

The Middle East After October 7: One Year On

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Islamic Theology of Counter Terrorism

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Summary: The war which Hamas started on 7th Oct has now spread across the Middle East and Israel is fighting on seven fronts at the same time which is a clear proof that Israel cannot tolerate any threat from within or outside of its border, does not matter how far the threat had emerged. The Middle East has dramatically changed after the 7th Oct war and it has certainly pose ideological and political impact on different societies living inside or outside the state of Israel. Israeli and Palestinian societies have been changed since the Hamas attacks on 7th October, which have left scars of distrust for the three communities most directly impacted: Jews, Palestinians and Arabs surrounding the State of Israel.

Israeli Society: The 7th Oct attack on Israel has not only changed the political, geographical and security domains in the state but across the region. The thought process of an ordinary Israeli has also changed after the 7th Oct because they have never seen such a high level of Jewish-targeted massacres since the Holocaust. Moreover, the new generation of the Jewish community have witnessed multiple layers of hate and antisemitism across the globe. In the backdrop to those horrific events, is the functioning of the economy, which has shrunk for a few reasons: Israel sent headers and thousands of reservists into the war; Palestinian labour was completely cut off from the Israeli market; and the war has negatively affected economic growth, credit rating and market valuations.

Palestinian Society: The economy of the Palestinian Authority has suffered. A significant portion of the region's economy was dependent on Palestinian labour, who have seen their livelihoods diminished as thousands of work permits were immediately revoked after Hamas carried out the heinous attacks on 7th Oct. The life of ordinary Palestinians was shattered as a result. It will be extremely hard for Israel to maintain the same level of trust in Palestinian labourers, and this will continue to affect Palestinian society.

Arab Society: Israeli Arabs were living dual lives in Israel, on the one hand they have sympathy with their Palestinian brethren, whether living in Gaza or in the PA, and on the other hand, they are dedicated to serve the country in which they were born and bred, which is Israel. Their sympathy for the people of Gaza raises questions about levels of patriotism, while actions of “bad apples” within the Arab community have also created fissures between both communities. The Hamas attacks have also sharpened Israeli mentality towards the role of Arab citizens, for example: “are they with us or with Hamas?”. Moreover, the kidnappings and murders of Muslim Arabs by Hamas have also changed the mindset of segments of Arab society, which now view that Hamas is not trustworthy and use them as a

political and religious tool against their own state, while, in fact, they are still considered traitors by the people of Gaza.

Gaza: Thousands of people in Gaza have lost their lives and the living infrastructures of more than a million people have been completely destroyed due to the Israeli military operation against Hamas after 7th Oct, which has created huge grievances in Gaza society against Israel. Hamas have already admitted that the war has recruited thousands of new members to the organisation. It is true that Israel will not let Hamas rule in Gaza, but it is impossible to deradicalize the people of Gaza because Hamas militants live among them and Hamas have already created a strong motivation across Gaza's society against Israelis.

Iran & Proxies: Iran has lost Hamas but cannot afford to lose its ideological proxy Hezbollah. Hezbollah, like Hamas, lives among civilians and it will be hard to eradicate Hezbollah ideology from Lebanon's Shia communities. Hezbollah is not only a terrorist group but a social welfare, religious, and cultural entity in Lebanese society. The defeat of Hezbollah will be the defeat of the Iranian crescent in the region because, of all the Iranian proxies in the Middle East, Hezbollah is the "mother" organisation. Hezbollah has made tremendous gains during the Syrian war and has battle-hardened experience. The IDF knows very well that it will take a long time to eliminate Hezbollah on the ground and separate it from Lebanon. Iran will not sit quiet and watch the elimination of its mother proxy This was the reason that Israel's military strategic goals included successfully eliminating the entire Hezbollah command by pinpoint targeting, because on the ground it would have been difficult, even if not impossible.

