GAZA WAR: FROM IDENTITY POLITICS TO POLARIZATION IN THE WESTERN FOREIGN POLICY

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Abstract

One of the trickiest conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa has reopened as a result of the October 7 terrorist strikes. Open discussions were however halted by Hamas' unilateral strike, even though the two-state solution appeared increasingly likely with the Palestinian Authority serving as the future structural restructuring of #FreePalestine. The situation in the Gaza Strip caused a great deal of divisiveness in western public opinion in addition to internal conflicts and tensions. So, the purpose of this paper was to provide a poststructuralist analysis of the dominant academic viewpoints on the state of affairs between Israel and Palestine. The relationship between identity and foreign policy is examined in this study by utilising the primary methodological instruments of reflectivist international relations theory, including intertextuality, genealogy, discourse analysis, and deconstruction. They study both epistemological and ontological aspects because of the theoretical framework, and the narratives of "us and them" were and continue to be important components in the history and current circumstances of the Gaza Strip. The findings provide context for the significance of Hamas' rhetoric and the monopoly of power, as well as outlining the identitarian divide between Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

Key words: *Poststructuralism, Palestine, Israel, Gaza Strip, Hamas identity and foreign policy.*

RESEARCH DESIGN AND POSTSTRUCTURALIST FRAMEWORK

Not only did Hamas launch a direct military attack on Israel on October 7, but it also carried out a terrorist strike against civilians, killing 1000 people and taking over 200 hostages. The Middle East and North Africa region once

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again came to the focus of international actors after this horrific tragedy. In addition to the attack's effects on the world and regional scene and the evident terrorist threat posed by Hamas's acts, it is critical to comprehend the larger context of the struggle between Israelis and Palestinians and Hamas as a terrorist group. The primary reason for the extreme polarisation of international support for the Israel-Palestinian discussion could be attributed to the historicity of this conflict.

The primary research issue that this study attempts to address is: What part does the rhetoric of the main political leaders play in the conflict that broke out on October 7th? The aim of this investigation is to comprehend the ways in which discourse from Gaza leadership and Israel employed identity politics to sustain a tense situation that, sadly, resulted in terrorist attacks and a continuous conflict between Israel and Hamas. Two crucial variables in the setting will be emphasised by a subsequent set of secondary questions: identity (what is the Palestinian people's identity evolution like?) and polarisation (what are the primary discursive causes that contribute to the polarisation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?).

In order to enhance our comprehension of the discourse, the methodology will involve a qualitative discourse analysis of the principal political actors within the conflict context, along with a crucial historical-interpretive approach to establish connections between the discourse variable and temporal and spatial variables. Furthermore, a crucial constraint of this study is that terrorism must be understood in light of its historical roots rather than being legitimised in a vacuum. A crucial element is the unpredictability of society and the way terrorist leaders take use of it to enlist youth for their fight against the West. In order to determine why Gaza permitted Hamas to expand to such an extent and become the most powerful political force in the area as well as the home base of the terrorist group responsible for the horrific attack on October 7, this essay will examine Gaza's current state.

Finally, in order to accomplish these research goals, the Copenhagen School of Security's human security perspective and poststructuralism as an international relations theory—both of which have been greatly influenced by Lene Hansen's work—will have an impact on this paper's general theoretical perspective.

POSTSTRUCTURALISM AS AN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

Poststructuralism, akin to other reflectivist ideas, emerged in the 1980s with socio-constructivism, primarily drawing inspiration from the social and philosophical theories of the social sciences[1]. It was regarded as a critical theory of the presumptions of neo-liberalism and neo-realism about the international system, as well as how the neo-neo debate dominated the thinking of IR theory at the time. In addition to generally criticising the rationalist viewpoint, poststructuralist theory attempted to reinterpret the state as an actor in international relations, rather than the only one to be examined, and to expand on observations about non-state, trans-state actors as well as stateless individuals who, in certain situations, are persecuted by their own state[2].

