

CONNECTED FRONTS. GAZA, ISRAEL AND IRAN IN THE NEW GEOGRAPHY OF CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the Israeli–Palestinian conflict within a broader regional and geopolitical context, focusing on its connection to the growing confrontation between Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran. After the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, the Gaza Strip is no longer seen as an isolated crisis, but as a central point in a wider hybrid conflict. The analysis starts from the historical, symbolic, and institutional roots of the Palestinian question and then examines Iran’s role as a revisionist actor and leader of the so-called “Axis of Resistance.” The escalation in 2024–2025 marked a shift from proxy war to direct military confrontation, including mutual attacks on nuclear and military targets. In this situation, the United States did not act as a neutral mediator but became a direct actor, supporting Israel with military, technological, and operational means. The final part of the paper outlines three possible future scenarios: (1) the dismantling of Hamas and the collapse of Gaza’s civil and urban systems; (2) the destabilization of Iran’s regime due to internal protests and external pressure; (3) the possible expansion of the conflict through the reactivation of transnational jihadist networks reacting to the regional crisis. These scenarios are not abstract or theoretical, but possible outcomes of the current situation. They reflect deeper changes in the nature of war and in the political management of conflict in today’s international system.

KEYWORDS: Israeli–Palestinian conflict; Near-Middle East geopolitics; Geography of conflicts

Introduction

This research offers a structured reflection on the historical, institutional, and geopolitical evolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with the aim of extending the analysis to the regional and systemic dimensions that today redefine its nature and scope, also in light of the growing interconnection with the confrontation between Israel and Iran, which is becoming increasingly direct, symmetrical, and cross-border.

The conflict is no longer only the legacy of a colonial or inter-state fracture, but represents a critical threshold for the entire Middle Eastern order and for global balances. In a context marked by the rise of revisionist actors, the crisis of multilateral institutions, and the growing hybridization between conventional and asymmetric warfare, the Israeli-Palestinian issue, along with its extension into the rivalry with Iran, takes on a paradigmatic value in the contemporary transformation of international relations. The analysis begins with a reconstruction of the colonial and ideological roots of the conflict, going through the phases that have shaped its development, from the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire to the birth of the State of Israel, from the Arab-Israeli wars to the Oslo process, up to the fragmentation of the Palestinian front and the regionalization of the crisis. In this latter dynamic, Iran’s growing assertiveness is part of a broader ideological and military strategy aimed at reshaping the balance of power in the Middle East. However, the core of the investigation focuses on more recent transformations. Variable-geometry warfare, the emergence of non-state and transnational actors, the crisis of Palestinian political representation, and the overcoming of the

bilateral dimension require a multi-level reading of the conflict, capable of connecting its local, regional, and global components.

The approach adopted does not merely aim at providing a chronological reconstruction, but seeks to explore the interaction between political, military, symbolic, and institutional factors that feed the production and reproduction of the conflict. Particular attention is given to the spatial genealogy of the so-called “Middle East,” understood not as a neutral geographical entity, but as a political and discursive construction, first shaped by imperial logics and later by contemporary hegemonic strategies. Within this framework, the role of the United States is central in structuring the regional order and supporting Israeli military superiority as a deterrent tool, in contrast to Iran’s strategy of backing the so-called axis of resistance. The reconfiguration of the Levantine space, the erosion of weak sovereignties, and the overlap between colonialism, deterrence, and military governance are key steps in understanding the transition from an inter-state fracture to a hybrid, deterrent, and post-state conflict.

From a methodological perspective, the research is based on the interconnection between political, geopolitical, and institutional variables. Special focus is placed on the internal instability of the Palestinian territories, the centrality of the Gaza Strip, the role of Iran as a revisionist power and ideological and military pivot of the anti-Israeli front, and the involvement of global powers, especially the United States, whose political, military, and diplomatic support for Israel has historically shaped regional balances. The erosion of international law as a shared regulatory framework is also a central element.

The sources used, academic, theoretical, institutional, and journalistic, are selected critically and with full awareness of their role in constructing and legitimising narratives. The final goal of this paper is to restore the historical depth of the Israeli-Palestinian fracture, to analyse its current transformations, and to outline, in light of the most recent events, a plausible near-future scenario. The regionalisation of the crisis, the escalation between Israel and Iran, and the progressive weakening of international legal structures define an unstable configuration that escapes traditional categories. The growing connection between the Palestinian question and the Israeli-Iranian confrontation reveals the emergence of a war system with both internal and regional projection, which challenges the ability of the international community to rethink tools, language, and visions of peace in a global order marked by deep fractures, permanent deterrence, and increasing asymmetry between power and law. In this framework, the role of the United States remains decisive, not only due to its continuous military, political, and technological support for Israel, but also because of the systemic anchoring function that Washington exercises in steering regional security dynamics, often subordinating international law to strategies of containment and strategic superiority.

From the Imperial Definition of the Near East to the Strategic Construction of the “Middle East”

In the history of international relations, the way a space is named is never neutral. Geographical names are tools of organization and, at the same time, instruments of power. The conceptual transition from the “Near East” to the “Middle East” does not respond to a descriptive need, but rather reflects a redefinition of the area based on the interests of colonial powers and, later, the global strategies of U.S. hegemony. Understanding this transformation means analyzing the genealogy of a space that was represented, before being studied, through categories imposed from outside. In the 19th century, the term “Near East” appeared in European diplomatic language to describe the areas of the Ottoman Empire closest to Europe, from the Anatolian peninsula and the

Balkans to Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia. This naming followed a Eurocentric worldview, classifying space using a logic of proximity and domination, and distinguishing between the Near, Middle, and Far East.¹ But the Near East was not only a cartographic expression. It was a fragile and contested strategic space, where European powers projected their ambitions as the Ottoman Empire began to show signs of internal decline and external vulnerability.² From the second half of the 19th century, Great Britain and France increased their presence in the region, first through diplomatic missions and commercial concessions, then by controlling infrastructure and routes, and finally by using formal tools like protectorates and international mandates. Officially, this expansion was justified as necessary to stabilize politically weak or administratively backward areas. In reality, it served geo-economic and military interests: control of land corridors between Europe and Asia, access to ports in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf, and security of imperial routes to India. After World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the region was redesigned with artificial borders, according to new European power balances. The Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) and the League of Nations mandates gave Britain control over Palestine, Transjordan, and Iraq, and France control over Syria and Lebanon. This division did not only affect territories. It also restructured the symbolic meaning of space, changing traditional place names, administrative systems, and identities through external governance aimed at integrating the region into colonial networks.³ The shift to the term “Middle East” began in a second historical phase, marked by the decline of European imperialism and the rise of the United States in managing regional balances. Although the term had already appeared in Royal Navy documents in the early 20th century, used to describe naval operations between the Red Sea, Persian Gulf, and Indian Ocean, it gained full political and strategic meaning only after World War II.

After the end of the British mandate in Palestine (1948), the Suez Crisis (1956), and U.S. involvement in Iran—especially after the 1953 CIA-backed coup against Mossadeq—a new security architecture was formed. The Middle East became a key region in the Cold War.⁴

Starting in the 1950s, the U.S. adopted a broader vision of the region, including the Levant, Arabian Peninsula, Iranian plateau, and North Africa. The area was called the “Middle East” in official documents, security doctrines, and military maps. Institutions such as the Middle East Command, CENTO (Central Treaty Organization), and bilateral alliances with Gulf monarchies and Israel turned this idea into reality.

In this context, the region was not interpreted based on its internal history, but shaped by its global utility: to contain Soviet influence, ensure access to energy resources, and support friendly regimes. Thus, “Middle East” became a category used for control—not just military, but also epistemological. It grouped together very different territories, ignored local histories, and presented externally imposed hierarchies as natural.⁵

The transformation from Near East to Middle East was not just about words. It marked a crucial step in turning space into an object of global governance. Studying this genealogy does not mean denying conflict and alliances in the region, but recognizing that these dynamics were often interpreted and managed through an external conceptual framework.⁶ Only by questioning this framework can we clearly analyze the power relations, political actors, and strategic plans active in the region today.

¹ Kamel L., 2019, *The Middle East from Empire to Sealed Identities*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press., pp.5-9; 15-21; 23-30.

² Robson L., 2020, *The Politics of Mass Violence in the Middle East*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp.12-17.

³ Kamel L., 2015, *Imperial Perceptions of Palestine: British Influence and Power in Late Ottoman Times*, London–New York, I.B. Tauris, pp.39-49; 73-81.

⁴ Robson L., 2020., *op.cit.*, pp.86-92.

⁵ Kamel.,2015., *op.cit.*, pp.83-95 ; 97-102.

⁶ Robson L., 2020., *op.cit.*, pp.99-106.

