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**The Westphalian Hamas (and Iranian) strategy
behind its 10/7 attacks**

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1. Methodological introduction

This article's goal is to determine **the strategic political intention behind the Al-Aqsa Flood Operation of October 7, 2023**. Did the Hamas'¹ military wing, the *Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades*, launch the attack for **territorial or religious motivations**? An innovative epistemological perspective² distinguishing two opposite Glocalist or Westphalian *collective identity* models may help understanding the events occurring in Israel and Gaza.

The Westphalian identity vision relates to well-defined State physical boundaries, while **the opposite Glocalist model** enhances on the contrary communities within ideological, economic, theological, or spiritual intra- or trans-national virtual borders, corresponding to the *Abrahamic* perspective. The first model, on the contrary, envisions the opposite *Two-States* solution for the Arab-Israeli conflict³.

This article applies to the selected case-study the adopted methodology, defining *collective identities*⁴ using the suggested analysis in broad general terms. Its limited scope does not allow a complete and detailed description of the competition between the two aforementioned opposite élites cyclically influencing the geopolitical arena, like in a **Ping-Pong power-game**.

¹ ISPI, "Che cos'è Hamas?", *Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale*, (Institute for Studies of International Politics), October 10, 2023: <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/che-cose-hamas-147295>.

² This author has developed over two decades of research the suggested innovative methodological approach in a number of publications, applying the Glocalist/Westphalian analysis to a variety of case-studies.

Among other articles and books (with ample bibliography), see: E. Molinaro. "Geopolitical Trends: Statalist BRICS Challenge Glocalist Financial Instability". *Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali* 2016;83.1: pp. 49-68; "La competizione tra élites statali e glocali: il caso-studio di Gerusalemme e dei suoi Luoghi Santi". In: A.M. Cossiga, S.L. Germani (eds.). *I fondamentalismi religiosi nel mondo contemporaneo* (Roma: Eurilink) pp. 187-208; Id. (2013). "Gerusalemme tra status quo e conflitti identitari". In: C. De Martino (ed.). *Gerusalemme, Strategie per il controllo dello spazio urbano* (Roma: Castelvecchi) pp. 125-143; Id. (2009). *The Holy Places of Jerusalem in Middle East Peace Agreements. The Conflict between Global and State Identities* (Brighton - Portland: Sussex Academic Press) pp. 198. "Nazione, religione e identità collettiva tra Europa e Mediterraneo", in: E. Pfössl (ed.). *La creazione di una zona di pace e stabilità attorno all'Unione Europea* (Roma: Editrice Apes) pp. 301-452; (2002). *Negotiating Jerusalem. Precondition for Drawing Scenarios Based on Territorial Compromises* (Jerusalem: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs PASSIA) pp. 122; "New Palestinian and Israeli Leaderships Needed After the Horrors of the Gaza War", *Vision*, October 18, 2023: <https://www.thinktank.vision/en/media-en/articles/new-palestinian-and-israeli-leaderships-needed-after-the-horrors-of-the-gaza-war>; (2018) "The Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue Starts from Collective Identities: The Innovative Role of the Anna Lindh Foundation's Italian Network", in Hiroshi Kato, Liana Lomiento (eds.), *The Mediterranean as a Plaza. Japanese and Italian Insights on the Great Sea*, pp. 183-202: <https://ride.mediper.eu/images/pdf/Estratto.pdf>.

³ Gennaro Migliore, "Biden's visit to the Middle East and the Abraham Accords", in Enrico Campelli and Giorgio Gomel eds, *The enlarged Mediterranean, a region in transition: conflicts, challenges, future perspectives*, April 19, 2022: <https://www.cespi.it/it/eventi-attualita/dibattiti/il-mediterraneoallargato-una-regione-transizione-conflitti-sfide/bidens>.

⁴ See, in particular, G. Bateson (1972). *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Through this new understanding of the deep political interests at stake political analysts can avoid traditional constructed dichotomies, such as those referring to popular Israeli/Palestinian, right/left or West/Islam opposite extremes. Such artificial polarization provides organized élites with intellectual weapons to manipulate both scholars' interpretations and people's perceptions, distracting them from **the real power-game on the ground**.