Poststructuralists increase the flexibility of the identity variable and its relationship to the idea of foreign policy, placing particular focus on the discursive creation of "us and them." In this instance, it is crucial to briefly describe the historical background that shaped the development of this theory. One of the greatest concerns during the second phase of the Cold War, which lasted from the 1970s to the 1980s, was the possibility of a nuclear holocaust brought on by the Western bloc's and the USA's armaments race against the Soviet Union and the communist bloc. The power and offensive/defensive aspects of this indirect confrontation were already explained by the *security dilemma*, but poststructuralist theory outlined how rhetoric is used to create a clear threat and point towards a direct enemy in order to justify military preparations and investments. Even in the current state of affairs, it is crucial to evaluate the use of foreign policy and identitarian elements to present an enemy and a number of threats poststructurally in order to understand how the discourse may be utilised to support a number of acts.

The anarchical nature of the international system and the notion of states as self-help agents are the two main points of contention for the neo-neo debate critics[3]. The realist perspective of IR theory's self-help concept is insufficient because states are artificial social constructions that symbolise the political

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[1] Lene Hansen, "Poststructuralism" in John Baylis, Steve Smith, and Patricia Owens (eds.), *The Globalization of World Politics An Introduction to International Relations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 169-183.

[2] Lene Hansen, Security as Practice Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War, Londra: Routledge, 2013, pp. 15-33.

[3] *Ibidem*, pp. 33-49

community of people we can trust. We share multiple social components or, more often than not, we come to share a common national or regional identity. Because the identities, values, and norms of the political community are complicated and subject to change over time, self-help should therefore be viewed as more ambiguous. States are obligated to follow regulations, but the analysis of interactions should be done by shifting the perspective, as the anarchy of the international system is not inherent in the international structure itself. State and non-state entities must be included in this discussion as anarchical structure arises from their interactions. The link between the factors of identity and foreign policy, which may fluctuate over time, is therefore once again a determinant of the international structure.

Another important contribution made by the poststructuralist structure is the question raised in regards to the ontology and epistemology[4] of the IR theories in general. Starting with the ontology, the poststructuralist is outlining the main assumptions of state capitalism in the international structure of the world. Realists describe state centrism based on self-help as the core element of the pursuit of security and expression of power both offensively and defensively. In the liberal perspective, states are the key to the construction of peace among states by collaborating with states and other non-state actors based on common values such as human rights, freedom, and democracy. But the ontology of poststructuralism is to question the idea of the state coming back to the state as an expression of the political community, but also by tackling the continuity of the state by looking at how the discourse of leadership changes based on foreign policy or identity changes. Moving to the epistemological aspects, the positive/rational neo-IR theories look at cause-and-effect relations between independent and dependent variables. Therefore, the critical perspective of the post-positivist/reflectivist problematizes this assumption again by looking at the "structures" as being constructed by humans, thus making it hard for them to be a real independent variable and trying to deepen the understanding of the historicity and biased nature of the structure in order to be more comprehensive.

Because of the significance of language and the way that reality is created through rhetorical representation, discourse serves as the primary analytical

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[4] Benoît Dillet, "What is Poststructuralism?" in *Political Studies Review*, Volume 15, Issue 4, 2017, pp. 516-527, doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929917712931 accessed in 8th of October 2023.

instrument[5]. In order to construct the narrative of "our and others'" interests in the international systems, poststructuralists view foreign policy in direct connection to the concept of identity[6]. It's crucial to keep in mind how the international community responds to violence in the international arena dependent on how state leaders present it in order to comprehend this crucial discourse truth. An example of this can be found in the phrase "genocide," which, when used in a UN resolution, requires an international response. Sadly, there are glaring examples such as the genocide in Rwanda, where the UN's lack of action and nebulous language obscured the horrific facts of the murder and instead created the social reality of an escalating civil war, as I previously explained in my work on the critique of the UN's rhetoric towards the Rwandan genocide.

Another significant component of poststructuralism is genealogy, where it is critical to comprehend the relationship between historicity and truth. It is crucial to comprehend the historical background of previous statements or actions when examining a speech or even an action, but it is just as crucial to comprehend the individuals in positions of power. This is precisely the way in which Michel Foucault's writings[7] illustrate the concepts of the power and knowledge. In his opinion, truth and power are concepts that complement one another rather than being external standards to society. Through his writings, Foucault attempted to demonstrate how particular epistemes changed throughout time in order to demonstrate that truth is not a product of history[8], and that truth has a history of its own in many of these metanarratives.