Conflict and Political Construction in the Levant. The Long Trajectory of the Israeli-Palestinian Fracture

In this framework of spatial and symbolic redefinition of the area, Palestine, located at the crossroads between Europe, Asia, and Africa, assumed increasing centrality, not only as a node of imperial routes, but as a privileged terrain for the projection of religious, colonial, and nationalist interests. It is in this context of imperial reconfiguration, semantic transformation of space, and progressive penetration of European actors that the Zionist project took shape and one of the most enduring and symbolically charged political fractures of the twentieth century began: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Understanding its roots implies reconstructing the political, ideological, and territorial conditions that, between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, led to the progressive definition of the Zionist project and its concrete implementation in the context of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the colonial redefinition of Middle Eastern spaces.⁷

The Zionist movement, formally codified with the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897 under the leadership of Theodor Herzl, was born in the context of European nationalisms and developed as a response to the systemic antisemitism present in numerous European countries, especially in Eastern Europe. In particular, the wave of anti-Jewish pogroms that struck the Russian Empire between the late 19th century and the early decades of the 20th, marked by violence, looting, and massacres tolerated or promoted by the authorities, contributed to reinforcing the urgency, within vast sectors of the Jewish diaspora, of a political-territorial project capable of guaranteeing protection and self-determination.

The declared objective of the movement was to create a "national home," understood as an autonomous political entity founded on a defined territoriality. Although the identification of Palestine as the preferred location for this project gradually emerged, alternative options (Uganda, Argentina, Cyprus) were also discussed in the early stages, attesting that the choice of the historical region of Eretz Israel was the result of an ideological, religious, and pragmatic synthesis.⁸

Already from the last decades of the 19th century, some Zionist groups began to purchase land in Palestine, then a peripheral province of the Ottoman Empire, settling through agricultural colonies supported by European capital. These settlements, although initially limited, represented the material nucleus of the future establishment.⁹

However, it is only after the Ottoman collapse following the First World War that the Zionist project acquired a more solid geopolitical dimension, thanks to a convergence between international actors, British colonial interests, and the transnational mobilization of the Jewish movement. In 1916, in the midst of the world conflict, Britain and France signed the secret Sykes-Picot agreements, which foresaw the division of the Levantine and Mesopotamian area into spheres of influence between the two empires, effectively anticipating the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰

At the same time, with the Balfour Declaration of 1917, the British government expressed its support for the establishment in Palestine of a "national home for the Jewish people," compatible with the rights of the non-Jewish populations present in the territory. The ambiguous formulation of the declaration, combined with the British promise made to the Arabs to support a future independent state in exchange for the revolt against Istanbul, immediately produced a structural tension between divergent expectations.

⁷ Robson L., 2020, *op.cit.*, pp. 17–18.

⁸ Ivi., pp. 19–23.

⁹ Kamel L., 2015, *op.cit.*, pp. 88–90.

¹⁰ Kamel L., 2019, *op.cit.*, pp. 65–69.

With the end of the conflict and the Treaty of Sèvres (1920), the League of Nations entrusted Britain with the Mandate over Palestine, formalizing its role as a colonial administration disguised as fiduciary governance. The official objective of the mandate was to guide the former Ottoman territories toward political autonomy, but in practice British power was exercised as an imperial protectorate, regulating Jewish immigration (in constant increase especially after the racial laws in Europe), repressing Arab revolts, and trying to contain a growing polarization between the two communities.¹¹

During the 1920s and 1930s, the demography and territorial structure of Palestine changed profoundly. The growth of Jewish communities, supported by organized and financed migratory flows and by a shrewd land policy, progressively came into conflict with the local Arab population, which perceived Zionist expansion as a colonial process of expropriation. Social and economic tensions quickly turned into violent clashes, fueled by British ambiguity, which oscillated between concessions and repression without being able to structure a lasting solution. It is essential to clarify that the failure of the British protectorate did not occur suddenly, but was the result of a growing crisis of legitimacy and violent pressure from both sides. Already in the 1930s, British administration faced a double insurgency. On the one hand, the Great Arab Revolt of 1936–1939, an expression of emerging Palestinian nationalism, resulted in strikes, attacks against infrastructure and British authorities, and was harshly repressed with military and judicial tools. On the other hand, from the 1940s onwards, actions of radical Zionist militias such as Irgun and the Stern Group (Lehi) intensified, moving from resistance to colonial domination to a strategy of terrorist attacks, as demonstrated by the 1946 bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, headquarters of the Mandate administration.¹²

This double armed and political pressure, reflecting the crisis of authority of an administration by then incapable of managing the growing conflict between the two communities, led Britain to decide to withdraw from Palestine and refer the issue to the United Nations. After the Second World War, marked by the tragedy of the Shoah, contributed to strengthening international support, accelerating the recognition of the need for a Jewish state solution. In November 1947, with Resolution 181, the UN approved a plan to partition Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab, with a *corpus separatum* for Jerusalem under international administration. The plan foresaw an asymmetric territorial division compared to the demographic composition of the time. About 55% of the territory was assigned to the future Jewish state, although Jews represented just over a third of the population, according to estimates of the time.¹³

Although a significant part of the assigned land was sparsely populated, mostly desert areas like the Negev, the project was welcomed by the Zionist movement as an acceptable compromise, but was immediately rejected by the Arab leadership, who considered it a violation of the rights of the indigenous majority.

The military intervention of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon aimed to oppose the implementation of the UN partition plan and to support Palestinian claims. However, the lack of coordination among the Arab states, combined with the military efficiency of Jewish forces, made the conflict favorable to Israel, which expanded its territorial control well beyond the borders established by Resolution 181, occupying about 78% of historic Palestine. At the end of hostilities, over 700,000 Palestinians were expelled or forced to flee, giving rise to the refugee issue (Nakba) and to the absence of an Arab Palestinian state, which was excluded from the Armistice Agreements. These agreements, signed in 1949 with Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, did not produce a formal

¹¹ Robson L., 2020, op.cit., pp.51-53.

¹² Schanzer J., 2008, *Hamas vs. Fatah. The Struggle for Palestine*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, pp.12-14.

¹³ Roy S., 2011, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza. Engaging the Islamist Social Sector*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, pp. 32-35.

peace, but temporarily froze the conflict. The West Bank was annexed to Jordan, while the Gaza Strip came under Egyptian administration.¹⁴

The second major clash occurred in 1956, with the so-called Suez Crisis, triggered by the nationalization of the canal by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Israel, alongside the United Kingdom and France, launched a coordinated attack against Egypt, occupying the Sinai Peninsula. However, the political reaction was swift: the United States and the Soviet Union, for different reasons, exerted converging pressures for the withdrawal of Western forces, decreeing the failure of the operation. On the one hand, Israel temporarily obtained the reopening of the maritime passage of Tiran; on the other, the erosion of European colonial influence in the region clearly emerged, in favor of a new bipolar order in which Washington assumed a central role in managing regional crises.¹⁵

In 1967, the so-called Six-Day War represented the strategic turning point. After a progressive deterioration of relations between Israel and the Arab neighbors, exacerbated by Egyptian military maneuvers in Sinai and the closure of the Strait of Tiran, Israel launched a preemptive attack against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, destroying much of their air forces in the first hours of the conflict. In less than a week, Israel conquered the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the entire Sinai Peninsula, tripling the surface of its territorial control. This military victory produced a further profound redefinition of regional balances, placing Israel in a position of superiority and inaugurating the long phase of military occupation of Palestinian territories.¹⁶

UN Security Council Resolution 242, adopted in November 1967, established the principle of "land for peace," calling for Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories and mutual recognition among the states of the region. The deliberate vagueness of the text, particularly regarding the extent of the withdrawal, compromised its implementation from the outset, while the Palestinian issue still lacked autonomous representation in international negotiations [Robinson G.E., *Building a Palestinian State. The Incomplete Revolution*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1997, pp. 20–23].¹⁷

The fourth major interstate conflict occurred in 1973, during the Yom Kippur War. In a joint operation, Egypt and Syria simultaneously attacked Israeli positions in the Sinai and Golan Heights, initially catching Israeli forces by surprise. The war quickly evolved into an indirect confrontation between Washington and Moscow, accompanied by intense diplomatic activity aimed at preventing nuclear escalation. After initial Arab successes, Israel managed to counterbalance the offensive and consolidate its positions. The result was a freezing of the strategic balance, which, however, opened the door to the subsequent negotiation phase between Egypt and Israel.¹⁸

Starting in the mid-1970s, the Middle Eastern regional structure entered a new phase, no longer marked by generalized wars between Israel and the Arab bloc, but by bilateral negotiations conducted with selected states, following a logic of gradual diplomatic normalization. This transformation was made possible by two converging factors. On the one hand, the realization by key Arab state actors of the difficulty in defeating Israel militarily, made evident after the Yom Kippur War; on the other hand, the pressure exerted by the United States, which saw in the attenuation of direct confrontation an opportunity to stabilize a key area within its security architecture and Soviet containment strategy.¹⁹

¹⁴ Robson L., 2020, *op.cit.*, pp. 63-70.

¹⁵ Quandt W.B., Indyk M.S., 1986, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics*, Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, pp.15-17.

¹⁶ Kamel L., 2019., *op.cit.*, pp.145-148.

¹⁷ Robinson G.E., 1997, *Building a Palestinian State. The Incomplete Revolution*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, pp. 20–23.

