks represents one of the most severe crises in the history of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The coordinated assault by Hamas militants resulted in significant civilian casualties and the capture of hostages, prompting an extensive Israeli military campaign in Gaza. The resulting hostilities rapidly expanded into a large-scale conflict, characterised by intense aerial bombardments, ground operations, and rocket attacks.

The humanitarian consequences of the war have been profound. According to reports from the United Nations and international humanitarian organisations, millions of civilians have been affected by displacement, infrastructure destruction, and shortages of essential services (OCHA, 2024). Hospitals, schools, and residential areas have suffered extensive damage, placing immense strain on already fragile humanitarian systems within Gaza. Meanwhile, Israeli communities have also experienced significant trauma and insecurity due to ongoing threats from rocket attacks and cross-border violence.

Despite extensive international attention, the underlying causes of the conflict and the pathways toward resolution remain deeply contested. Political divisions within the international community, combined with longstanding grievances between the parties involved, have complicated diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving a sustainable ceasefire or long-term peace agreement. Consequently, there is a pressing need for scholarly analysis that examines both the structural causes of the conflict and the humanitarian consequences that arise from it.

## **1.4 Research Objectives**

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the Israel–Hamas war within its historical, humanitarian, and geopolitical contexts. Specifically, the research aims to:

- Examine the underlying historical and political causes that contributed to the outbreak of the Israel–Hamas war.
- Assess the humanitarian impact of the conflict on civilian populations, particularly within the Gaza Strip.

## 18. Int. J. Arts Humanit.

- Analyze the responses of the international community, including governments, international organizations, and humanitarian institutions. By addressing these objectives, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics driving the conflict and its broader implications.

### 1.5 Research Questions

This research is guided by the following key questions:

- What historical and political factors contributed to the outbreak of the Israel– Hamas war?
- How has the conflict affected civilians and humanitarian conditions in the affected regions?
- How have global actors—including states, international organizations, and humanitarian institutions—responded to the crisis?

### 1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the academic and policy-orientated understanding of one of the most consequential conflicts in contemporary international politics. The Israel– Hamas war not only affects the immediate populations involved but also carries far-reaching implications for regional stability in the Middle East and for global diplomatic relations. Scholars have long argued that unresolved conflicts in this region have the potential to influence international security, energy markets, migration patterns, and geopolitical alliances (Khalidi, 2020).

Furthermore, the humanitarian dimension of the conflict raises critical questions regarding the protection of civilians, adherence to international humanitarian law, and the responsibilities of international institutions during armed conflicts. By examining both the causes and consequences of the Israel– Hamas war, this study aims to contribute to informed academic debate and policy discussions concerning conflict resolution and humanitarian protection.

Ultimately, the research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how historical grievances, political dynamics, and humanitarian realities intersect in shaping one of the most enduring conflicts in modern history.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Israeli– Palestinian conflict has long been examined through historical, political, and humanitarian lenses. Rashid Khalidi's comprehensive historical analysis situates the modern conflict within colonial and nationalist developments in Palestine and the wider Middle East, highlighting how early twentieth-century imperial dynamics set the stage for sustained violence and contested statehood claims (Khalidi, 2020). Gelvin (2021) similarly traces the conflict's roots in competing nationalisms, arguing that it is shaped by both structural

forces and local political dynamics over the past century. These foundational works establish that the conflict cannot be understood apart from its deep historical context.

Scholars examining the causes of the Israel– Hamas war emphasise the multifaceted interplay of political, social, and security factors. Gelvin (2021) identifies cycles of territorial occupation, failed diplomacy, and recurring hostilities as central to periodic escalations. Khalidi (2020) adds that persistent asymmetries in power and control—in particular over Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip—have perpetuated grievances that fuel recurring violence. These analyses underscore that causes of conflict are rooted in prolonged political contention rather than isolated incidents.

Research on Hamas's role in the conflict highlights the organization's evolution from a socio-religious movement to a significant political and military actor. Milton-Edwards and Farrell (2010) chart Hamas's origins within the First Intifada and its expansion into governance structures in the Gaza Strip, noting how political fragmentation within the Palestinian polity shaped subsequent confrontations. Gunning's (2007) ethnographic work further illustrates that Hamas's social services networks and political strategies have been as crucial to its influence as its armed resistance.

The humanitarian impact of the Israel– Hamas conflict has been the focus of both academic and institutional research. Studies document the severe effects of sustained hostilities on civilians, including loss of life, injury, displacement, and psychological trauma. Sara Roy's (2016) work on Gaza emphasises how economic blockade and recurrent military operations have devastated local infrastructure and exacerbated civilian vulnerabilities long before the 2023 escalation. Institutional reports corroborate these findings with real-time data on civilian harm during specific confrontations.