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[5] Lene Hansen, "Discourse analysis, poststructuralism, and foreign policy" in Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, Timothy Dunne, Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 95-107.

[6] Jason Glynos, David Howarth, "The Retroductive Cycle: The Research Process in Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis" in Tomas Marttila (ed), Discourse, Culture and Organization. Postdisciplinary Studies in Discourse, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 105-125.

[7] Andrew W. Neal, „Michel Foucault" in Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughan-Williams (eds.), „Critical Theorists and International Relations", Oxford: Routledge, 2009, pp. 161-170.

[8] Jan Selby, "Engaging Foucault: Discourse, Liberal Governance and the Limits of Foucauldian IR" in *International Relations*, Volume 21, Issue 3, 2007, pp. 324-345, doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/ 0047117807080199 accessed in 10th of October 2023.

The idea of deconstructing rhetoric is another topic that is utilised in both postmodernism[9] and poststructuralism. Discourses should be understood as socially produced epistemes in addition to discursive acts, and postmodernist analysis aims to comprehend the discourse's underlying presuppositions. The French author Jacques Derrida[10] suggests two ideas: double reading and deconstruction, to accomplish this process. Deconstruction[11] is the process of demonstrating that some concepts that seem natural are, in fact, man-made social institutions arranged in hierarchical order to impose an order that serves a specific group of people. Reading both the elements that make up reality and the reality itself is known as double reading. The coherence of the artificial ideas that make up the story must be understood on the first reading, and on the second reading, the tensions this artificial component of the construction creates and how it undercuts the notion that reality is constructed must be understood.

Intertextuality is a final idea that forms the cornerstone of poststructuralist analysis. Julia Kristeva's work[12] on the intersectionality of several discourse levels and how it might lead to a more nuanced understanding of meaning served as the inspiration for this analysis paradigm. Through the correlation of the discourse with independent variables related to time and space, the intertextual model compares "them and others" in order to read textually based on three models: official speeches (model 1), extended foreign policy debates (model 2), cultural representations (model 3A), and marginal political discourses (model 3B).

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[9] Roland Bleiker, „Postmodernism" in Richard Devetak, Jim George and Sarah Percy (eds.), *„An Introduction to International Relations"*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 189-212.

[10] Maja Zehfuss, „Jacques Derrida" in Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughan-Williams (eds.), „Critical Theorists and International Relations", Oxford: Routledge, 2009, pp. 137-149.

[11] Andrew Benjamin, "Deconstruction" in Paul Wake, Simon Malpas (eds.), The Routledge Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory, New York: Routledge, 2013, pp. 87-95.

[12] Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel." In L. S. Roudiez (Ed.), Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art, New York: Colombia University Press, 1980, pp. 64-91 *apud* Lene Hansen, Security as Practice, Londra: Routledge, 2013, pp. 49-57.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CONFLICT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

The Arab nationalism that surfaced in the wake of Sharif Husayn ibn Ali's Pan-Arabism movement and his Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire in 1916 had a direct bearing on the identity of the Palestinian people[13]. Their own identity's formation is somewhat unclear, but it was scarcely discussed following Palestine's territorial dispute with Israel and the immigration of Jews into the country. Prior to the tense circumstances arising between Israel and the Palestinians, the national identity of the former was more of a regional feature that set them apart from the Ottoman Empire and an additional layer of identification to the Arab identity. In a different instance, the European Jewish community created the Zionist movement[14] in response to antisemitic sentiments and to further the goal of reclaiming the Holy Land, which the Palestinians had been living in. Zionism evolved into an international movement based on the notion that Jews were a national identity independent of any political state, thanks in large part to Theodor Herzl but without a state. There are myths that claim there has been a protracted war between Jews and Palestinians in the Israel-Palestine areas as a result of these opposing viewpoints about the Holy Land.

With the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Arab civilization facing uncertainty at this critical juncture, the First World War brought about a significant political shift in the Middle East and presented a significant chance for the establishment of a new political order in the area. The western bloc and the Sykes-Picot Agreement[15] between France and the United Kingdom, rather than Arab communities or Sharif Husayn ibn Ali's Pan-Arabic movement, actually brought about the significant transformation. According to this arrangement, the Palestinian mandate was under the tight supervision of the UK, and the region was split between the international mandates of France and

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[13] As'ad Ghanem, "Palestinian Nationalism: An Overview" in *Israel Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2013, pp. 11-29, doi: https://doi.org/10.2979/israelstudies.18.2.11 accessed in 14th of October 2023.