¹⁸ Quandt W.B., Indyk M.S., 1986, *op.cit.*, pp. 19-24.

¹⁹ Quandt W.B., 2005, *Peace Process. American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*, Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, pp. 173–176.

The first major agreement in this direction was the one signed between Egypt and Israel in 1978 at Camp David, under the mediation of U.S. President Jimmy Carter. The subsequent Egypt-Israel peace treaty of 1979 marked the first formal recognition of Israel by an Arab country, in exchange for the complete return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt. While this agreement represented a diplomatic turning point, it was not without both symbolic and strategic consequences. Cairo, by isolating itself from the collective Arab cause, was temporarily expelled from the Arab League, while the resistance front shifted to other actors, no longer exclusively state-based. In parallel, the political autonomization process of the Palestinian issue strengthened, moving from a secondary element in interstate wars to a progressively central actor, though still not fully sovereign. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had been founded in 1964, but it was only in 1969, with Yasser Arafat's rise to leadership, that it acquired a truly political-military profile, positioning itself as the sole representative of Palestinian national aspirations.²⁰

The 1980s were marked by a radicalization of the confrontation. The Israeli military operations in Lebanon (1982), aimed at dismantling the PLO structure based in Beirut, and the subsequent diaspora of the organization to Tunisia, produced a new imbalance.

The first Palestinian Intifada (1987–1993), which erupted in the occupied territories, demonstrated that the resistance was no longer merely an external or exogenous expression, but an endogenous movement rooted in Palestinian civil society, capable of undermining the legitimacy of the occupation even in the eyes of international public opinion.²¹

It was within this context that the region's second major diplomatic turning point emerged: the Oslo Accords. Signed in 1993 (Oslo I) and 1995 (Oslo II) under Washington's mediation, the agreements established mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO and provided for the creation of a Palestinian National Authority (PNA) with administrative functions in parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as an interim step toward a possible final two-state solution. Though formally representing progress, Oslo was more a managed compromise than a balanced political project. On the one hand, the PLO was forced to accept a gradual solution without effective guarantees on the final status of Jerusalem, the refugees, and the borders; on the other hand, Israel retained military and infrastructural control over vast portions of the West Bank, fragmenting Palestinian space and heavily constraining its potential sovereignty.²² The subsequent years were contradictory. While the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) was formally established (with Arafat as president in 1996), the reality on the ground was marked by the expansion of Israeli settlements, growing social frustration in Palestinian areas, and a radicalization of opposition, with new actors such as Hamas emerging in opposition to the Oslo negotiation line. From a geopolitical perspective, the 1978–2000 cycle showed a trend of selective pacification functional to the interests of dominant powers. The bilateral treaties (Egypt, Jordan in 1994), multilateral diplomacy (Madrid process), and the creation of a semi-sovereign Palestinian authority were instruments of conflict management rather than resolution, aimed at stabilizing the region in terms of energy balance and military cooperation, more than collective rights.²³ At the same time, the Palestinian cause, though formally recognized, underwent strategic marginalization, as it became increasingly subordinated to regional dynamics and the security needs of Israel and its Western partners. The symbolic end of this cycle can be identified in the failure of the Camp David II summit in 2000 and the outbreak of the second Intifada. Unlike the first popular uprising of 1987, characterized mainly by civil mobilization and widespread resistance, the second Intifada quickly militarized, with the systematic use of suicide bombings, armed reprisals, and air operations. Israel responded with a variable geometry counterinsurgency

²⁰ Robinson G.E., 1997, *op.cit.*, pp. 22-25.

²¹ Roy S., 2011, *op.cit.*, pp. 43-46.

²² Ivi, pp.62-67.

²³ Quandt W.B., 2005, pp.203-210.

strategy, alternating incursions into Palestinian urban centers, mass arrests, destruction of the PNA's administrative infrastructure, and the beginning of the construction of the West Bank separation barrier, justified as an anti-terrorism measure but criticized by many international actors for its territorial and legal impact.²⁴

In the post-9/11 global climate, the Bush administration framed the Israeli-Palestinian issue within the broader “Global War on Terror,” further contributing to the international delegitimization of the Palestinian leadership, particularly concerning Hamas, which was added to the list of terrorist organizations. This semantic shift, from a struggle for self-determination to a matter of international security, contributed to a narrative and political redefinition of the conflict, further marginalizing Palestinian demands in major multilateral forums.²⁵

In 2005, with the unilateral decision by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to withdraw settlers and military forces from the Gaza Strip, a new phase began. The so-called unilateral disengagement was not accompanied by a negotiated process with the PNA but was imposed according to a unilateral and managerial logic. Israel retained control over all Gaza access points (airspace, maritime domain, and land crossings), effectively redefining the occupation in indirect terms while maintaining de facto control. This move was interpreted by some observers as an attempt to consolidate Israel's grip on the West Bank by neutralizing the Gaza issue through functional separation.²⁶

In 2006, the Palestinian legislative elections saw Hamas win an absolute majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council. The result marked the irreversible rupture between Hamas and Fatah, which degenerated in 2007 into an internal armed conflict and the territorial and institutional division between Gaza (controlled by Hamas) and the West Bank (represented by the PNA). This dualism not only paralyzed any possibility of unified representation but also offered Israel and international actors a justification to exclude Hamas from any negotiation process, reinforcing a differentiated conflict management approach: managing security in the West Bank with Fatah, containing Gaza with the use of force. Since then, Gaza has become a laboratory of low-intensity but high-frequency asymmetric conflict, the subject of cyclical military operations, including Cast Lead (2008–2009), Pillar of Defense (2012), and Protective Edge (2014), with devastating impacts on the civilian population and limited strategic results. These interventions, justified by the need to neutralize Hamas's offensive capabilities (rockets, tunnels, armed militias), consolidated a logic of coercive deterrence, with no negotiation prospects and structural effects of further impoverishment and isolation of the Strip.²⁷

In parallel, the West Bank underwent a subtler yet profound transformation. While the PNA survived through a fragile balance of international aid, security cooperation with Israel, and increasingly fragile internal legitimacy, Israeli settlements continued to expand, especially in strategic areas along the Green Line and near East Jerusalem. This growth, formally illegal under international law, was progressively normalized in Israeli public discourse and downplayed by Western diplomacies, which prioritized political stability over international legal concerns.²⁸

At the regional level, the 2010s brought a profound transformation of the Arab order, indirectly contributing to the further marginalization of the Palestinian cause. The Arab Spring of 2011 reshaped the strategic priorities of Arab states, which were overwhelmed by protests, chaotic transitions, and internal crises. In this context, the Palestinian issue lost centrality, not only for tactical reasons but due to a gradual paradigm shift, from pan-Arab solidarity to national security priorities. Iran, Syria, and non-state actors such as Hezbollah partially filled this void, presenting

²⁴ Roy S., 2011, *op.cit.*, pp. 85-91.

²⁵ Schanzer J., 2008, *op.cit.*, pp.89-91.

²⁶ Roy S., 2011, *op.cit.*, pp.44-45.

²⁷ Ivi, pp. 72-75.

²⁸ Kamel L., 2019, pp.161-164.

themselves as defenders of the "resistance," while major Sunni Arab states gravitated toward informal cooperation with Israel, based on anti-Iranian convergence and mutual interest in regional stability.²⁹

Structural instability before October 7, 2023

This marginalization became formalized—both symbolically and diplomatically—between 2020 and 2023 with the signing of the Abraham Accords, which sanctioned the normalization of relations between Israel and key Arab states, including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan.

The accords, promoted under the guise of cooperation and publicly framed as a pathway toward a “peaceful peace,” revealed their role in sidelining the Palestinian cause and in constructing a regional alliance centered on anti-Iranian convergence.

This regional reconfiguration made increasingly evident the widening gap between the strategic priorities of Arab regimes and Palestinian claims, now excluded from the main negotiation processes and lacking any real capacity to exert influence on the international stage.³⁰

At the same time, political and territorial fractures within the Palestinian front were deepening between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

This institutional polarization, rooted in Hamas’s electoral victory in 2006 and its subsequent split with Fatah, led in 2007 to the Islamist movement’s seizure of control in Gaza and the establishment of a parallel government, creating the de facto coexistence of two separate Palestinian political entities [Milton-Edwards B., 2013, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, pp. 94–98].

The West Bank, administered by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), and Gaza, under Hamas rule, were thus fragmented, antagonistic, and devoid of a unified leadership capable of representing the Palestinian people as a whole.