Data produced by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) systematically tracks casualties, displacement, and infrastructure damage in Gaza, highlighting the disproportionate impact of hostilities on women and children (OCHA, 2024). These reports situate the 2023 escalation within a broader pattern of civilian vulnerability endemic to prolonged conflict. Humanitarian planning and scholarly analysis widely use OCHA's situation updates to comprehend the immediate human toll of military operations.

Healthcare infrastructure disruption is another critical aspect of the humanitarian crisis. The World Health Organization (WHO) has documented severe strain on medical facilities in Gaza during periods of escalation, noting shortages of essential supplies, intermittent electricity, and overwhelmed hospitals (WHO, 2024). Such disruptions have far-reaching implications beyond immediate casualties, contributing to heightened disease transmission and chronic health challenges.

Educational disruption figures prominently in analyses

of long-term humanitarian impact. UNICEF (2024) reports that recurrent closures and destruction of schools during escalations impede learning continuity for children in conflict zones, affecting psychosocial well-being and future opportunities. The loss of educational services is increasingly recognised as a significant, albeit indirect, consequence of prolonged conflict.

The international humanitarian response has been the subject of critical scholarship and policy analysis. UNRWA's role in providing food, shelter, and psychosocial support to displaced Palestinians has been highlighted as essential, though constrained by funding shortfalls and access challenges (UNRWA, 2025). Scholars note that operational limitations often reflect wider political barriers to neutral humanitarian access in contested environments.

The response of major global powers to the Israel– Hamas war reveals the influence of geopolitical interests on diplomatic postures. Research on U.S. policy emphasises a longstanding strategic alliance with Israel, shaped by security cooperation and shared political values that inform Washington's diplomatic responses in crises (Sharp, 2025). Comparative analyses suggest that divergent priorities among China, Russia, and European actors reflect broader contestation over international leadership roles in conflict mediation.

International institutions such as the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) have been studied as arenas of contested diplomacy. The UNSC often struggles to pass binding resolutions due to veto power exercised by permanent members, illustrating structural challenges in achieving unified global action on ceasefires or humanitarian access (United Nations, 2024). These dynamics are central to literature on the limitations of multilateral governance in protracted conflicts.

Public opinion and transnational activism have also received scholarly attention. Research indicates that social movements and diasporic advocacy campaigns influence international public discourse, shaping how citizens in Europe, North America, and the Middle East perceive conflict narratives and governmental policies (Human Rights Watch, 2024). Digital media research shows that social platforms amplify competing narratives, affecting global awareness and mobilisation around humanitarian issues.

Finally, conflict resolution and peacebuilding scholarship highlight the persistent barriers to lasting peace. Authors such as Shlaim (2014) argue that negotiated settlements require addressing not only territorial disputes but also issues of identity, collective memory, and mutual recognition. While ceasefires may offer temporary respite, scholars broadly agree that long-term stability hinges on comprehensive political agreements that acknowledge the structural roots of the conflict.

## 2.1. Historical Context and Causes of the Conflict

### 2.1.1 Historical Development of the Israel–Palestine Conflict

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinian territories has its origins in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when competing nationalist movements emerged in the region of historic Palestine. Jewish nationalism, expressed through the Zionist movement, sought the establishment of a Jewish homeland, while Palestinian Arab nationalism developed in opposition to both colonial rule and Zionist settlement (Gelvin, 2021). During the period of the British Mandate for Palestine (1920–1948), tensions between Jewish and Arab communities intensified as immigration, land acquisition, and political mobilisation transformed the demographic and political landscape of the territory (Khalidi, 2020).

The establishment of Israel in 1948 following the 1948 Arab–Israeli War marked a critical turning point in the conflict. While Israelis view this event as the founding of their state, Palestinians refer to it as the Nakba, or catastrophe, due to the displacement of approximately 700,000 Palestinians from their homes (Pappé, 2006). This displacement created a large refugee population and laid the foundation for enduring grievances that continue to shape Palestinian political identity and demands for statehood.

Another decisive moment occurred during the Six-Day War, when Israel captured the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. The occupation of these territories dramatically altered the geopolitical landscape of the conflict and intensified debates surrounding sovereignty, self-determination, and international law. Scholars argue that the post-1967 occupation became one of the central drivers of Palestinian resistance movements and international diplomatic negotiations (Gelvin, 2021; Khalidi, 2020).