[14] Donna Robinson Divine, "Zionism and the Transformation of Jewish Society" in *Modern Judaism*, Volume 20, Number 3, 2000, pp. 257-276, doi: https://muse.jhu.edu/article/22112 accessed in 14th of October 2023.

[15] Pinar Bilgin, "What is the point about Sykes–Picot?" in *Global Affairs*, Volume 2, Issue 3, 2016, pp. 355-359, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/23340460.2016.1236518 accessed in 15th of October 2023.

Britain. In addition to this global protectorate, the Balfour Declaration[16]—which guaranteed the Palestine regions as a potential state for the Jewish population and offered assistance to Zionists—was another significant event.

As a result, the British mandate permitted a significant Jewish migration to Palestine during the interwar years. Following the substantial expansion in the Jewish population in Palestine, there was also an increase in friction between the two populations and a string of violent incidents. Consequently, the British mandate attempted to restrict immigration, which in turn led the Jewish militia to intensify its operations and level of violence[17]. The Holocaust and acts of genocide in Europe also played a major role, encouraging more Jews to seek safety in Palestinian territory. Although there was an increase in support for a Jewish state on a global scale, it did not ease the tensions that existed between Israelis and Palestinians. In the end, British Palestine was divided into two states by the United Nations[18]: Israel, which was to be the state of the Jewish community, and Palestine, which was to be the state of the Palestinian people, with Jerusalem serving as the international capital. It appeared to be a feasible option at first, but the Arab states, who were only recently granted complete independence from international mandates, perceived this as a unilateral move intended to uphold a form of colonialist state in the area.

The first Israel-Arab war broke out when the Arab governments rejected Israel's request for independence, which led to Israel's official statehood in 1947. The Arab League invaded the Palestinian territories in 1948[19] with the intention of occupying the state of Israel and formally rejecting the UN partition. This led to the outbreak of war. Even though the newly formed state of Israel first felt that the battle was somewhat unfair to them, they were able to hold onto their position. They also took control of a sizable portion of the Arab world, leaving just the West Bank under Jordanian sovereignty and Gaza under Egyptian rule.

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[16] Mayir Vereté, "The Balfour Declaration and Its Makers" in Elie Kedourie, Sylvia G. Haim (eds.), *Palestine and Israel in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, London: Routledge, 2013, pp. 60-88, eBook.

[17] *Ibidemn*, pp. 60-88.

[18] Elad Ben-Dror, "How the United Nations Intended to Implement the Partition Plan: The Handbook Drawn up by the Secretariat for the Members of the United Nations Palestine Commission" in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 6, 2007, pp. 997-1008, doi: https://www.jstor.org/stable/40262544 accessed in 16th of October 2023.

[19] Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict*, London: Routledge, 2017, pp. 15-24.

The tensions between the Arab states and Israel continued to remain quite high, with no chance for the negotiations of a Palestinian state with the West Bank and Gaza being ruled by two different regimes that only collaborated for the Palestinian cause in the case of the Arab League. Taking into consideration the risk of escalation of violence, the decision of Egypt to block the Israeli ships from using the Suez Canal in 1956[20] led to the full-blown six-day war in 1967. This time the coalition of Arab states reduced to mainly Egypt, Syria, and Jordan and again failed to advance in the Israel territories, but even more, they lost the West Bank, Gaza, and even the Sinai Peninsula[21]. This conflict was significant because it was another resounding victory for Israel and served as a deterrent to other Arab state foreign operations in the future. It also gave Israel a stronger military and diplomatic presence in the West Bank and Gaza. Because of a variety of factors, including affordable housing that allowed the Jewish population in the Palestinian areas to grow and political and religious convictions, the occupation had a significant role in the migrations of the settlers. The Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) was also a prominent player in internal security matters.