Without a deep awareness of **the real interests at stake**, which are often invisible to the **general public**, the success of research publications and academic models risk to rely rather on the contingent ability to recruit sponsors with powerful communication instruments, than on objectively verified results.

2. Hamas recent Westphalian declared goals

*Ḥamās*⁵, an acronym for *Ḥarakat al-Muqāwama al-Islāmiyya* (the Islamic Resistance Movement), is a Palestinian Islamist, Sunni, radical, political organization involved since its foundation in 1987 in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which never reached the vast amount of fatalities of the events triggered since 10/7⁶.

Since they revised their organization's Charter in 2017, the Hamas leadership has apparently been shifting from the Glocalist to the Westphalian model. Its new intended goal (art. 20) became to establish "a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its Capital along the lines of the 4th of June 1967"⁷.

The conflict (art. 16) "is with the Zionist project, not with the Jews because of their religion. Hamas does not wage a struggle against the Jews because they are Jewish but wages a struggle against the Zionists who occupy Palestine"⁸.

In this perspective, Hamas' attack was supposed to be part of its guerrilla warfare against the State of Israel. On January 21, 2024, Hamas released the "Our Narrative" document, officially claiming its goal for the 10/7 attack of "stopping the expansion of West Bank settlements and bringing an end to the blockade of the Gaza Strip"⁹, and asserting that it was "a necessary step and a normal response to confront all Israeli conspiracies against the Palestinian people and their cause"¹⁰.

If they did not intend to terrorize "Jews" defined as such in religious, ethnical, or "racial" terms (as distinguished from the overall Arab, Jewish, Muslim, and Christian, citizens of Israel), did Hamas plan, years earlier, horrible rapes and similar unspeakable inhumane violence in order to spread psychological terror, or did its fighters transgress their initial orders?

⁵ ISPI, "Che cos'è Hamas?", *Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale*, (Institute for Studies of International Politics), October 10, 2023: <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/che-cose-hamas-147295>.

⁶ Daniel Byman, et al., "Hamas October 7 Attack: Visualizing the Data", *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)*, December 19, 2023: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/hamass-october-7-attack-visualizing-data>.

⁷ MEE staff, "Hamas in 2017: The document in full", *Middle East Eye*, May 2, 2017: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/hamas-2017-document-full>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Jack Khoury, "Hamas Releases Memo Explaining Why It Waged War on Israel; Gazans Question Timing, Cite Criticism of Hamas", *Haaretz*, January 21, 2024: https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-01-21/ty-article/.premium/hamas-releases-memo-explaining-why-it-waged-war-on-israel-gazans-question-timing/0000018d-2d3a-db77-ad9f-ff3abfd30000?utm_source=mailchimp&utm_medium=Content&utm_campaign=daily-brief&utm_content=f8952c5708.

¹⁰ Al Jazeera staff, "Hamas says October 7 attack was a 'necessary step', admits to 'some faults'", *Al Jazeera*, January 21, 2024: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/21/hamas-says-october-7-attack-was-a-necessary-step-admits-to-some-faults>.

By declaring as targets of their attack the Israeli military bases and soldiers, Hamas denied allegations of war crimes, such as rapes and intentional mutilations: “Avoiding harm to civilians, especially children, women and elderly people is a religious and moral commitment by all the Al-Qassam Brigades’ fighters”. “The Palestinian fighters only targeted the occupation soldiers and those who carried weapons against our people”¹¹, Hamas stated, adding that its members were “keen to avoid harming civilians” and that any such targeting was by accident.

In the same report, Hamas admitted that “maybe some faults happened”, but explained the killing of innocent civilians with “the rapid collapse of the Israeli security and military system, and the chaos caused along the border areas near Gaza”¹².

In fact, all the acts of cruel violence that the Israeli civilians experienced as a result of the 10/7 attack are under the moral, legal, and political responsibility of Hamas, including those in which they were not directly involved, because their decision to breach the defensive fence protecting the State of Israel facilitated the entrance of thousands of additional armed violent Palestinians from Gaza.