Throughout the late twentieth century, the conflict was characterised by cycles of violence and attempts at peace negotiations. The First Intifada (1987–1993), a widespread Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule, significantly reshaped the political dynamics of the conflict by bringing international attention to Palestinian grievances and prompting negotiations that eventually produced the Oslo Accords in the 1990s. Although the Oslo process raised hopes for a two-state solution, its failure to resolve key issues—including borders, settlements, and the status of Jerusalem—contributed to renewed tensions and the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000 (Shlaim, 2014).

Scholars widely emphasise that the persistence of the conflict is rooted not only in territorial disputes but also in deeply embedded narratives of identity, security, and

## 20. Int. J. Arts Humanit.

historical justice. These factors have created a situation in which both sides perceive existential threats, making compromise extremely difficult. As a result, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict continues to be viewed as one of the most enduring and politically sensitive disputes in modern international relations.

### 2.1.2 Emergence of Hamas and Political Dynamics in Gaza

The rise of Hamas represents a significant development in the evolution of Palestinian political movements. Hamas was founded in 1987 during the First Intifada as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, combining Islamist ideology with Palestinian nationalism. Unlike the more secular Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Hamas framed the conflict with Israel in both religious and political terms, advocating resistance against Israeli occupation while also providing social services to Palestinian communities (Milton-Edwards & Farrell, 2010).

In its early years, Hamas gained popularity among Palestinians by establishing charitable organisations, schools, and healthcare services, particularly in the Gaza Strip. These activities allowed the movement to build grassroots support and challenge the political dominance of the PLO. At the same time, Hamas also developed an armed wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, which carried out attacks against Israeli targets as part of its strategy of armed resistance (Gunning, 2007).

The political significance of Hamas increased dramatically after the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections, in which the organisation won a majority of seats in the Palestinian parliament. The election outcome reflected widespread dissatisfaction with corruption and governance issues within the Palestinian Authority. However, tensions between Hamas and the rival political faction Fatah soon escalated into violent clashes, culminating in Hamas taking full control of the Gaza Strip in 2007 (Brown, 2010).

Since then, Gaza has remained under Hamas administration while Israel has maintained a blockade of the territory, citing security concerns related to rocket attacks and weapons smuggling. The blockade, combined with recurring armed confrontations between Israel and Hamas, has created a severe humanitarian and economic crisis within Gaza. Scholars argue that this political and humanitarian environment has contributed to cycles of radicalisation, instability, and recurring conflict between the two sides (Roy, 2016).

The governance of Gaza by Hamas has therefore become a central factor in understanding the dynamics of the Israel–Palestine conflict. While Hamas portrays itself as a resistance movement defending Palestinian rights, Israel and several Western countries designate it as a terrorist organisation. This fundamental disagreement has complicated diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving the

conflict and addressing the humanitarian conditions within Gaza.

### 2.1.3 Immediate Causes of the 2023 War

The most recent escalation in the conflict began with the October 7 attacks, when Hamas launched a large-scale coordinated assault on Israeli territory. The attack involved rocket barrages, cross-border infiltrations, and the taking of hostages, resulting in significant civilian casualties and widespread shock within Israeli society. Analysts describe the operation as one of the most significant security breaches in Israel's modern history (International Crisis Group, 2023).

In response, the Israel Defence Forces launched an extensive military campaign targeting Hamas infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. The military response included airstrikes, ground operations, and the mobilisation of large numbers of Israeli troops. Israeli authorities framed the operation as a necessary effort to eliminate Hamas's military capabilities and prevent future attacks against Israeli civilians.

Several scholars and policy analysts argue that the October 7 attacks cannot be understood in isolation but must instead be viewed within the broader context of prolonged tensions in the region. These tensions include the blockade of Gaza, ongoing Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank, political fragmentation within Palestinian leadership, and the absence of meaningful peace negotiations for more than a decade (Khalidi, 2020; International Crisis Group, 2023). The accumulation of these factors created a volatile environment in which the potential for escalation remained high.

The humanitarian consequences of the war have been severe. According to the United Nations and international humanitarian organisations, the conflict has resulted in widespread displacement, destruction of infrastructure, and a major humanitarian crisis within Gaza. Hospitals, residential areas, and critical infrastructure have been heavily damaged, placing millions of civilians at risk (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024).

The events surrounding the October 7 attacks and the subsequent military response therefore represent not only a military confrontation but also a broader humanitarian and geopolitical crisis. Understanding the immediate causes of the war requires recognising how historical grievances, political dynamics, and security concerns intersect to produce recurring cycles of violence between Israeli and Palestinian actors.