Iran has powerful influence across the Middle East and has the capabilities to fight across multiple fronts along Arab borders. For example, the Iranian proxy in Yemen, the Houthis, defeated Arab coalition forces, and Arab states ultimately pulled their forces back without achieving their goals, pushing them to negotiate with Iran at the table. Israel is the only country that has the levels of western support and weapons capabilities to destroy Iranian proxies in the region and there are expectations that this will create a peaceful and trustworthy atmosphere between Israel and the Arab world.

There is no doubt that the Middle East is on the brink of fire, but the state of Israel is playing its cards very carefully and effectively. Israel has done its homework to assassinate more Iranian proxy leaders and IRGC commanders in Syria and Lebanon but will never harm the Iranian Supreme leader Ali

Hosseini Khamenei since harming him could ignite a religious war in the region that Israel could not handle. Israel will only rely on regime change within Iran by Iranians themselves. Israel can help them in terms of weakening the regime's power by targeting its military capability as well as its nuclear program if it's justified by the Islamic Republic's aggression.

Arab States: There are four types of Arab and Muslim countries around and connected with the state of Israel in different regions, for example:

- 1- **Enemy** (Syria, Iran, Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq)
- 2- **Friendly** (UAE, Sudan, Morocco, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan)
- 3- **Frenemy** (Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Qatar)
- 4- **Neutral** (Oman, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Pakistan)

These countries are playing a very crucial and significant role directly or indirectly for Israel in different regions. Israel's political and military establishments keep a close eye on each of those listed countries with the goal of bringing neutral countries close and weakening enemy countries. Two countries of them try not to engage directly and officially with Israel, only doing so covertly: Iraq and Qatar. Qatar has always supported proxies behind the curtain to weaken the state of Israel while never confronting directly. After the fall of Saddam Hussein, Iraq is not in the position to pose a direct threat to Israel because the rise of ISIS has weakened its military capability and administering control over former ISIS cities. However, Kurdistan is politically and geographically divided into two zones, Erbil area is political supportive towards Israel, however, Sulaymaniyah area which is geographically close to Iran has more Iranian influence within and around the borders. The state of Israel has close political and military contacts with the Kurdish capital Erbil.

International Cooperation: Israel has traditionally had strong support from western states, especially from the United States. After 7th Oct, the entire civilised world in the west stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the state of Israel for multiple reasons:

- 1- *Israel is an ally of most of the western world.*
- 2- *Israel has military and intelligence cooperation channels with the US and European countries.*
- 3- *Israel has economic and diplomatic ties with a majority of western states.*
- 4- *The citizens of several western countries have been either murdered or kidnapped by Hamas on the 7th Oct attacks.*
- 5- *Western countries have regional interest with the State of Israel in the Middle East*

6- War on Isarel is considered a war on western nation states.

7- Hamas and Hezbollah have been designated terrorist groups by many western countries.

There are many more reasons for western countries to stand with the Jewish state. The US consistently uses rhetoric of unconditional support to Israel and assists with military capabilities. Meanwhile, Israel has helped the US by sharing intelligence and conducting joint military operations to achieve mutual regional goals.

There is no doubt that many Europeans states have also pressured Israel to end the war in Gaza, but the reason is not to weaken Israel or save Hamas, rather from fear of war escalation across the Middle East. On the one hand, western governments want Israel to eliminate Hamas but on the other hand they want Israel to end the war because of the pressure they face from their own citizens, which has weakened their political support in their own constituencies. Western political leaders are fighting for their own political career. Many strong members of the UK Parliament lost their election because of their unconditional support to Israel, which means they have compromised their career to stand with the Jewish state of Israel.

Conclusion: The Israel-Hamas war has now evolved into an official Israel-Iran war, which may change again in to the Iran-Arab war because there are reports that Iran has sent strongly worded threats to the US administration: if Israel strikes its oil refineries, Iran will hit oil refineries in the Arab countries and if this happens, the war would cover the entire Middle East and every country, their supporters (Russia, China, US, etc) will jump to protect their security, political, economic and geographical interests. It has been predicted that the war in the Middle East will start a third World War, which no one wants, and everyone would try to stop because it's not in any country's regional interests.

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