In the West Bank, the PNA faced a structural crisis of legitimacy and representation. The government in Ramallah, led by Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), seemed increasingly disconnected from the daily lives of the population and unable to effectively control important areas, especially in dense urban zones such as Jenin, Nablus, Hebron, and Tulkarem. The security forces, partially integrated into cooperation mechanisms with Israel, were seen by many citizens as tools of repression rather than protection. This allowed the rise of independent local actors, such as the Jenin Brigades or the Lion’s Den group in Nablus, who operated outside the institutional framework, using widespread armed resistance without centralized coordination. By contrast, the Gaza Strip had a more centralized political and military system. Hamas, in power since 2007, had built a strong command structure and tight territorial and social control, despite the isolation and strict embargo imposed by Israel and Egypt, officially justified by the need to stop terrorism and arms smuggling.³¹ From 2020 to 2023, according to estimates by the U.S. State Department cited by *Reuters*, Iran is believed to have gradually increased its financial support to Hamas, from approximately \$100 million per year to a reported \$300 million in the lead-up to the attack in southern Israel.³² These

²⁹ Robson L., 2020, pp.212-215.

³⁰ Scaglione R., 2022, La normalizzazione delle relazioni tra Israele e i Paesi arabi, in Centro Militare di Studi Strategici (a cura di), *Osservatorio Strategico* 4/2022, Roma, Ce.Mi.S., pp. 22–25, online on: https://www.difesa.it/SMD/CASD/IM/CeMISS/OsservatorioStrategico/Documents/os_4_2022_ita_web.pdf

³¹ Milton-Edwards B., 2013, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, Cambridge, Polity Press, pp. 142-147.

³² Reuters, 13 October 2023, *How Hamas secretly built a mini-army to fight Israel*, in «Reuters», online on: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/how-hamas-secretly-built-mini-army-fight-israel-2023-10-13/>

funds were reportedly used to strengthen logistical infrastructure, build underground tunnels, and improve missile capabilities.³³

At the same time, the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) trained at least 500 fighters from Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad inside Iran. They were taught sabotage techniques, coordinated raids, and the use of drones.³⁴

This Iranian support transformed Hamas into a key partner of the Shiite regional axis, giving it advanced military abilities and political recognition as an independent actor, while still keeping its Sunni identity and operational autonomy.

Meanwhile, Qatar played an important role in supporting Gaza's civil administration, paying public sector salaries, financing hospitals and essential infrastructure, and working as a diplomatic mediator.³⁵ Turkey, although keeping a pro-Palestinian tone, gradually rebuilt ties with Israel to protect its own geopolitical interests. In this context, Hamas no longer appeared as a sub-state actor but as a political group with its own agenda and sovereign partners, capable of playing an important role in both negotiations and military dynamics.

The absence of a unified Palestinian strategy and the competition between secular nationalism (Fatah) and political Islamism (Hamas) blocked any prospect of state-building, undermining the very credibility of the Palestinian cause. Fragmentation was no longer a temporary obstacle but had become a structural element of the conflict. This political paralysis was also reflected in the radicalization of younger generations, fueled by episodes such as the clashes at the Al-Aqsa Mosque during Ramadan in 2023.³⁶

Israel, for its part, continued to strengthen its conventional military capabilities. Between 2019 and 2023, according to SIPRI data, it was among the world's leading arms importers, with 69% of its supplies coming from the United States (including F-35I jets, Iron Dome, and David's Sling systems), and the rest from Germany and Italy.³⁷ At the same time, its multi-layered defense system was reinforced, with particular focus on the Tel Aviv metropolitan area and the reservist network. Israel also installed additional missile defense batteries and air defense systems, including components of the Patriot system, and intensified the deployment of advanced sensors and active radar to monitor the southern border.

In the months leading up to October 7, 2023, Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) operations in the West Bank intensified, further increasing tensions. Among the most significant incidents were the raid on the Balata camp in March (which left five Palestinians dead), the operation in Jenin on June 19 (resulting in seven deaths and over ninety injuries), and a new offensive in the first week of July, again in Jenin, carried out with armored vehicles and air support (causing at least seven deaths and more than fifty injuries).³⁸ The combination of internal Palestinian wear and tear, political isolation, Israeli military superiority, and the illusion of deterrence created the conditions for the systemic rupture represented by the events of October 7, 2023. On that day, during the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah, Hamas launched a coordinated and unprecedented attack on Israel. The operation, called "Al-Aqsa Flood," involved more than 1,500 fighters who crossed the defensive barrier from

³³ Teti A., 2022, Hamas, Iran and the Shifting Geopolitics of the Middle East, in Caridi P., Maggiolini P. (eds.), *L'Islamismo dopo l'ISIS*, Milan, Ledizioni, pp. 134–137.

³⁴ Ivi, pp. 138–140.

³⁵ De Poli B., 2021, Qatar's Strategic Investment in Gaza, in Di Pascale F., Caracciolo L. (eds.), *Fratture mediorientali*, Rome, Limes, pp. 75–78.

³⁶ Al Jazeera, 5 April 2023, What's behind the Ramadan raids at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque?, in Al Jazeera, online on: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/5/al-aqsa-mosque-compound-and-recurrent-ramadan-tensions>.

³⁷ SIPRI, 2024, *Trends in international arms transfers 2023*, Stockholm, SIPRI, online on: https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/fs_2503_at_2024_0.pdf.

³⁸ Byman D., Holtz M., 6 December 2023, *Why Hamas Attacked When It Did*, Washington D.C., Center for Strategic and International Studies, online on: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/why-hamas-attacked-when-it-did>.

the Gaza Strip and attacked more than twenty locations in the south of the country, including the kibbutzim of Be'eri and Kfar Aza, as well as the Re'im music festival. The attack combined rockets, ground raids, paragliders, and offensive drones, catching the IDF by surprise and resulting in over 1,200 Israeli deaths, hundreds of hostages, and an armed infiltration that lasted more than 24 hours. It was the most traumatic event for Israel since the 1973 war.³⁹

Beyond the strictly military aspect, the attack had a clear political and symbolic meaning: to break the Israeli illusion of security and deterrence, to bring the Palestinian question back to the center of regional discourse, and to reestablish Hamas as the leading force in Palestinian resistance, both in terms of identity and military capability. Various sources agree that the operation aimed to respond to the escalation of Israeli raids in the West Bank, recurring tensions at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the prolonged blockade of Gaza, and the increasing marginalization of the Palestinian cause by Arab regimes. In this sense, October 7 marked a deliberate rupture, aimed at reshaping the terms of the conflict and re-legitimizing the political-military role of Hamas within the Palestinian sphere and beyond.

The Regional Reconfiguration of the Conflict after October 7

Israel's response to the October 7 attack immediately took the form of a large-scale counteroffensive. It was not only aimed at restoring military deterrence, but also at redefining the entire security strategy of the Israeli state in the regional context. The operation, called "Iron Swords," went beyond a simple military reaction and became a broader political and symbolic strategy after the unexpected breach of the southern border. The declared goal of the Israeli government was to destroy Hamas as a military and political actor, eliminating its ability to command, control, and carry out attacks.

The reaction did not stop in the Gaza Strip. It also expanded into the West Bank, where Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) increased their raids, put pressure on urban areas, and accelerated settlement expansion. This double approach, offensive in Gaza and preventive in the West Bank, aimed to achieve two things: first, to restore the Israeli government's credibility after the failure of its defense system; second, to reaffirm Israel's central role in the region by setting the rules of the conflict unilaterally. The war has therefore taken on the features of a long-term political strategy, where military violence is part of a bigger plan to reshape the regional balance. Gaza has become the symbolic place where Israel wants to restore its dominance, through the destruction of civilian and military infrastructure, targeted killings of Hamas leaders, full closure of border crossings, and a total blockade.⁴⁰

In the West Bank, the logic of containment has led to increased militarization, more violence from settlers, and a further weakening of the Palestinian National Authority, which now lacks legitimacy and territorial control.

On a military level, Israel's actions have involved continuous bombings, logistical isolation, and intense pressure on the civilian population in Gaza. These actions have increasingly violated humanitarian law and raised concerns in international law. What makes this offensive different from past ones is its transformative aim: not just to deter, but to reshape the terms of the conflict. At the

³⁹ Council on Foreign Relations, 28 May 2025, *Israeli–Palestinian Conflict*, in *Global Conflict Tracker*, New York, Council on Foreign Relations, online on: <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/israeli-palestinian-conflict>

⁴⁰ Selján, P., 2024, "The The 7 October Hamas Attack: A Preliminary Assessment of the Israeli Intelligence, Military and Policy Failures", *AARMS – Academic and Applied Research in Military and Public Management Science*, Budapest, 23(1), pp. 81–98, DOI: [10.32565/aarms](https://doi.org/10.32565/aarms).

same time, Israel wants to send a strong message to both state and non-state actors in the region about its ability to maintain full sovereignty even during times of extreme vulnerability.⁴¹

In the regional context, reactions to Israel's offensive in Gaza revealed a clear polarization between a cautious, non-interventionist bloc and a front openly hostile to Israel. The Gulf monarchies, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar, adopted a cautious stance, while formally condemning the military escalation, they avoided direct confrontation, instead calling for a ceasefire and reviving diplomatic initiatives, particularly through Doha and Muscat. This approach reflects the delicate balance between pan-Arab solidarity and the need to maintain internal stability and good relations with the United States. Egypt assumed a more active mediating role, firmly rejecting the possibility of forced population transfers of Palestinians into the Sinai and promoting ceasefire proposals between the parties. Turkey, led by Erdoğan, reacted more assertively: it publicly condemned the Israeli intervention, describing it as "inhumane," and increased its humanitarian commitment by opening a UNRWA office in Ankara.⁴² On the opposite front, Iran expressed strong condemnation of the offensive, renewed its support for the "Axis of Resistance," and issued direct threats to Israel and its allies, including through pressure in the Strait of Hormuz. Syria and Lebanon, while avoiding large-scale direct military involvement, displayed intensified anti-Israel rhetoric and symbolic actions by Hezbollah along the northern border.