## 2.2 Empirical Review

Scholarly research on the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian territories has developed across multiple academic disciplines, including political science, Middle East studies, history, sociology, and international relations. Empirical studies examine the historical roots of

the conflict, the emergence of militant and political organisations such as Hamas, and the political dynamics surrounding the Gaza Strip. This section reviews thirty influential scholars whose work contributes to understanding the historical causes and contemporary dynamics of the conflict.

Recent scholarship continues to examine the historical narratives and political dynamics shaping the conflict. Nathan Thrall (2023) analyses the social and bureaucratic structures that influence daily life for Palestinians and Israelis, emphasising how administrative systems and political restrictions reinforce inequality and tension within the region.

Similarly, Rashid Khalidi (2020) provides a historical interpretation of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict as a prolonged struggle involving colonial dynamics, territorial disputes, and competing nationalist movements. Khalidi argues that the conflict has been shaped by international power politics and shifting regional alliances.

Sara Roy (2016) examines the economic and political conditions within the Gaza Strip, highlighting how economic restrictions, political isolation, and recurring military confrontations have contributed to long-term humanitarian and institutional crises in Gaza.

Avi Shlaim (2014) investigates Israeli foreign policy and regional diplomacy, emphasising how strategic considerations and regional security concerns have influenced Israeli approaches toward Palestinian territories.

Mark Tessler (2009) provides extensive empirical data on public opinion within Arab societies and Israel, demonstrating how perceptions of security, identity, and historical grievances influence political attitudes toward the conflict.

The ideological and political development of Hamas has been studied extensively by Beverley Milton-Edwards and Stephen Farrell (2010). Their research highlights how Hamas evolved from a grassroots Islamist social movement into a powerful political and military actor within Palestinian politics.

Similarly, Jeroen Gunning (2007) provides a detailed analysis of Hamas's political strategy, arguing that the organisation's influence stems partly from its provision of social services and its political engagement within Palestinian society.

Historical investigations into the origins of the conflict have also produced significant scholarly contributions. Ilan Pappé (2006) examines the displacement of Palestinians during the 1948 Arab–Israeli war and its long-term implications for Palestinian identity and refugee politics.

Another influential historian, Benny Morris (2004), used archival research to reassess the events surrounding the creation of Israel and the Palestinian refugee crisis, providing a nuanced interpretation of wartime decision-making.

Baruch Kimmerling and Joel Migdal (2003) analyse the development of Palestinian political identity and state-building efforts, emphasising the role of historical

institutions and leadership struggles in shaping Palestinian politics.

Ilan Lustick (2003) explores the political dilemmas surrounding territorial control and demographic changes within Israel and the Palestinian territories, arguing that internal political debates significantly influence policy decisions.

Earlier scholarship also contributed foundational analyses of the conflict. Edward Said (1979) examined how Western narratives and political discourse shaped international perceptions of the Middle East, including the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Shibley Telhami (1990) studied public opinion and political attitudes in the Arab world, demonstrating how regional perceptions of the conflict influence diplomatic relations and international alliances.

Moshe Ma'oz (1995) analysed Israeli–Arab relations and the political dynamics surrounding peace negotiations in the Middle East.

Yezid Sayigh (1997) provided a comprehensive study of Palestinian armed struggle and the development of nationalist movements within the Palestinian political landscape.

Helga Baumgarten (2005) explored the political evolution of Hamas and its role within Palestinian society and governance.

Norman Finkelstein (2003) investigated international political debates surrounding the conflict, focusing on human rights discourse and historical interpretation.

Chomsky and Pappé, (2010) critically examined United States foreign policy in the Middle East and its implications for the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Walter Laqueur (2003) analysed the broader history of Middle Eastern nationalism and the geopolitical forces influencing the conflict.

David Shipler (1986) explored everyday interactions between Israelis and Palestinians, highlighting the social and psychological dimensions of the conflict.

Ari Shavit (2013) investigated Israeli national identity and historical narratives shaping contemporary political debates within Israel.

Alan Dershowitz (2003) examined legal and diplomatic arguments related to Israel's security policies and international law.

Gil Z. Hochberg (2007) analysed cultural narratives and visual representations of the conflict within Israeli and Palestinian societies.

Meir Litvak (2010) studied Palestinian nationalism and ideological developments within Hamas and other Palestinian political organisations.

Bashir Bashir (2016) explored questions of reconciliation, shared history, and alternative political frameworks for resolving the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

David Meir-Levi (2007) examined historical narratives regarding the origins of the Palestinian refugee crisis and competing interpretations of the conflict.

Efraim Karsh (2002) challenged revisionist historical interpretations of the Arab–Israeli conflict, emphasising the role of regional politics and Arab state policies.

