
THE MOSLEM WORLD: THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS

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HAMAS. CONFRONTATION WITH ISRAEL: KEY FEATURES
AND IDEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

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Abstract. In October 2023, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict riveted the attention of the entire Muslim world, with the media laying it on thick and spreading information about the imminent start of the third world war. While the scientific community is trying to determine the causes of the conflict, leaders of virtually all countries are urging Israel and Palestine to lay down their arms. Analysts say that the conflict may become protracted, as the parties are not yet ready to enter into

negotiations. According to political scientists, unlike in previous cases, the struggle for territory is not at the root of the current confrontation. Today, the cause of the conflict is dissatisfaction of Hamas with the shift of world centers of power.

The Islamic Resistant Movement (Hamas) came to power in the Middle East 27 years ago in a democratic election. According to official data of the Palestinian Central Election Commission, Islamic radicals won 76 seats – more than half of the total number of deputies in the 132-seat Palestinian parliament. [1] Hamas won the elections largely due to the show of the unity and a carefully thought-out election campaign. In order to participate in the elections, the organization increased its annual budget to approximately \$90 million. About 85 per cent of the money was spent on the group's political activities and the remaining funds on terror operations. [2] Having the ability to solve social problems, the organization invested substantial efforts in changing its image. It replaced the established image of militant radicals with the image of a constructive political force, although the change did nothing to reassure Israeli politicians. After the Islamist victory, former deputy from the right-wing Likud party Silvan Shalom said that it was “an earthquake that will set us [Israel] back 50 years and ultimately lead the entire Middle East to chaos”. [1] The prophecy is beginning to come true, and the escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can not only reshape the entire region, but also global political contours.

It should be noted that the Hamas leadership is based in the Gaza Strip but has many branches in Palestine itself and beyond. The political and military bodies of the organization are intertwined and practically inseparable. An important fact is that Hamas showed the world how to succeed in a political race against weak secular regimes. This was a big surprise for people in the West, but not for Palestinians, who see the organization as a symbiosis of religion and politics among 21st-century Muslims. As noted by researchers A. Krylov and V. Morozov, “the

emergence of the Islamic Resistance Movement (*Harakat al-Muqāwamah al-ʿIslāmiyyah*, Hamas) in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank was a direct consequence of the fact that the idea of Arab unity, once popular among the major organizations of the Palestinian resistance movement, had run its course. Even though during the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948–1949, 1956, 1967 and 1973 this idea was indeed the main factor uniting the countries of the Arab world, it quickly lost its relevance after signing the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in March 1979 on the basis of the Camp David Accords. Arab nationalism and Arab unity were replaced by new forms of ethnical and territorial nationalism, including Palestinian nationalism, which had a distinct radical Islamic orientation.” [3] As a result, Islamist groups and organizations emerged, many of which set themselves the goal of overthrowing secular regimes and establishing Sharia-compliant political authorities.

It is worth noting that Hamas has a rather complicated political structure. Hamas’s governing body is the Majlis al-Shura (Shura Council), which is backing the political leadership of the organization and is engaged in spreading of the ideology. The Council is formed through multi-staged elections. First, the Electoral College is selected by secret ballot in four ‘districts’. They are roughly divided as follows: the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Israel (prisoners) and foreign cells. Then, the local Shura Councils and their representatives are elected by secret ballot. And finally, a number of them are elected as members of the Majlis al-Shura; thus, the Council always has representatives from each ‘district’. In the the Majlis al-Shura there are 45 members from Hamas, while another 12 members are elected from other branches of the Muslim Brotherhood. Each stage of the election lasts three or four months. [4] Importantly, the elections are held in strict secrecy, and the names of the Council members are not disclosed. It is also interesting that there is no internal political campaign, and the final decision rests with the

members of the Political Bureau. The Chairman can only hold office for two terms. The 2017 elections to the Political Bureau (when Ismail Haniyeh took over from Khaled Mashal) showed that only influential and senior Hamas officials can run for the office. The Chairman of the Political Bureau has key influence on the activities of the organization in Gaza, Samaria and Judea, as well as outside Palestine. However, he is obliged to coordinate crucial decisions with the Majlis al-Shura, which was stipulated by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the ideologist of the movement. [5]

The Hamas security system is quite curious because security forces are rather branched out. The police keep order both onshore and offshore. Note that the police are made up of elite rapid response units and naval Special Forces. Therefore, the police have the right to arrest senior officials, put down demonstrations, and protect the coastal zone near Gaza.

In addition to the police, Hamas has domestic security agencies, security and safety apparatus, national security agencies and civil protection authorities. "Domestic security agencies work closely with the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, and their members are often part of the Brigades. Training of the staff of domestic security agencies is such that they can serve as both soldiers of a regular army and guerrilla fighters in case Israel enters the sector. The safety and security apparatus was created to ensure that top Hamas officials are protected. National security agencies are responsible for monitoring Egyptian borders with border crossings, and overseeing smuggling through tunnels and the sea. They have fired at Israeli ships on more than one occasion in order to ensure uninterrupted supplies for the assembly and subsequent installation of missile launchers. Civil protection authorities are responsible for the domestic security of Gaza, preventing the infiltration of Israeli intelligence agents or members of Fatah into the strip." [6]

In general, the Hamas structure is built vertically, but all major decisions can only be made through a deliberative process.