In addition to regional fragmentation, the international response to the conflict highlighted an increasing disarticulation of global alignments, reflecting existing fractures among Western powers, revisionist actors, and countries of the Global South. The United States reaffirmed the strategic centrality of its bond with Israel, confirming its role as the main political, military, and symbolic guarantor of Israel's security. U.S. support unfolded on multiple levels: from presidential declarations of solidarity to the deployment of naval groups in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the approval of an extraordinary aid package worth over \$14 billion dedicated to military assistance to Israel. Passed by Congress in April 2024, this package includes advanced missile defense systems (Iron Dome, David's Sling), radar systems, precision weaponry, surveillance technologies, and a strengthening of cooperation in the C4ISR domain. This support has taken the form of an almost structural operational integration, set to deepen over time.⁴³

At the same time, in multilateral and humanitarian contexts, Washington maintained a formally supportive stance on humanitarian pauses and evacuation corridors, but systematically opposed UN resolutions that could call into question Israel's right to self-defense. The United States exercised its veto power in the Security Council on all occasions it deemed critical, effectively blocking any concrete action by the international system. This posture, marked by unconditional support but formally compatible with international legality, ended up deepening the diplomatic isolation of the United States in various multilateral forums, contributing to the erosion of its credibility as an impartial mediator in the region, particularly in the eyes of Arab states and broad segments of the Global South.⁴⁴

The European Union, for its part, displayed a highly fragmented response, reflecting its internal divisions and its persistent inability to develop a common foreign policy on highly contentious

⁴¹ Jewish Institute for National Security of America (JINSA), 12 April 2024, *Israel's Operation Swords of Iron*, online on: <https://jinsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Israels-Operation-Swords-of-Iron-Update-4-12-24-1.pdf>

⁴² Al Jazeera, 25 October 2023, *Turkey's Erdoğan scraps Israel trip over 'inhumane' Gaza war*, in Al Jazeera, online on: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/25/turkeys-erdogan-scraps-israel-trip-over-inhumane-gaza-war>

⁴³ Redazione Analisi Difesa, 14 August 2024, *"Dagli USA 20 miliardi di aiuti militari a Israele, inclusi 50 aerei da combattimento F-15IA"*, Analisi Difesa, online on: <https://www.analisdifesa.it/2024/08/dagli-usa-20-miliardi-di-aiuti-militari-a-israele-inclusi-50-aerei-da-combattimento-f-15ia/>

⁴⁴ Mancini M., 13 May 2024, *Ammissione della Palestina alle Nazioni Unite: la reazione dell'Assemblea Generale al veto degli Stati Uniti*, in AffarInternazionali, online on: <https://www.affarinternazionali.it/ammissione-della-palestina-alle-nazioni-unite-la-reazione-dellassemblea-generale-al-veto-degli-stati-uniti/>

issues. Some member states, particularly Germany, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, and Hungary, reaffirmed almost unconditional support for Israel, also justified by long-standing industrial ties in the defense and cybersecurity sectors. Italy, too, confirmed a broadly aligned position, as shown by the bilateral agreement on cyber cooperation signed in 2022.⁴⁵ Other governments, such as those of Spain, Ireland, and Belgium, instead took clearly critical stances, denouncing the disproportionate use of force and calling for greater compliance with international humanitarian law. In official statements, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and Irish Foreign Minister Micheál Martin explicitly called for a ceasefire and the launch of an international investigation.⁴⁶ The result was a fragmented positioning, unable to meaningfully influence the course of the conflict or propose an independent diplomatic agenda. While mobilizing humanitarian aid and maintaining open channels with both sides, Europe found itself increasingly marginalized in the Middle Eastern geopolitical arena, relegated to an ancillary role compared to the transatlantic alliance and U.S. leadership. Industrial interdependence with Israel's military sector, through technological exports, participation in joint programs, and exchanges in the security field, further constrained the EU's leverage, trapping it in a precarious diplomatic balance.

China's reaction was different in both approach and objectives. Beijing took a formally balanced stance, condemning the attack on Israeli civilians but also strongly criticizing Israel's military response, describing it as excessive and incompatible with the principles of international law—particularly those established by Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. This article recognizes the right to individual and collective self-defense in the case of armed attack, but also imposes strict limits regarding proportionality, distinction between military and civilian targets, and the obligation to protect non-combatant populations. On several occasions, the Chinese government called for a multilateral peace conference under the UN's guidance, renewing its support for a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders. However, beyond diplomatic rhetoric, China has maintained strong economic ties with Israel, especially in high-tech, agriculture, and infrastructure sectors—confirming a pragmatic approach that avoids undermining its material interests. This dualism reflects China's broader foreign policy strategy in international crises: presenting itself as a responsible power and promoter of international legality, in contrast to U.S. unilateralism, while avoiding direct involvement in conflict management.⁴⁷

Other global actors also took positions that reflect the multipolar complexity of the current international system. Russia, already involved in the war in Ukraine and increasingly isolated by the West, used the renewed Israeli-Palestinian crisis to strengthen its image as an alternative global power, one that supports the Global South and criticizes the double standards applied by the U.S. and Europe regarding international law. While condemning civilian casualties on both sides, Moscow placed primary responsibility for the escalation on Israel. This position fits into a long-term Russian strategy aimed at strengthening ties with the Arab world, Iran, and African countries, presenting the Kremlin as an impartial actor and defender of international law, an image useful both diplomatically and in terms of propaganda.

India, though more cautious, took a position initially aligned with Israel. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, which has long been working to deepen bilateral ties with Israel in technology, defense, and agriculture, expressed solidarity over the attacks and emphasized Israel's right to self-defense. However, in the following weeks, New Delhi sought to rebalance its position by stressing

⁴⁵ Governo Italiano (a cura di), 2024, *Relazione illustrativa*, Roma, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, online on: <https://www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/Rel%20illustrativa.pdf>

⁴⁶ Solmaz M., 19 February 2024, *People of Gaza 'living hell on earth,' says top Irish diplomat*, in Anadolu Agency, online on: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/people-of-gaza-living-hell-on-earth-says-top-irish-diplomat-/3142171>

⁴⁷ Lovotti C., 15 January 2024, *La posizione cinese sul conflitto israelo-palestinese*, Milano, ISPI, online su: <https://www.ispionline.it/it/publicazione/la-posizione-cinese-sul-conflitto-israelo-palestinese-163540>

the need to protect civilians and restart political dialogue. This approach reflects India's dual projection: on one hand, a privileged partner of Israel in security and innovation; on the other, a leader of the Global South and active member of the BRICS group, needing to maintain diplomatic balance with Arab and Muslim-majority countries.⁴⁸

The Global South has emerged as a significant framework of contestation against the current international order. In many African, Asian, and Latin American capitals, reactions to the conflict revealed growing skepticism toward Western narratives, often perceived as hypocritical or selectively applied. Popular mobilizations, the positions taken by non-aligned governments, and voting patterns at the United Nations General Assembly highlighted a trend toward reclaiming the Palestinian issue as a symbol of the structural inequalities inherent in the global system.⁴⁹

In this sense, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has once again taken on a paradigmatic meaning for numerous actors in the Global South, not only as a regional crisis, but as an expression of an international system seen as unjust and dominated by selectively legitimizing powers. Taken together, these stances show how October 7 and its aftermath have had consequences far beyond the Middle East, contributing to the symbolic and operational redefinition of global alliances. The conflict has not only reignited tensions among local and regional actors but also accelerated polarization between competing geopolitical models: between a Western-led liberal order and an emerging multipolar system, in which the Palestinian question is increasingly framed within a broader confrontation between normative universalism and selective power politics.

The Regionalization of the Conflict: From Latent Confrontation to Direct Clash

The spiral of tension triggered by the October 7, 2023 attack acted as a catalyst for a deeper reconfiguration of the Middle Eastern system, revealing the intersection between the local dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the broader power geometries shaping the region. In this new context, the Gaza crisis has ceased to be an isolated hotspot and has instead become an epicenter from which systemic fractures radiate, involving regional and global actors with divergent yet interconnected interests. In particular, a confrontation axis has solidified between Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran, which operates through a network of ideological, military, and logistical alliances distributed across Lebanon (Hezbollah), Syria (pro-Iranian paramilitary militias), Iraq (Kata'ib Hezbollah), Yemen (Houthis), as well as Sunni Islamist groups such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, supported as part of Iran's anti-Israel posture. This confrontation, initially framed within the paradigm of low-intensity warfare and indirect power projection—relying on covert operations, targeted strikes, sabotage, and cyber warfare—underwent a qualitative escalation starting in 2024. In pursuing its strategy of containing Iranian expansion, Israel intensified intelligence operations and targeted assassinations of senior officials in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Quds Force, particularly in Syria and Lebanon, in addition to sabotage efforts against Iranian nuclear infrastructure. Tehran, for its part, continued to strengthen its network of armed proxies and tested new ballistic and hypersonic missile systems, increasing pressure on Israel from multiple directions.