## 22. Int. J. Arts Humanit.

Benny Morris (2008) further analysed the broader history of Arab–Israeli wars and the evolution of Israeli military strategy.

Fischel (2011) and Ben-Ami (2006) studied the diplomatic history of peace negotiations, particularly focusing on the failure of the Oslo peace process and subsequent political developments.

Gershon Shafir (1996) investigated the sociological dimensions of Israeli state formation and settlement patterns.

Collectively, these empirical studies illustrate that the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is shaped by a combination of historical grievances, political ideologies, territorial disputes, and geopolitical dynamics. While some scholars emphasize colonial legacies and displacement, others focus on security concerns, nationalism, or political leadership. The diversity of perspectives within the literature reflects the complexity of the conflict and highlights the importance of interdisciplinary research in understanding its causes and potential pathways toward resolution.

### 2.3 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frameworks provide an analytical lens through which complex political conflicts can be understood and interpreted. In the study of international conflicts, theories from international relations and political sociology are frequently used to explain the motivations of political actors, the persistence of violence, and the challenges of conflict resolution. This study adopts a combination of realist and constructivist perspectives to analyse the causes and dynamics of the war between Israel and actors in the Palestinian territories, particularly Hamas.

One of the most influential perspectives in international relations is realism, which emphasises the role of power, security, and survival in shaping the behaviour of states. Classical realist scholars such as Hans Morgenthau argued that international politics is fundamentally driven by the pursuit of power and the need for states to protect their national interests within an anarchic international system. Later developments in the theory, particularly the structural realism proposed by Kenneth Waltz, emphasise that the absence of a central authority in the international system compels states to rely on military strength and strategic alliances to ensure their survival (Waltz, 1979).

Applying realist theory to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict helps explain the security-driven policies adopted by Israel in response to perceived threats from armed groups such as Hamas. From a realist perspective, the military actions of the Israel Defence Forces can be interpreted as attempts to maintain national security and deterrence against hostile actors. Realism also explains why regional and global powers often respond to the conflict based on strategic interests rather than purely

humanitarian considerations.

While realism provides insight into the strategic motivations of states, it does not fully explain the importance of identity, ideology, and historical narratives in sustaining the conflict. For this reason, this study also incorporates insights from constructivism, which emphasises the role of social constructs, collective identities, and shared beliefs in shaping political behaviour. Constructivist scholars such as Alexander Wendt argue that international politics is not determined solely by material power but also by the meanings that actors assign to their relationships and identities (Wendt, 1999).

In the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, constructivism highlights how historical narratives, national identity, and collective memory influence political attitudes and policies. Israeli and Palestinian societies have developed distinct historical interpretations of key events such as the creation of Israel in 1948 and the displacement of Palestinian populations. These narratives shape perceptions of legitimacy, justice, and victimhood, making political compromise more difficult. Constructivism therefore provides an important framework for understanding the persistence of the conflict beyond purely strategic considerations.

Together, realism and constructivism offer complementary perspectives for analysing the Israel–Hamas war. Realism explains the strategic and security-based motivations of political actors, while constructivism highlights the role of identity, ideology, and historical narratives in shaping the conflict. By combining these theoretical approaches, this study provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding the causes and dynamics of the war as well as the broader geopolitical implications.

### 2.4 Research Gap

Despite the extensive body of scholarship examining the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, several important gaps remain within the existing literature. Previous studies have largely focused on historical developments, diplomatic negotiations, and ideological narratives surrounding the conflict. While these contributions provide valuable insights into the origins and evolution of the dispute, relatively fewer studies have examined the recent escalation of violence involving Hamas and Israel within an integrated analytical framework that simultaneously considers historical causes, humanitarian consequences, and international responses.

Many earlier studies concentrated primarily on historical interpretations of the conflict or on the broader Arab–Israeli geopolitical context. Although these works significantly contributed to understanding the structural foundations of the conflict, they often did not incorporate the rapidly changing political and humanitarian dynamics that have emerged in recent years. In particular, the

escalation following the October 7 attacks **has** created new political realities that require updated scholarly analysis.

Another limitation in existing research is the tendency to examine the conflict from either a purely political or purely humanitarian perspective. Studies focusing on military strategy and security policy often overlook the humanitarian consequences of prolonged warfare, while humanitarian analyses may not fully address the political and strategic motivations underlying the conflict. As a result, there is a need for research that integrates these perspectives to provide a more holistic understanding of the war and its implications.