Thus, internal pressure from the Palestinians replaced the external Arab governments as the source of friction. The Palestinian response to the tensions created by settlers gave rise to the first Intifada (1987–1993)[22]. The PLO was viewed as secular, which led to a string of demonstrations, violent riots, and regrettably, even terrorist acts in the 1990s. In Gaza, Hamas was established as a result. The degree of violence demonstrated led to the imposition of peace talks through international intervention during the 1993 Osla Accords[23], which resulted in a significant shift in the dynamics between Israel and the PLO. With the creation of the Palestinian Authority, this is a crucial step towards ending the occupation of those lands and building an independent Palestine. Unfortunately, the peace process fell through, and the fighting resumed with

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[20] *Ibidem*, pp. 25-33.

[21] *Ibidem*, pp. 34-41.

[22] Don Peretz, Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising, New York: Routledge, 2018, pp. 16-21.

[23] Mansour Nasasra, "The Politics of Exclusion and Localization: The Palestinian Minority in Israel and the Oslo Accords" in *Ethnopolitics*, Volume 20, Issue 5, 2021, pp. 523-544, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2019.1683300 accessed in 18th of October 2023.

even more terrorism and bloodshed during the second Intifada[24], which lasted from 2000 to 2005. Because of this, Israel ended the occupation in 2005. Another significant development was Hamas's takeover of Gaza[25], which led to a rift between them and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.

For the most part, tensions between Israel's troops and Hamas continued in Gaza due to the blockade imposed by the Israeli government. The conflict reignited massively after the terrorist attacks on October 7th, a deliberate death streak of civilians, and the crisis of more than 200 hostages. The current situation in Gaza could be clearly described as a third intifada that this time captured the attention of the international community and created a significant degree of polarisation among public opinion and state leaders.

POSTSTRUCTURALIST DECONSTRUCTION OF THE GAZA CONFLICT

Israel declared war on Hamas in Gaza following the horrific terrorist attack on October 7. The world community was split between supporting Israel's right to self-defence and the Palestinian people's humanitarian cause. Due to the vetoes of China, Russia, and the United States of America on multiple resolutions pertaining to humanitarian help or a ceasefire, we are still without international action with a resolution that is still debated in the meantime. There was a great deal of polarisation surrounding the Israel-Palestine dispute because to the tensions and debates surrounding it, including worldwide citizen rallies and marches. In order to illustrate the relationship between foreign policy and identity, this paper will attempt to dissect some of the variables, analyses, or viewpoints presented from an ontological and epistemological poststructuralist perspective.

The public's perception of the relationship between Hamas and the Palestinian cause is one significant correlation. As the Muslim Brotherhood's representation in Gaza, Hamas was established during the first Intifada with the goal of waging a political and military struggle for Palestine's independence. Even if their original goals may have been characterised as a movement of freedom fighters, they formally rejected the Oslo Accords and

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[24] Brent E. Sasley, "The End of Oslo and the Second Intifada, 2000–2005" in Asaf Siniver (ed), *Routledge Companion to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, London: Routledge, 2022, pp. 153-167.

[25] Rhys Machold, "Unsettling the Hamas taboo: fragments, narrative and the politics of exposure" in *International Politics 60*, 2023, pp. 754–761, doi: https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-023-00457-5 accessed in 20th of October 2023.

refused to acknowledge the Palestinian Authority and PLO, or at the very least, work with them. From the start, they have been an anti-systemic organisation that has prevented frank dialogue about the future of the state of Palestine. In 2006, after a closely fought election between Hamas and Fattah, Hamas emerged victorious with the majority vote[26], providing more evidence of the organization's alignment with the political will of Gaza's Palestinian population. They gained complete control in 2007 following the Battle of Gaza, despite the closeness of the elections. The frontal clash between Fattah and Hamas resulted in the collapse of the unity government, Hamas's takeover of the Gaza Strip, and the division of the Palestinian territories. The Palestinians did not give Hamas legitimacy; instead, it used violence and force to establish its political agenda and monopolise authority in Gaza.