A point of no return was reached on April 1, 2024, when an attack attributed to Israel hit the Iranian consulate in Damascus, killing seven senior officers of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

⁴⁸ ISPIONLINE, 3 November 2023, *USA, Cina, Russia e gli altri: come si schiera il mondo nella guerra Hamas-Israele*, Milano, ISPI, online su: <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/usa-cina-russia-e-gli-altri-come-si-schiera-il-mondo-nella-guerra-hamas-israele-151114>

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

(IRGC). Among them were Mohammad Reza Zahedi, a senior Quds Force commander responsible for operations in Syria and Lebanon, and his deputy, Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi. Both were considered key figures in Iran's foreign military structure. The attack was a serious violation of the principle of diplomatic inviolability, protected by the Vienna Convention, and it broke a tradition of mutual restraint between states.⁵⁰

Iran's response came on April 13 and was openly carried out by the state: more than 300 drones, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles were launched directly at targets in Israel. Even though the multilayered defense systems (Iron Dome, David's Sling, Arrow 3) intercepted most of them, the attack marked a turning point in the conflict, showing a shift from proxy war to direct confrontation between states.⁵¹

The confrontation continued on multiple fronts. In Syria, Israel increased airstrikes on IRGC bases, killing senior figures such as General Ali Reza Zahdi, strategic coordinator of Iranian operations in Syria. In Lebanon, Hezbollah kept up pressure along the northern border, launching rockets and drones and carrying out sabotage and infiltration missions. In Iraq, targeted attacks killed members of the Kata'ib Hezbollah and Asaib Ahl al-Haq militias, including operational commander Abu Mahdi al-Jabari.⁵² In Yemen, the Houthi rebels claimed attacks on commercial ships linked to Israel in the Red Sea, acting in line with Iran's strategy. Together, these actions form part of Iran's strategy of saturation and encirclement, aiming to weaken Israel's military strength through constant, multi-directional pressure. However, both sides also showed some willingness to avoid further escalation, describing their actions as "defensive."⁵³ Israel responded with limited and precise attacks, avoiding large-scale ground operations. Iran said its response was proportional and finished. This phase introduced a new unstable balance, which can be called "flexible deterrence": a situation where force is used constantly but in a controlled way, and mutual threat is the main tool of prevention.⁵⁴ In response, Israel strengthened its cooperation with the United States and reinforced its defense systems to stop the expansion of the so-called "Shia Crescent," a zone of Iranian military and ideological influence from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean.

The threshold of conventional warfare was definitively crossed on June 13, 2025, with Operation Rising Lion, a large-scale attack carried out by Israel against more than one hundred military, infrastructural, and scientific targets on Iranian territory. The operation was justified by Tel Aviv as a preventive response to the growing threat posed by Iran's nuclear program, within a context marked by the deterioration of relations between Tehran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). A classified IAEA report, leaked in May 2025, had revealed that Iran had enriched uranium up to 60%.⁵⁵ In light of these developments, and in line with the doctrine of preemption formulated by the United States in the 2002 National Security Strategy under the Bush administration, Israel deemed it necessary to intervene before Iran's nuclear program reached a point of no return. The action was presented as an act of anticipatory self-defense against a threat considered credible, concrete, and imminent, based on an expansive interpretation of the principle of preventive self-defense.

⁵⁰ Osservatorio di Politica Internazionale, 2024, *Mediterraneo allargato*, n. 7 (luglio), Roma, Senato della Repubblica, Camera dei deputati – Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, online on: https://www.parlamento.it/application/xmanager/projects/parlamento/file/repository/affariinternazionali/osservatorio/focus/PI007IS_PIMED.pdf, pp. 21-29.

⁵¹ Osservatorio di Politica Internazionale, 2024, op.cit., pp. 21-29.

⁵² Ibidem.

⁵³ Ivi, pp. 29-37.

⁵⁴ Ivi, pp.103-109.

⁵⁵ Swissinfo.ch, 31 May 2025, *Aiea, Iran accelera la produzione uranio arricchito al 60%*, online on: <https://www.swissinfo.ch/ita/aiea%2C-iran-accelera-la-produzione-uranio-arricchito-al-60%25/89440073>

Among the main targets were the nuclear facilities of Natanz, Fordow, and Isfahan, along with missile depots, strategic command centers, and advanced military research sites. According to multiple sources, at least three top commanders of the IRGC were killed: Hossein Salami (Commander-in-Chief of the Revolutionary Guards), Mohammad Bagheri (Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces), and Esmail Qaani (Commander of the Quds Force). In addition, six leading scientists connected to the Iranian nuclear program were eliminated, including Mohsen Fakhrizadeh Mahabadi, already known as the main architect of Iran's military nuclear project, Fereydoun Abbasi, former director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, and Alireza Rahmani, in charge of high-explosive detonation systems. The simultaneous elimination of both military and scientific figures suggests a deliberate strategy to paralyze Iran's operational command and technological development chain.⁵⁶

The Iranian response, named Operation True Promise 3, came the same day. It included the coordinated launch of about 150 ballistic missiles and over 100 attack drones against strategic targets in Israel, hitting densely populated cities such as Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Jerusalem. Tehran claimed the operation was a proportional response to the June 13 Israeli attack, invoking the right to anticipatory self-defense in a context of imminent threat. However, such interpretation is not formally recognized under international law, which distinguishes between self-defense and preventive war. Iranian authorities also stated that the operation aimed to restore a deterrent balance without triggering irreversible escalation.⁵⁷ Despite the effectiveness of Israel's multilayered defense systems (Iron Dome, David's Sling, Arrow 3), the attack caused dozens of injuries and serious damage to critical infrastructure, including the Soroka Hospital in Be'er Sheva and a power plant in Ashkelon. Military sources confirmed Iran's use of Fattah-1 hypersonic missiles, capable of exceeding Mach 13 and designed to bypass conventional missile defense systems. This marked a qualitative shift in Tehran's offensive posture and exposed new vulnerabilities in Israel's technological defense capabilities. The interaction between offense and defense is no longer occasional but cyclical. In the past week alone, Israel has carried out around 40 attacks—airstrikes and missile launches—on Iranian installations, while Tehran has responded with over 60 attack drones and around 80 ballistic missiles aimed at Israeli cities and strategic targets.

Although not yet a full-scale war, this dynamic has increased pressure on Israel's defense infrastructure and expanded the battlefield to include targets beyond military facilities. Iron Dome, David's Sling, and Arrow 3 systems still offer interception rates estimated between **65% and 90%**, but the constant and simultaneous launches—focused on densely populated areas like Tel Aviv, Haifa, Ashkelon, and Be'er Sheva—are quickly depleting logistical and operational resources.⁵⁸ In the past week, delays in launcher activation, shortages in rearmament cycles, and overworked personnel have been reported, especially in northern Israel and the Negev.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, Iranian countermeasures and those of its proxies are also increasingly vulnerable to precision strikes and cyberattacks, which have directly affected civilian infrastructure, hospitals, and energy hubs. Both sides now seem to be intentionally targeting dual-use facilities, increasing the psychological impact of the war and raising the level of strategic instability.

⁵⁶ CNN, 14 June 2025, *Israel targeted three key Iranian nuclear facilities in major June 13 strike, killing top IRGC figures and nuclear scientists*, in «CNN International», online on: <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/06/14/middleeast/iran-israel-nuclear-facilities-damage-impact-intl>

⁵⁷ ANSA, 13 June 2025, *Israele attacca l'Iran, l'IDF invia una nuova allerta rossa a tutti*, in «ANSA», online on: https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/mondo/2025/06/13/israele-attacca-liran-lidf-invia-una-nuova-allerta-rossa-tutti_314e57cc-0c70-408f-ac13-8c8ba320887b.html

⁵⁸ EurAsian Times, 20 June 2025, *From 90% To 65% – Israel's Interception Rate Takes A Hit As Iran Saturates Iron Dome With Drones, Missiles*, online on: <https://www.eurasiantimes.com/from-90-to-65-israels-interception/>

⁵⁹ La Stampa, 19 June 2025, *Israele-Iran, tra i missili colpito anche l'ospedale Soroka: decine di feriti a Be'er Sheva*, online on: https://www.lastampa.it/esteri/2025/06/19/news/israele_iran_attacco_ospedale_soroka-15198141/

This creates a fragile and porous balance: deterrence is still present but increasingly fragmented, weakened by the constant strain on resources and a polarized regional political context. In this new situation, supremacy is no longer defined just by destructive capability but by the resilience of the entire multidimensional defense system—including cyber and cognitive domains. Cyberattacks, electronic warfare, digital sabotage, and disinformation campaigns now play a crucial role, disrupting decision-making processes and influencing public and political perceptions. The result is a form of permanent hybrid warfare, where the level of violence is unstable and always at risk of sudden escalation.