Furthermore, while many scholars have analysed the political dynamics of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, fewer studies have systematically examined how global actors and international institutions respond to the humanitarian crises generated by the conflict. Organisations such as the United Nations and other international humanitarian agencies play critical roles in addressing civilian suffering and facilitating diplomatic dialogue, yet the effectiveness of these responses remains an important area for further investigation.

This study therefore seeks to address these gaps by providing a comprehensive analysis of the Israel–Gaza war that integrates historical context, humanitarian impact, and international reactions. By combining insights from realist and constructivist theories with contemporary empirical evidence, the research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the causes, consequences, and global implications of one of the most significant conflicts in modern international relations.

### **3: HUMANITARIAN IMPACT OF THE WAR**

#### **3.1 Civilian Casualties and Displacement**

The October 7, 2023, attacks launched by Hamas against Israel and the subsequent Israeli military response in the Gaza Strip resulted in a catastrophic humanitarian toll. Civilian casualties have been substantial, with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2024) reporting over 58,000 Palestinian deaths and more than 139,000 injuries by mid-2025, a significant proportion of which were women and children. These figures reflect both direct impacts from aerial bombardments, artillery shelling, and cross-border hostilities, as well as indirect consequences, including inadequate access to medical care, electricity outages, and shortages of life-saving supplies. In Israel, the October 7 attacks caused over 1,000 civilian deaths and the abduction of hostages, producing widespread trauma, fear, and population displacement within affected communities (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

The conflict triggered massive internal displacement in Gaza, affecting approximately 1.9 million people, nearly 90% of the territory's population (UNRWA, 2025). Many

displaced individuals sought refuge in overcrowded schools, hospitals, and temporary shelters, often lacking access to clean water, sanitation, or adequate food supplies. Displacement disproportionately affected vulnerable groups, including children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, many of whom were separated from their families or lost essential medical care. According to Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF, 2024), repeated forced evacuations compounded the vulnerability of displaced populations, leading to increased malnutrition, psychological trauma, and exposure to communicable diseases.

This large-scale displacement not only created immediate humanitarian needs but also had broader social and economic implications. Families were forced to abandon livelihoods, leaving households financially destitute. The prolonged nature of the conflict, coupled with repeated displacement cycles, has intensified dependency on humanitarian aid and increased the risk of long-term social instability, further compounding the crisis in the Gaza Strip.

#### **3.2 Damage to Infrastructure and Public Services**

The war has caused extensive damage to civilian infrastructure, severely limiting access to basic services and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. Residential areas have been heavily bombed, leaving hundreds of thousands of people homeless. Hospitals, clinics, and medical facilities have been particularly affected, with the World Health Organization (WHO, 2024) reporting that fewer than half of Gaza's hospitals remained fully operational due to structural damage, electricity shortages, and limited medical supplies. The destruction of healthcare infrastructure has impeded treatment of the injured and exacerbated pre-existing health challenges, including chronic disease management and maternal care.

Education infrastructure has also been profoundly disrupted. According to UNICEF (2024), more than 80% of schools in Gaza have been damaged or repurposed as temporary shelters for displaced families. This has interrupted formal education for hundreds of thousands of children, creating long-term challenges for human capital development and social stability. The destruction of schools, combined with disrupted curricula and psychological trauma, threatens the educational continuity and development prospects of an entire generation.

Essential public services such as water, sanitation, and electricity have also suffered extensive damage. The OCHA (2024) reports that attacks on water pipelines and sewage systems have led to severe shortages of clean drinking water, while fuel shortages have restricted the operation of water pumps and hospital generators. Consequently, the risk of waterborne diseases and public health emergencies has increased. The disruption of electricity and communications further complicates relief

## 24. Int. J. Arts Humanit.

operations, hindering the ability of humanitarian organisations to respond effectively to urgent needs.

The cumulative impact of this infrastructure damage transforms the conflict from a military confrontation into a complex humanitarian emergency. The loss of housing, medical care, education, and essential services leaves civilians vulnerable to both immediate and long-term crises, highlighting the urgent need for coordinated humanitarian assistance and infrastructure rehabilitation.

### 3.3 Role of International Humanitarian Organisations

International humanitarian organisations have played a central role in mitigating the consequences of the conflict. The United Nations system, including OCHA, UNRWA, and UNICEF, has delivered food aid, medical supplies, water, and shelter materials to displaced populations while coordinating data collection to assess needs and monitor civilian harm (UNRWA, 2025; UNICEF, 2024). UNRWA has been particularly critical in providing emergency shelter and psychosocial support for displaced families, as well as operating clinics and vaccination campaigns in overcrowded camps.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has focused on protecting civilians, delivering medical assistance, and monitoring compliance with international humanitarian law. The ICRC has facilitated the safe passage of medical personnel, the exchange of hostages, and the provision of essential services under dangerous conditions (ICRC, 2024). Similarly, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as Human Rights Watch (2024) and Médecins Sans Frontières (2024) have documented civilian casualties, provided emergency healthcare, and advocated for the establishment of safe corridors for humanitarian relief.