Its 18-page paper describes the current war as part of a 105-year-old struggle of the Palestinian nation against “colonialism”, 30 years against the British mandate, and 75 years against the State of Israel.

“Israel has destroyed our ability to create a Palestinian state by accelerating the settlement enterprise,” Hamas said, blaming the United Nations for failing to stop the process. “Were we supposed to continue waiting and relying on the helpless UN institutions?” the document asks¹³.

Hamas said the war is designed “to stop the Israeli plan to control the area and to Judaize it and to harm the Al-Aqsa Mosque.” With regard to Gaza, the organization claimed that the enclave had “been turned into the world’s largest open-air prison” and that the war “was necessary to end the blockade”¹⁴.

3. Is Hamas the same as ISIS?

After the 10/7 Al-Aqsa Flood operation Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared a “right war against Hamas’ monsters”¹⁵, comparing their brutal actions to those of the Islamic State (ISIS/Daesh): “Hamas is ISIS”¹⁶. **The two organizations, in fact, are quite different from each other.**

¹¹ Hamas Media Office, “Our Narrative... Operation Al-Aqsa Flood”, *Hamas Media Office*, January 21, 2024: <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/PDF.pdf>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Jack Khoury, “Hamas Releases Memo Explaining Why It Waged War on Israel; Gazans Question Timing, Cite Criticism of Hamas”, *Haaretz*, January 21, 2024: https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-01-21/ty-article/premium/hamas-releases-memo-explaining-why-it-waged-war-on-israel-gazans-question-timing/0000018d-2d3a-db77-ad9f-ff3abfd30000?utm_source=mailchimp&utm_medium=Content&utm_campaign=daily-brief&utm_content=f8952c5708.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Laurence Figà-Talamanca, “‘Israele eviti il genocidio’, ma l’Aja non ferma le armi”, *ANSA*, January 27, 2024: <https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/mondo/2024/01/26/israele-eviti-il-genocidio-ma-laja-non-ferma-le-armi-499f1c27-4c3f-417c-a57a-92eece9e810e.html>.

¹⁶ Josef Federman, “Israel likens Hamas to the Islamic State group. But the comparison misses the mark in key ways”, *AP News*, November 29, 2023: <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-gaza-war-islamic-state-group-29e59446a42d077323a3a216127c4978>.

ISIS is composed mainly of Iraqi and Syrian fighters, or people coming from other areas of the world (Europe, Asia, North Africa), while Hamas has exclusively Palestinian members.

Hamas' attacks are aimed at Israeli targets; ISIS on the contrary has declared religious goals, as its propaganda is aimed at the entire Muslim community scattered around the globe, urging them to fight against the "infidels", and carrying out attacks in Europe or other countries.

These significant differences, in light of the aforementioned Westphalian/Glocalist epistemological methodology, help understand why the Glocalist *Islamic State* carried out on January 3, 2024, the Suicide Bombing on the Memorial Route for the Assassination (by former Glocalist U.S. President Trump) of Westphalian Qasem Soleimani within the City of Kerman, in Iran, claiming the attack through its social networks¹⁷.

The explanation for this ISIS attack lies in the political developments over almost half a century in Iran since the death of Glocalist Ayatollah Khomeyni¹⁸.

Firstly, since in 2013 Hassan Rouhani won the elections, he officially shifted Iranian politics through a more Westphalian-oriented government, which basically the current leader Ebrahim Raisi continued to follow.

Secondly, the *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action* (JCPOA), signed in 2015 with Westphalian US President Obama, was a diplomatic achievement ending decades of tensions over Iran's controversial nuclear program¹⁹.

Thirdly, under the suggestion of the Westphalian Chinese leader Xi, the Iranian government took the historical decision to normalize relations with Sunni Saudi Arabia, joining together the Westphalian BRICS Group.