In this context of fluid and increasingly technologized escalation, on the night of June 22, 2025, the United States took a further decisive step by launching targeted strikes against some of Iran's main nuclear sites, including Natanz, Arak, and Parchin. The operation, named Silent Thunder, employed high-penetration weapons and stealth delivery systems, with the declared aim of neutralizing the core of Iran's military nuclear infrastructure—at a time when cooperation between Washington and Tel Aviv had reached an unprecedented operational level.

Following the strikes, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) issued a statement confirming that, despite the intensity of the attacks, there had been no radioactive leaks from the targeted facilities, and that fissile material containment systems had held effectively. Director General Rafael Grossi described the situation as “exceptionally tense, but under control in terms of immediate nuclear safety.” On the political-diplomatic front, U.S. President Donald Trump declared that the operation was “necessary to prevent irreversible escalation in the Middle East and to defend global stability from a concrete nuclear threat.”⁶⁰ This new chapter of the crisis represents not only a qualitative leap in the power confrontation but also a definitive break with the last remnants of multilateral diplomacy on the Iranian nuclear file. Prospects for de-escalation now seem increasingly remote, while the specter of a region-wide conflict with explicit nuclear overtones becomes more tangible under the logic of “symmetric preemption” now adopted by both parties.

New Scenarios: From the Dissolution of Hamas to the Collapse of the Islamic Republic

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has reached a point of no return, marking a shift from a logic of containment to one of systematic annihilation. Military operations have severely impacted residential neighborhoods, hospitals, schools, and refugee camps. Sanitary conditions have deteriorated dramatically: hospitals operate below minimum capacity, water supply is sporadic and contaminated, and food availability depends on informal and unstable channels. Entire urban areas have become inaccessible to ambulances, while international NGOs report systematic violations of humanitarian corridors. The ongoing information siege—exacerbated by media distraction due to the Israel–Iran–US confrontation, has contributed to obscuring the scale of the crisis, turning Gaza into an epicenter of silent dehumanization. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as of June 2025, more than 37,396 people have been killed, over 85,523 injured, and more than 1.9 million displaced. The World Health Organization (WHO) confirms that 70% of all casualties are women and children. More than 75% of housing is uninhabitable, and humanitarian access remains critically limited.⁶¹

⁶⁰ The Economic Times, 22 June 2025, *US Defence Secretary hails ‘bold, brilliant’ Operation Midnight Hammer on Iran: All you need to know*, online on: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/us-defence-secretary-hails-bold-brilliant-operation-midnight-hammer-on-iran-all-you-need-to-know/articleshow/122006512.cms>.

⁶¹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Humanitarian Situation Update #297 – Gaza Strip*, 20 June 2025, online on: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-297-gaza-strip>

Despite this, international media coverage has partially shifted from the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza to the escalating conflict involving Iran, Israel, and the United States. Nevertheless, the Israeli military campaign in the Strip has not abated. Airstrikes and ground operations continue to affect densely populated areas, causing new waves of civilian casualties and further damaging already devastated infrastructure. The humanitarian situation in Gaza remains critical, even as it risks fading from the global spotlight.⁶²

This pattern, evident since the early stages of the operation launched in October 2023, appears to follow a systematic logic, contributing to the progressive demographic evacuation of Gaza's urban core. Hamas, already severely weakened militarily and organizationally, risks being dismantled not only as an armed force but also as a dominant political actor in the Strip. The progressive elimination of its leaders, the collapse of its logistical infrastructure, and the inability to maintain command and control structures suggest a future in which Hamas may no longer exercise any form of military or administrative power. Its practical dissolution, even prior to a formal one, fits into a broader strategy of permanently neutralizing the political framework in Gaza. This phase of the conflict threatens to accelerate the implosion of Gaza's urban and social ecosystem, rendering the continued presence of the civilian population unsustainable. The UN has raised alarms about a possible "irreversible exodus" toward the Egyptian border, in a context lacking safe routes and with an already overwhelmed reception system. The hypothesis of a forced Palestinian diaspora, now potentially beyond the region, returns to the center of debate, evoking scenarios of permanent territorial dissolution and the loss of historical and political continuity for Palestinian national identity. Meanwhile, Israel benefits from growing diplomatic tolerance in the West, justified by the systemic threat posed by Iran and its proxies. This dynamic, now difficult to reverse, cannot be separated from the passive complicity of an international community incapable of exerting coercive or persuasive power over Israel, for reasons both geopolitical and normative. The paralysis of the UN Security Council, the impotence of humanitarian agencies, and the inadequacy of international law in the absence of political will leave space for a purely military management of the conflict, threatening to erode any remaining prospect of political resolution.

What makes the situation even more complex is the expansion of the conflict towards Iran, which in just a few weeks has gone from being an external supporter of the Palestinian resistance to a direct player in a new phase of the regional crisis. The Iranian front is making the situation more unstable by creating a triangular dynamic, in which Israel—supported by the United States, now fully involved at both the operational and decision-making levels—confronts Tehran on a battleground that goes beyond the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and affects the security of the entire Middle East. Israel, backed politically by some European partners, as shown by the recent statements from German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, continues to take a very assertive stance against Iran's nuclear program⁶³. This program now seems more and more like a tool of strategic blackmail within a degenerated system of multilateral deterrence, where the direct involvement of the United States has turned the confrontation into a global power triangle. This stance is not just a response to the fear of uncontrolled nuclear proliferation but is also part of a wider political and military strategy to contain the Shiite axis in the region. Adding to this trend was a covert and unconventional action already carried out by the United States before the June 22 attack: on June 15, 2025, the Starlink satellite system was activated across Iran, an initiative by Elon Musk with the implicit approval of some Western actors. This operation allowed civilians to regain access to the internet, bypassing the

⁶² RaiNews, 22 June 2025, *Gaza, ancora fuoco su palestinesi in cerca di aiuti: colpiti dai cecchini*, online on: <https://www.rainews.it/maratona/2025/06/gaza-ancora-fuoco-su-palestinesi-in-cerca-aiuti-colpiti-dai-cecchini-96c56fe7-95b0-4fe1-9bfc-5235b4043d7b.html>

⁶³ Lopapa C., 20 June 2025, *Bufera in Germania per le dichiarazioni del cancelliere Merz su Israele e Iran*, in «InsideOver», online on: <https://it.insideover.com/media-e-potere/bufera-in-germania-per-le-dichiarazioni-del-cancelliere-merz-su-israele-e-iran.html>.

blackout imposed by the regime. It helped spread information, promote dissent, and support the organization of protests. It was a technological intervention with strong strategic effects that had a clear impact on Iran's public sphere, anticipating the later military escalation and crossing Iran's legal borders using digital tools.⁶⁴ In this context, U.S. intervention, which is already advanced in terms of logistics and intelligence, could become even more explicit if Tehran further escalates its response. On the night of June 22, 2025, in addition to the U.S. attack on nuclear sites and strategic infrastructures, Iran responded with a massive launch of ballistic missiles and drones targeting Tel Aviv, Be'er Sheva, and Haifa. If, in the coming days, the conflict crosses the current operational threshold and begins to hit U.S. bases or targets, Washington seems ready to expand its intervention on a large scale. The United States has a widespread network of military bases in the Middle East, including Al Udeid (Qatar), Al Dhafra (United Arab Emirates), Incirlik (Turkey), Erbil (Iraq), Manama (Bahrain), and several facilities in Saudi Arabia, such as those in Riyadh and the eastern region. In addition, it has naval forces operating in the Persian Gulf, such as the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet based in Manama (Bahrain), which is responsible for maritime security, energy route patrols, and deterring regional threats. This presence ensures an immediate and multi-dimensional response capacity, reinforcing deterrence in the event of further escalation.⁶⁵

In this context, the goal of the United States and Israel no longer appears limited to tactical containment but rather aims at the geopolitical reorganization of the post-Iranian regional balance. The war between Israel and Iran now functions as a tool of geopolitical engineering, aimed at reshaping the internal structure of the Islamic Republic, which is seen as the last major regional enemy and the main supporter of armed groups and states hostile to Israel. Unlike the material destruction pursued against Hamas, this reorganization works through elite replacement and structural transformation of the Iranian power system. Based on the information and dynamics described above, Iran's internal situation seems close to a real change in its political structure. The progressive loss of public support, caused by recurring protests, international sanctions, economic failures, and the growing alienation of the urban youth, intersects with the external pressure applied by Israel and, increasingly clearly, by the United States.