Despite these efforts, humanitarian operations have faced significant obstacles, including active hostilities, restricted access to affected areas, and logistical limitations. Scholars and humanitarian agencies emphasise that sustained access, protection of civilian infrastructure, and international diplomatic intervention are essential to prevent further civilian harm and support long-term recovery (OCHA, 2024; WHO, 2024). Without effective coordination and security guarantees, the scale of human suffering is likely to increase, highlighting the interconnected nature of military, humanitarian, and political dimensions of the conflict.

## 4: GLOBAL REACTIONS AND DIPLOMATIC RESPONSES

### 4.1 Responses from Major Global Powers

The Israel–Hammas war has elicited diverse and often contrasting responses from major global powers, reflecting broader geopolitical interests and strategic alignments. The United States has consistently reaffirmed its support for Israel's right to self-defence while

simultaneously expressing concern over civilian casualties. President Joe Biden's administration approved significant military and humanitarian aid packages to Israel and emphasised the need for humanitarian corridors in Gaza (U.S. Department of State, 2024). Analysts argue that the U.S. approach reflects both strategic interests in maintaining regional alliances and domestic political considerations, particularly support from pro-Israel constituencies (Baker & Schmitt, 2024).

China, in contrast, has emphasised diplomatic mediation and the importance of adhering to international law. The Chinese government has called for an immediate ceasefire and advocated for a two-state solution, positioning itself as a neutral mediator capable of facilitating dialogue between Israel and Palestinian representatives (Xinhua, 2024). Observers note that China's stance also aligns with its broader geopolitical strategy of expanding influence in the Middle East without direct military involvement.

Russia has adopted a more ambivalent stance, emphasising sovereignty and self-determination while urging both parties to negotiate. Moscow's position includes calls for dialogue within the framework of international law, reflecting Russia's desire to assert influence as a power broker in the region (Reuters, 2024). Russian policymakers have also used the conflict to critique perceived Western bias in Middle East diplomacy, positioning themselves as advocates for multipolar solutions.

These divergent positions among major powers underscore the challenge of achieving coordinated international responses. While all actors express concern over humanitarian consequences, strategic and political considerations often dictate the scope, speed, and nature of their engagement, influencing the prospects for conflict resolution.

### 4.2 Role of International Institutions

International organisations, particularly the United Nations (UN), have played a central role in responding to the crisis and facilitating diplomatic efforts. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has convened multiple emergency sessions to address the conflict, resulting in debates over ceasefire resolutions, humanitarian access, and accountability for violations of international law (United Nations, 2024). However, the UNSC has struggled to achieve consensus due to competing interests among permanent members, including the U.S., Russia, and China. Vetoes and political stalemates have often delayed decisive action, highlighting structural challenges in global governance.

The UN General Assembly and associated agencies such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) have focused on delivering emergency aid, documenting civilian harm, and

advocating for the protection of displaced populations (UNRWA, 2025; OCHA, 2024). These agencies emphasise compliance with international humanitarian law and the establishment of safe humanitarian corridors.

Other international institutions, such as the European Union (EU), have employed a combination of diplomatic pressure and financial support to mitigate the humanitarian crisis. The EU has called for an immediate cessation of hostilities while pledging funding for relief operations, reconstruction, and medical support (European External Action Service [EEAS], 2024). These coordinated multilateral efforts illustrate the critical role of international institutions in bridging gaps between conflicting parties, though political divisions among global powers often limit their effectiveness.

### **4.3 Public Opinion and Global Protests**

The Israel– Hamas war has generated widespread public engagement and activism around the world, reflecting the conflict's deep international resonance. Demonstrations have occurred across major cities in Europe, North America, the Middle East, and Asia, with participants advocating for both Israeli and Palestinian rights. For instance, large-scale protests in London, Paris, and New York have called for ceasefires, humanitarian aid, and accountability for civilian casualties (Amnesty International, 2024).

Social media platforms have become crucial arenas for global advocacy, with campaigns highlighting humanitarian conditions, documenting civilian suffering, and pressuring governments to adopt specific policy positions. Hashtags and online petitions have mobilised international audiences, illustrating how digital activism can amplify public concern and influence diplomatic discourse (UNICEF, 2024).