Finally, Raisi expressed the desire to revive the nuclear deal that Glocalist former US President Donald Trump boycotted in 2018.²⁰

ISIS, on the contrary, follows the opposite trans-boundary Glocalist model. Its spokesman Mujahid Abu Hudhayfah Al-Ansari, while inviting Muslims to eliminate Jews around the world, accused Hamas of not establishing Islamic rule or the Sharia legal system in Gaza.

According to the Glocalist Islamic State, Westphalian Hamas has prevented the Islamization of Gaza in every possible way: "*Hamas is not a party worthy of leading Gaza and in whose ranks the Muslims of Gaza should fight*"²¹, Al-Ansari said.

Moreover, the spokesman stressed that with Israel there is first and foremost a religious war, while Hamas' goals are "*the liberation of the homeland, patriotism and strengthening their own power, which is why they believe that blood must be shed. Hudhayfah expresses regret because it is precisely for these false ideals, according to Daesh, that the Palestinian fighters*

¹⁷ OSINTdefender, "ISIS has now claimed Responsibility for the Suicide Bombing yesterday on the Memorial Route for the Assassination of Qasem Soleimani within the City of Kerman, Iran which resulted in the Death of close to 200 Iranians; ISIS in a Statement claimed the Bombing was carried out by the Terror Operatives, Umar al-Muwahid and Sayf Allah al-Mujahid", *OSINTdefender*, January 4, 2024: <https://twitter.com/sentdefender/status/1742944420012478687?t=iNK-SpV7NPgbYq6RCx74Lg&s=08>.

¹⁸ Akbar Ganji, "Who Is Ali Khamenei? The Worldview of Iran's Supreme Leader", *JSTOR*, September/October, 2013: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23527515>.

¹⁹ Sina Azodi, "New Iran Leadership Complicates Negotiations", *Arms Control Association*, October, 2021: <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2021-10/features/new-iran-leadership-complicates-negotiations>.

²⁰ Steven Erlanger, David Pierson and Lynsey Chutel, "Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt Invited to Join Emerging Nations Group", *The New York Times*, August 29, 2023: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/24/world/europe/brics-expansion-xi-lula.html>.

²¹ AGC News staff, "STATO ISLAMICO. A Gaza non si combatte secondo le leggi di Allah. Abbas è il 'guardiano degli Stati Uniti' e Hamas il 'guardiano dell'Iran'. Attaccate gli ebrei ovunque essi siano", *AGC News*, January 4, 2024: <https://www.agcnews.eu/stato-islamico-a-gaza-non-si-combatte-secondo-le-leggi-di-allah-abbas-e-il-guardiano-degli-stati-uniti-e-hamas-il-guardiano-delliran-attaccate-gli-ebrei/>.

*fighting in Gaza are shedding their blood. He calls Mahmoud Abbas (the head of the Palestinian Authority) the ‘guardian of the United States’ and Hamas the ‘guardian of Iran’*²².

Moreover, Al-Ansari called on Gaza fighters to “*fight the Jews as Allah has ordained and for what Allah has established (i.e. Islamic rule and the Sharia system), and not for the establishment of the land (i.e. patriotism and the rule of Hamas), to govern according to the laws established from above by Allah and not laws invented by men. Fight for what the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and his companions fought for*”²³.

4. New Israeli and Palestinian leaderships

The United States, Qatar, and Egypt have recently proposed a six-week pause in fighting to release all 109 civilian (including elderly and children, along with the bodies of 27 people, but excluding Israeli troops, either women or men) held inside Gaza:

*“The proposal includes the freeing of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel, at a rate of three prisoners for each hostage, a temporary repositioning of Israeli troops away from high-population areas of Gaza and a significant increase in humanitarian aid flowing into the enclave.”*²⁴

*“The Paris text envisions a first phase lasting 40 days, during which fighting would cease while Hamas freed remaining civilians from among more than 100 hostages it is still holding. Further phases would see the release of Israeli soldiers and the handover of the bodies of dead hostages.”*²⁵

On February 27, 2024, the Qatari Foreign Ministry spokesperson said that although they were “optimistic about the ongoing Gaza mediation talks”, there was not yet any breakthrough to announce concerning an impending cease-fire and hostage deal. The foreign ministry added that they cannot comment on U.S. President Joe Biden’s remarks that a deal is expected by next March 4, 2024²⁶, while according to an Egyptian source reports that there was no breakthrough in negotiations are false²⁷.