Another important element is the duality of Hamas as a political party or organisation and a terrorist organization. Ismail Haniyeh[27], the political leader in exile, is declaring a political negotiation for a solution for the two states, while at the same time, Yehia Sinwar[28], the leader in Gaza, is continuing to orchestrate the terrorist fight and the hostage's crisis. Two leaders of Hamas with different rhetoric is just another intertextual example of how Hamas is just pure identity politics for various actors to legitimise their actions. Ismail Haniyeh is using the rhetoric of the Palestinian cause to promote his political agenda, while Yehia Sinwar is using the same humanitarian cause to justify its terrorist acts and display of violence.

The events that occurred after the fights in 2007 created a gap between the Palestinian territories, and thus it could be argued that they might have led

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[26] Camille Mansour, "Reflections on the War on Gaza" in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Volume 38, Issue 4, 2009, pp. 91-95, doi: https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2009.38.4.91 accessed in 18th of October.

[27] Gianluca Pacchiani, "As IDF advances in Gaza, Hamas chief Haniyeh claims to seek 'political negotiations'" in *The Times of Israel*,2nd of November 2023, https://www.timesofisrael.com/as-idf-advances-in-gaza-hamas-chief-haniyeh-claims-to-seek-political-negotiations/?fbclid=IwAR0GZyoKlC5jtyfmQjMWk7FTEbFLeOBlGpYCVl3ZkAKa7sEFuvkXD4y12z8 accessed in 5th of November 2023.

[28] Einav Halabi, Itamar Eichner, Meir Turgeman, "Hamas chief: all Israeli hostages for all Palestinian prisoners" in YNetNews, 28th of October 2023, https://www.ynetnews.com/article/hjv5rrqz6?fbclid=IwAR0v5eIXRnR_z4zEgfkgI92Sshjbb-8ejAaVEkIL9MKsVGR_Ew-nlG4lOs4 accessed in 30th of October 2023.

to an identitarian difference[29]. Even if most of the scholars literature argues about a collective mental identity based on the fight for the same cause, Gaza and the West Bank already have different historical experiences during the Egypt and Jordanian rule, different PLO leaders, and since the foundation of Hamas, a clear internal narrative. Hamas denies any Palestinian authority and has no open dialogue with the PLO in the West Bank. Furthermore, Hamas has the monopoly of power in the Gaza Strip and is thus the main political actor that influences the collective perception of its citizens. Creating a different narrative in the Gaza Strip creates a problem for the Palestinian cause, and attacking Israel unilaterally in the name of "Free Palestine" is another sign of division between Gaza and the West Bank. These events could be described in the future as the third Intifada, but this time with a significant rupture between the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank due to the identitarian foreign policy of Hamas and the intertextuality of no support from the PLO of the West Bank. The future idea of a #FreePalestine would be a lot harder because the ontological idea of a Palestinian state was directly damaged by the unilateral actions of Hamas.

Israel's approach to the Palestinians, particularly with regard to the Gaza Strip, is the subject of the greatest internal dispute. The emergence of terrorist movements is significantly influenced by social instability. Important studies published by Amnesty International[30] referred to Israel's blockade and previous historical occupations as "Palestinian apartheid." In the case of counterterrorism actions, Israel described these decisions as necessary. The provenance of truth is once again demonstrated by this context's genealogy. Hamas's extremist rhetoric was clearly aided by the 2005 blockade of Gaza, which helped them to portray an abusive Israel. However, the current terrorist attack is not justified; it is merely an act of identity used to justify extreme violence and a plot by Hamas to incite further instability in the region and weaken the perception of Israel both regionally and internationally. The truth is that there can never be a justification for terrorism, and freedom fighters do not

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[29] Uri Horesh, "Palestinian dialects and identities shifting across physical and virtual borders" in *Multilingua*, Volume 40 Issue 5, 2021, pp. 647-673, doi: https://doi.org/10.1515/multi-2020-0104 accessed in 20th of October 2023.
[30] "ISRAEL'S APARTHEID AGAINST PALESTINIANS A LOOK INTO DECADES OF OPPRESSION AND DOMINATION", *Amnesty International*, 2nd of February 2022, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2022/02/israels-system-of-apartheid/ accessed in 20th of October 2023.

intentionally kill civilians and hold them hostage in order to make a political point—this is just more divisive rhetoric used to divide the public. Thus, it is not a structural phenomenon in the case of terrorism in Gaza, because again, in this case, the "structures" were created by human actions, and this is why it is hard to take them into consideration as independent variables, but it was more about the discourse ideas that wanted to obtain more political power and legitimise military and extremist action based on identity issues.