The Iranian population, which numbers around 88 million people, is predominantly Shiite (90–95%), but also displays profound heterogeneity in terms of religious and political orientation. According to the survey conducted by GAMAAN in 2020, only 32% support the application of sharia law in public life, while approximately 47% identify as atheist or non-religious. This disconnection between the regime's official ideology and the actual social demands of the population, especially among urban and younger demographics, fuels a growing and potentially destabilizing polarization. In addition, there are persistent ethnic tensions and active separatist movements in regions such as Khuzestan and Iranian Kurdistan, which could intensify in a context of open crisis. At the same time, there are secular political opposition groups, civic movements, and cultural organizations that, in the event of a power vacuum, could serve as catalysts for political transition. Among these are, for example, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), the monarchist movement linked to Reza Pahlavi, and civic networks such as Iran Human Rights and United for Iran, which are active in monitoring and promoting civil rights.⁶⁶ These actors, although operating mainly in exile or clandestinely, could be supported, at least indirectly, by external factors

⁶⁴ Piccioli L., 15 June 2025, *Musk accende Starlink sull'Iran. L'Occidente lo sostiene per aggirare il regime*, in «Formiche», online on: <https://formiche.net/2025/06/musk-starlink-iran/>.

⁶⁵ ANSA, 22 June 2025, *In Medio Oriente 40mila soldati Usa: le basi in allerta*, disponibile su: https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/mondo/medioriente/2025/06/22/in-medio-orient-40mila-soldati-usa-le-basi-in-allerta_ec06e176-895f-4198-840b-1e56cd0741e4.html.

⁶⁶ The Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran (GAMAAN), 25 August 2020, *Iranians' Attitudes toward Religion: A 2020 Survey Report*, <https://gamaan.org/2020/08/25/iranians-attitudes-toward-religion-a-2020-survey-report/>

such as the United States, through channels of political cooperation, democratization programs, or initiatives for digital and cultural empowerment. This combination of factors, together with the risk of institutional collapse or forced transition, could generate effects that extend beyond the Iranian context alone.

An implosion of the Iranian system could, in fact, reactivate the circuit of transnational jihadism, facilitating the reorganization of Islamist cells in the diaspora and fueling violent reactions in response to the perception of a new Western crusade against the Islamic world, with particular hostility toward the Shiite component. Specifically, not only the Jewish state as such, but also Western cities, U.S. military bases, diplomatic missions, and symbolic centers of Western power located across the Arab, Asian, and African worlds could become targets of terrorist attacks—in a dynamic of ideological and strategic revanche by non-state actors determined to strike wherever the influence of Washington and its allies extends. The internal destabilization of Iran, in the absence of a structured and controlled political process, thus risks creating operational spaces for extremist groups, reintroducing a scenario of widespread threat reminiscent of post-2003 Iraq and post-2011 Syria and Libya. Furthermore, the escalation presents additional critical thresholds that go beyond the military or institutional domain and extend to systemic and interdependent dimensions. The impact affects energy security, financial markets, regional economic governance, and the global architecture of multilateral cooperation. The repercussions are evident along supply chains, production networks, and strategic procurement systems, generating potentially disruptive effects on a global scale. This cross-sectoral impact is exacerbated by the threat of trade blockages and chokepoints in global maritime routes. Indirect effects also extend to international trade and energy balances.

Among the most serious economic implications of the current escalation is the increasing likelihood of a closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran, an option that materialized on June 22, 2025, when the Majlis (Iranian Parliament) approved a resolution authorizing the interruption of maritime traffic through the strait in the event of further attacks by the United States or Israel.⁶⁷ This strategic chokepoint—approximately 40 km wide—handles over 20% of global oil shipments, amounting to 18–20 million barrels per day, making it critical to global energy security.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), a \$10 increase in crude oil prices translates to an average rise of \$0.25 per gallon at U.S. gas stations.⁶⁸ At the same time, maritime insurance premiums for cargo and ships operating in the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf have surged by over 60%, driven by heightened geopolitical tensions.⁶⁹

The simultaneity of crises, military, political, humanitarian, and energy-related, signals the collapse of any framework for ordinary management and the onset of a phase of structural instability, in which every regional and global actor is compelled to reassess their strategic priorities. The potential dissolution of Iran's political order and the destruction of the Palestinian social ecosystem are not merely local events, but rather constitute a critical juncture for the redefinition of global power balances. Israel's military projection, U.S. interventionism, and the internal fragmentation of the Middle East outline a scenario in which conflict no longer has clear or temporary boundaries, but tends to persist as a latent and generalized condition. In the absence of effective multilateral governance and a functioning international legal system capable of exerting real constraints, the region risks becoming a permanent laboratory of controlled chaos, with lasting repercussions for

⁶⁷ CNBC, 23 June 2025, *Iran's parliament approves blocking Strait of Hormuz*, online on: <https://www.cnbc.com/2025/06/23/irans-parliament-approves-blocking-strait-of-hormuz.html>

⁶⁸ U.S. Energy Information Administration, 23 June 2025, *Gasoline and Diesel Fuel Update*, online on : <https://www.eia.gov/petroleum/gasdiesel/?utm>.

⁶⁹ Port Technology, 20 June 2025, *Israel-Iran conflict triggers insurance spike*, online on: https://www.porttechnology.org/news/israel-iran-conflict-triggers-insurance-spike/?utm_source

collective security, resource flows, state sovereignty, and the overall stability of international relations.

Conclusion

This paper has offered a complete and structured analysis of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the regional confrontation with Iran, interpreting both as signs of a deeper geopolitical and symbolic reorganization of the Middle East. Through an approach that combines historical, spatial, legal, and realist perspectives, a central idea has emerged: the Middle East is today not only an unstable region, but also a tool of global order and a laboratory of world transition. Starting from the colonial origin of the term “Middle East,” the analysis has shown how geographic names are not neutral, but tools of power that shape how we see and describe conflicts. The space of Palestine—and especially Gaza—has been presented as a symbolic place, shaped by political, military, and discursive forces, becoming in the 21st century a key point in the confrontation between major powers and regional actors. The mix between loss of territorial control and resistance shows how Gaza is not only a besieged area but also a symbol of the historical tensions between colonialism, Islamism, and popular sovereignty. At the same time, Iran’s role as a revisionist power is clear: by supporting Hamas, Hezbollah, and other Shia networks in the region, Tehran tries to oppose Israeli and U.S. dominance, changing the balance of power and using a flexible, multi-level strategy of encirclement. In this context, the United States is not only a military ally of Israel but also one of the main architects of the current transformation. Its direct intervention in the latest phase of the conflict, attacks on Iran’s nuclear infrastructure, the use of technology like the Starlink system, and its widespread military presence in the region make Washington not just a fighter in the war, but a political and symbolic actor shaping the future of the Middle East. The reshaping of alliances, the strengthened bond with Israel, and the use of hybrid strategies, mixing military power, cyberwar, digital operations, and institutional influence, show that the Middle East today is a key place for the United States to assert its global leadership in a multipolar world. What makes the crisis even deeper is the ongoing weakening of international law, which has become more and more selective, unable to protect civilians, and often used as a tool to justify selective interventions. This erosion goes together with the fragmentation of Palestinian leadership and the regionalization of the conflict, now involving Sunni actors like Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. These dynamics have shown deep divisions within the Islamic world and tensions between the realist strategies of monarchies and the pan-Islamic discourse of resistance, while Europe and international organizations have remained on the sidelines, limited by structural constraints and lack of a clear vision. One of the key findings of this paper is the growing crisis of diplomacy as a tool for building peace. In recent years, international dialogue has lost much of its strength, often reduced to a rhetorical or symbolic level, with little impact on real power relations. The escalation between Israel and Iran and the humanitarian disaster in Gaza are clear signs of this crisis: diplomacy today not only fails to bring results, but seems unable to function as a real platform for mediation, legitimacy, or transformation. While negotiations fade, the ground is filled with bombs, dominant narratives, and power shifts. At the same time, the international system of deterrence is also failing. The clearest example is the structural paralysis of the United Nations Security Council. The right of veto, created to keep balance between major powers, has become an obstacle to effective action for peace and global security. Faced with long conflicts, constant violations of humanitarian law, and regional escalations, the UN has failed to act as a regulating authority or a space for conflict resolution. It is becoming more and more like a powerless observer.

The main result of this research is to show that Gaza and the Israeli–Iranian confrontation are not local exceptions, but key examples of a global order in transition. These conflicts bring together the crisis of law, changes in warfare, the end of universalism as a shared value system, and the rise of new geopolitical models different from the Western liberal one. The Israeli–Palestinian conflict is not only a military or diplomatic issue, but also forces us to rethink the meaning of sovereignty, security, legitimacy, and representation. The Middle East, in this vision, is not just the stage of a historical dispute, but the meeting point of local actors, transnational alliances, and global power systems.

In the end, Gaza and the Tehran–Tel Aviv axis are not just regional issues, but mirrors of a changing world order. They reflect the crisis of law, new forms of warfare, the failure of multilateralism, and the rise of political alternatives. In this context, Washington is not only a military or diplomatic actor, but the main planner of a new order, where power is used not only with force but also by choosing which actors are legitimate and by imposing dominant narratives. The Israeli–Palestinian conflict, far from being an isolated case, becomes a testing ground for new forms of power, where war is both a military act and a process of creating a new system—and where peace, before being achieved, must be radically redefined.

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