Whatever will be the outcome of the current war, an analysis of the ongoing Westphalian world historical cycle offers new scenarios with predictable radical leaderships’ change for

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Karen DeYoung, Sarah Dadouch and Susannah George, “Details bedevil Gaza hostages-for-prisoners ‘framework’ deal”, *Washington Post*, January 30, 2024: https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2024/01/30/israel-hamas-qatar-hostage-deal/?utm_campaign=wp_todays_headlines&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&wpisrc=nl_headlines

²⁵ “Hamas gives initial approval for Gaza ceasefire, hostage deal – Qatar”, *Jerusalem Post*, February 1, 2024: <https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-784707>.

²⁶ “Qatari foreign ministry says ‘no breakthrough’ in cease-fire, hostage deal (quoting Reuters)”, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-02-27/ty-article-live/biden-sets-march-4-target-for-gaza-truce-mossad-chief-delaying-aid-risks-hostage-deal/0000018d-e888-d1e0-a1dd-f9fd39400000?liveBlogItemId=2138228633#2138228633>.

²⁷ Israel News, Tuesday, *Haaretz* (quoting *Sky News*), March 5, 2024, <https://us18.campaign-archive.com/?e=20d29a6ffb&u=d3bceadb340d6af4daf1de00d&id=7b686595cc>.

both sides of the conflict from a Glocalist to a Westphalian orientation, as in the case of the Israeli Bennett government at the end of the previous war with Hamas in 2021²⁸.

On the Israeli front, several demonstrations are clamouring for the resignation of the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.²⁹

On the Palestinian side, the Hamas' 10/7 attack also aimed at freeing Palestinian national leader Marwan Barghouti – the charismatic leader of the first and the second Intifada, held in Israeli jails for 21 years – who, according to former *Shin Bet* (Israel's internal security service) chief Amy Ayalon, would be the only one capable of acting as a go-between to achieve peace and leading the united Palestinians after the end of the war.³⁰

According to Barghouti's son Arab, his father “*is the person who can stop the war*” – a comment that recent polls conducted in Gaza and the West Bank seem to confirm – thus facilitating the aforementioned Westphalian Two-States peace solution for Palestinians and Israelis in conflict³¹.

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²⁸ Enrico Molinaro, “Is A Balanced Analysis on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Possible?”, <https://whataboutusmusic.com/2021/06/01/is-a-balanced-analysis-on-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict-possible/>.

²⁹ Reuters staff, “Only 15% of Israelis want Netanyahu to keep job after Gaza war, poll finds”, *Reuters*, January 2, 2024: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/only-15-israelis-want-netanyahu-keep-job-after-gaza-war-poll-finds-2024-01-02/>.

³⁰ Yossi Melman, “The Misconception Was That the Palestinians Aren't a People. They're Willing to Kill and Be Killed for Their Independence”, *Haaretz*, January 10, 2024: <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-01-10/ty-article-magazine/.premium/the-misconception-was-that-the-palestinians-arent-a-people/0000018c-eec3-d0b4-a7ce-ffe38ec80000>.

³¹ Lorenzo Attianese, “Arab Barghouti: 'Mio padre la chiave della pace'”, *Ansa*, November 17, 2023: https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/speciali/guerra-in-medio-oriente/2023/11/17/arab-barghouti-mio-padre-la-chiave-della-pace_1d1fe859-2082-42a7-bcb7-13c7f0bd4c9a.html.

Peter Baker, “Negotiators Close In on Hostage Deal That Would Halt Fighting in Gaza for Weeks”, *The New York Times*, January 27, 2024: <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/27/us/politics/hostage-deal-cease-fire-hamas-gaza.html>.

Nidal al-Mughrabi, “Hamas reiterates that Gaza war must end for any hostage release”, *Reuters*, January 29, 2024: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/hamas-reiterates-that-gaza-war-must-end-any-hostage-release-2024-01-29/>.