Administrative apparatus is required to take into consideration the opinion of the Majlis al-Shura and high-ranking military personnel. The maintenance of the military wing of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades costs approximately \$260 million per year. [7]

Hamas has a rather powerful army and an extensive system because of the fact that the Arabs of the Middle East perceive Israel as the root of all evil. It all started in 1947, when the UN General Assembly created two independent states – an Arab one and a Jewish one – thus creating strife between Israel and Palestine. The fact is that the creation of the state of Israel was perceived as a threat not only by the Arabs of Palestine, but also by the neighboring Arab states. In December 1947, at a meeting in Cairo, the leaders of Arab states expressed concern about Zionist ambitions in the Middle East. They feared that the ultimate aim of all the Zionists was “the acquisition of all of Palestine, all Transjordan and possibly some tracts in Southern Lebanon and Southern Syria.” Also, after taking control of the country, the Zionist ‘politicians’ would stop treating the Arabs “nicely”, and once feeling “strong enough,” they would begin “squeezing the Arab population off their lands... [and] if necessary out of the State.” [8] The fears of the Arabs were confirmed. The young Jewish state set itself the goal of building up its military potential so it could subsequently expand its borders. At the end of 1947, Israel started to set up military organizations in Palestine, such as Haganah, Stern and the Irgun. It was officially stated that they were there to protect the borders, but in reality they were tasked to ‘cleanse’ the territory of the Arab population. It should be noted that the activities of Israeli armed forces were not limited only to territories intended for the Jewish state. In 1948, the strategy was confirmed by the leader of the Irgun, M. Begin: “While the five Arab states (Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Transjordan) were preparing for joint aggression, we continued our forays into Arab territories. However, it was obvious that forays alone could not help us establish control over the entire territory... At the end of January 1948, the Irgun commanders set

four strategic goals: Jerusalem, Jaffa, the Lydda-Ramla plain and the triangle (the territory in the center of Palestine with the corner points of Nablus, Jenin and Tulkarm). We considered these plans to be alternative, meaning that they might meet our capabilities at one time or another. Out of the four objectives, we only achieved the second one, though the capture of Jaffa was of paramount importance.” [9] The Zionist armed forces thereby conducted 13 major military operations, eight of which were carried out outside the Jewish state.

Thus, the creation of the new state of Israel in the Middle East was followed by escalation of the Arab-Jewish confrontation, which was not so much a diplomatic dispute as an armed conflict. Therefore, the apprehensions of journalists, politicians and political scientists that the conflict in the Middle East could escalate into World War III might not be merely making headlines, but quite possibly become a reality. The thing is that Hamas has a global outreach. “For a long time, the Hamas headquarters were in Syria with the Chairman of the Political Bureau K. Mashaal. Damascus supported the movement’s activities since it is in opposition to Zionism. However, all ties were severed in 2012 after Hamas supported opposition sentiments and spoke out against the regime of President Bashar Assad. However, in 2019, I. Haniyeh was ready to show flexibility, saying that Hamas merely sought to distance itself from internal problems in Syria.” [10]

Hamas has many cells in Lebanon and has links to Hezbollah. Hamas also has close ties with Tehran, especially with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. “Iran’s military has more than once offered its assistance in preparing the Palestinian resistance movement, providing Hamas with logistical support and weapons. Often, various schemes for transporting money and weapons use Hezbollah as a transitor. However, there have been tensions between Tehran and Hamas, primarily due to the Syrian issue. Since 2017, Hamas has been sending delegations to

Tehran hoping to settle their differences and reinforce the 'Iranian Axis' in the region." [11]

Hamas has an operational base in Turkey, and Hamas representatives have established strong ties with SADAT, a private Turkish military company. "Hamas representatives own Turkish commercial companies, open bank accounts and sponsor activities of their organization." [12] In addition to the cells in Palestine and Arab countries, Hamas supporters can also be found in Europe and the US.

The current conflict between Israel and Hamas, which broke up again with more violence, is no longer caused by a territorial dispute between Palestinians and Jews. It is caused by the shift of world centers of power. The fact is that the US is in a confrontation with radical Islamists, and Israel serves as an outpost on the borders with the Arab world. It is obvious that Palestine and Israel are unlikely to start negotiations. Therefore, the radicals of the Arab world are going to support Hamas, and the US is going to support Israel. The question of World War III depends on whether the US and the Arab world get openly involved in the confrontation between Israel and Palestine.

It is worth noting that the conflict is unlikely to end soon. On October 17, 2023, the UN rejected a Russian resolution calling for a ceasefire with a rather perplexing explanation: "The resolution proposed by Russia does not condemn the actions of Hamas." [13] The concern is that people on both sides lose their lives due to the military confrontation every day. The point of no return has been passed, but what may be the reason for other countries to join the conflict remains to be seen.

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