Public opinion is also shaped by media coverage, which often frames the conflict in terms of human suffering, strategic security, or historical grievances. Research indicates that media framing significantly affects the perception of legitimacy, moral responsibility, and the urgency of international intervention (Human Rights Watch, 2024). The global public's engagement, therefore, not only reflects solidarity with affected populations but also exerts indirect pressure on governments and international organisations to act, demonstrating the interconnectedness of grassroots advocacy and formal diplomacy.

## **5: CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Political and Security Implications**

The Israel– Hamas war has profound implications for both regional stability in the Middle East and global geopolitical dynamics. The conflict has intensified pre-existing tensions between Israel and Palestinian factions while

also affecting neighbouring countries such as Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, which face spillover risks in terms of refugee flows, cross-border security threats, and political pressure from domestic constituencies (Berti, 2024). The military escalation has also highlighted vulnerabilities in Gaza's governance and Israel's civil defence infrastructure, prompting discussions on long-term security strategies and intelligence cooperation in the region (Eisenstadt, 2024).

Globally, the war has tested the diplomatic influence of major powers. The United States' robust support for Israel contrasts with China's and Russia's calls for immediate ceasefires and negotiations, reflecting a broader competition for influence in the Middle East (Xinhua, 2024; U.S. Department of State, 2024). These divergent approaches may complicate coordinated international responses, with potential consequences for broader international security frameworks, arms diplomacy, and regional alliances. Scholars argue that without effective multilateral engagement, such conflicts risk reinforcing cycles of violence and undermining long-term stability in an already fragile region (Sharp, 2025).

Furthermore, the protracted humanitarian crisis has implications for security, as civilian suffering and displacement can exacerbate radicalisation, reduce public trust in political institutions, and create long-term social grievances (UNRWA, 2025). The conflict demonstrates that military operations alone cannot ensure security; sustainable solutions require the integration of humanitarian, political, and developmental measures.

### **5.2 Prospects for Peace and Conflict Resolution**

Prospects for ceasefire agreements, reconstruction, and renewed peace negotiations remain complex but not unattainable. Diplomacy facilitated by international organisations and major powers will be critical. The United Nations, alongside regional actors such as Egypt and Qatar, has historically played an instrumental role in negotiating temporary ceasefires and humanitarian access in Gaza (United Nations, 2024). Recent proposals have emphasised phased ceasefires, humanitarian corridors, and monitoring mechanisms to reduce civilian harm while allowing reconstruction efforts to proceed.

Long-term peace will likely require addressing the underlying political and structural causes of the conflict. Scholars emphasise that sustainable solutions must include negotiations regarding territorial disputes, political representation, and the socioeconomic conditions in Gaza and the West Bank (Khalidi, 2020; Roy, 2016). Reconstruction efforts are also critical: rebuilding infrastructure, schools, hospitals, and water and sanitation systems is necessary not only for humanitarian purposes but also for fostering political stability and social resilience.

Conflict resolution will also depend on mechanisms to restore trust between the parties. Confidence-building

## 26. Int. J. Arts Humanit.

measures, third-party mediation, and international guarantees for civilian protection may reduce the risk of renewed hostilities (Shlaim, 2014). While historical precedents, such as the Oslo Accords, demonstrate both the possibilities and limitations of negotiated settlements, experts argue that a combination of multilateral diplomacy, humanitarian support, and structural reforms provides the most viable pathway toward lasting peace.

### 5.3 Conclusion

This study has examined the Israel– Hamas war from multiple perspectives, including its historical causes, humanitarian consequences, and global diplomatic responses. The literature review highlighted the deep historical roots of the conflict, including territorial disputes, nationalist movements, and the rise of Hamas as both a political and military actor (Khalidi, 2020; Milton-Edwards & Farrell, 2010). The empirical review demonstrated the severe impact of the 2023 escalation on civilians, infrastructure, and public services, while emphasising the critical role of international humanitarian organisations in mitigating suffering (OCHA, 2024; WHO, 2024).

We analysed the responses of major global powers, international institutions, and global civil society. The findings suggest that divergent geopolitical interests, coupled with public opinion and advocacy campaigns, shape the international response to the conflict and influence prospects for diplomacy (Baker & Schmitt, 2024; UNICEF, 2024).

Overall, the study underscores that resolving the Israel– Hamas conflict requires an integrated approach. Sustainable peace depends on addressing both the strategic and identity-driven dimensions of the conflict, protecting civilians, and ensuring effective humanitarian and reconstruction efforts. Failure to integrate these factors risks perpetuating cycles of violence and humanitarian crises, with broader implications for regional and global stability.

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