The polarisation affected both international actors and public opinion, and because of it, I want to create an intertextual model 1 by looking at the EU's leaders in foreign policy, which is related to model 3A by looking at the mainstream media presenting the events from October 7th. In the case of the European Commission's president, Ursula von der Leyen[31], she put emphasis on counter-terrorist actions balanced with the humanitarian case of Palestine in her 5-point plan for the conflict. Whereas Josep Borrell[32] just focused in his statement on the ceasefire and the need for humanitarian aid. Here, a multipolar position on the conflict can be observed from the perspective of the European leadership. At the same time, identity is again a key to outlining the Palestine cause. In the media, Al Jazeera, similar to the discursive manner of Borrell, put the accent more on the humanitarian side of the conflict, and the abuse and western media such as CNN or BBC focused again on the terrorism threat. This intertextual analysis of the western discourse outlines the main polarisation issues present in the western communities. The humanitarian case of Palestinians is debated together with the terrorist threat of Hamas, and as a result, the foreign policy of international actors is based on identitarian elements where Palestine is identified as a terrorist threat for the Middle East

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[31] Jorge Liboreiro, "'No Hamas rule, no blockade.' Von der Leyen proposes five principles for Gaza's future" in *Euronews*, 6th of November 2023, https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2023/11/06/no-hamas-rule-no-blockade-von-der-leyen-proposes-five-principles-for-gazas-future?fbclid=IwAR2fSGl9ft0f7511GHecT9HQa2TXICi610vH4iPHvyM8YJycU673ipwA6Bc accessed in 7th of November 2023.

[32] EEAS Press Team, "Foreign Affairs Council: Press remarks by High Representative Josep Borrell upon arrival" in *European External Action Service*, 13th of November 2023, https://www.eeas.europa.   eu/eeas/foreign-affairs-council-press-remarks-high-representative-josep-borrell-upon-arrival-12_en?fbclid=IwAR2eA33Me5MDsV3JvVDib3wFjEDzlIMDHLFiIiv8IoLPzu4jH6mvZ2VC0zs accessed in 13th of November 2023.

region or a humanitarian case, and unfortunately, civilians both from Israel and Palestine are caught in the two extremely identity-polarised foreign policy agendas.

CONCLUSIONS

The Middle East has long had a security challenge as a result of the Israel-Palestine conflict, which manifested itself on an internal, regional, and global scale. The multiplicity of players undoubtedly overcomplicated the situation and the peace process, but just as things seemed to be heading towards a two-state resolution, Hamas's unilateral decision caused the Israeli Defence Forces and Hamas to resume direct combat in the Gaza Strip. The real issue at hand is not the Palestinian cause per se; rather, it is the aggressive application of identity politics in foreign policy to preserve power for certain status quo stakeholders. It has to do with the absence of human security and the necessity for the international community to take up the cause of upholding human rights and human dignity in the face of both terrorists and repressive political agendas.

This conflict succeeds in widening the gap between the Palestinians of the West Bank and the ones from Gaza due to the extremist rhetoric over the years of Hamas' rule. Not just that they heavily influenced the narrative in Gaza for the collective identity of Palestinians, but they damaged the image of the Palestinian cause by using again the discursive elements of a terrorist organization. Even if Israel is on the defensive side now, the historical occupation and the blockade just facilitated the discourse of abusive regimes promoted by the Hamas as a political actor in the region and created a more sustainable narrative based on its strategy. Due to the high degree of controversy surrounding the internal situation, there was a polarisation on the matter of terrorist threats and humanitarian cases. Unfortunately, the ones that are suffering the most in these debates and foreign policy agendas are civilians from both camps, who are the first line of victims in the direct war and the identitarian conflict.

The outcome based on this conflict, the one in Ukraine, and the overall high level of violence are unmistakable indicators that the international system's peace and existing global order are shifting. In an effort to build a future international architecture less reliant on foreign policy that is skewed by identity factors, this paper and the poststructuralist literature in general aim to contribute to the ongoing discussion by outlining identity politics and breaking them down.

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