

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF RUSSIA-UKRAINIAN AND ISRAEL-GAZA WARS: IMPLICATIONS ON GLOBAL SECURITY

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Abstract

This paper is a comparative study on the political dynamics around two major contemporary conflicts: the Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Gaza conflict. The consequences of both conflicts are unique to international security and stability despite their distinct divergent geographical, historical, and ideological backgrounds. The paper investigates the fundamental causes of both conflict's strategic interests, with particular emphasis on the external influences that shaped these wars. It also underscores the influence and contributions of global powers and regional actors in subsisting or mitigating the strains of the conflicts. This comparative study leverages the fundamental political backgrounds of the Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Gaza conflict to bare their implications on international security and stability.

The paper adopts a multidisciplinary approach to examine and analyse the challenges of these wars on the reshape of international alliances, multilateral institutions and general international norms. The study highlights the surging impacts of these wars on the arms proliferation, refugee crises, economic devastation, and the strengthening of extremist ideologies. It also assesses the efficacy or flaws of international responses. Contorting both conflicts exposes information weaponization, hybrid warfare strategy and the fragile status of sovereign states in globalization as patterns of contemporary global warfare. The proffered some policy recommendations that can help strengthen the global security situation, foster existing conflict resolution mechanisms, frameworks, and promote sustainable peace in a progressively polarized world. The study further highlights the exigency for a comprehensive global framework and approach to address the multidimensional challenges posed by these persistent conflicts.

Keywords: Geopolitical Conflicts, International Security, Hybrid Warfare, Global Powers, Conflict Resolution

Introduction

The international security and stability has experienced subsistent challenges as a result of the continuing conflicts between Russia and Ukraine and Israel-Gaza. Though the historic, geographic and ideological foundations of these conflicts are divergent, their impact and influence are uniquely similar to the peace, security and stability of the global political system (Ocholi& Okonkwo, 2023). On the one hand, the annexation of Crimea in 2014 marked the beginning of the war between Russia and Ukraine. It further degenerated and escalated on 21 February, 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine (International Rescue Committee, 2023). This action which was tagged 'Special Military Operation' (SPO) no doubt remains one of the greatest threats to security and peace of Europe since the Cold War ended and caused extensive economic devastation, humanitarian crises as well as increased influx of refugees into other European countries (Global Conflict Tracker, 2024). On the other hand, intensified Hamas attacks on Israel in 2023 led to sustained military responses from Israel against Hamas hideouts in Gaza and across Palestine. Similarly, this Israeli military action has heightened security tension in the area and further exacerbated humanitarian crisis across the Middle East region (United States Institute of Peace, 2023).

Historical Context

Background to Russia/Ukraine War

In 2014, Russia annexed an autonomous southern part of Ukraine known as Crimea. This followed an American propelled effort to westernize Ukraine along the corridors of Russian borders which was announced at the April 2008 summit of NATO held in Bucharest where it was announced that Georgia and Ukraine will become members of NATO. The strategy was to be achieved through a three strand approach which are; to assimilate Ukraine into the EU, to establish a pro-Western liberal democracy in Ukraine, and most significantly, to incorporate Ukraine into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (Mearsheimer, 2022). Considering the struggle for global leadership between United States of America and Russia, such announce was correspondingly considered an existential threat to the Russian federation and therefore would not be allowed to happen. Thus, according to Mearsheimer (2022), outraged Russia leaders clearly expressed displeasure against such intentions and declared Russia would let either country to join NATO.

Following the degeneration of the conflict, Russia went ahead to invade Ukraine on 21 February 2022 (Hassan, & Mustafa, 2024). Part of the fundamental reasons given by the

Russian president Vladimir Putin to justify his SPO in Ukraine was hinged on the shape of the security state of post-Cold War Europe and the long-existing disagreement regarding the expansion of NATO (Ocholi & Okonkwo, 2023). The speech further reflected the relationship which existed among Russia, Ukraine and Belarus who shared a common political dynasty originally traced to the medieval Kyivan Rus. Thus, Russia perception about this move is that it is an anti-Russian project intended by the West to rival imperial Russia (Hassan, & Mustafa, 2024). Today, the escalated war has grave consequences on both parties to the conflict. The conflict has not only produced hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons but also resulted in thousands of casualties and unprecedented infrastructure damage since its conception.

Background to Israel-Gaza/Hamas Conflict

Historically, the Israel-Gaza/Hamas conflict is a complex conflict which dates back as far as the late 19th century. It started as a simple rising tension between the Arabs Palestinians and Jewish population following the establishment of Israel in 1948 which displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians (Bordas, 2024; Gilboa & Sigan, 2024). It was hence, a historical event that sowed the seed of discord and enduring animosity between the Jews and the Palestinian Arabs and thus, marking the beginning of escalated tension within the region as well as the contemporary exacerbated conflict between them.

It is noteworthy to mention the Gaza Strip at this point because of its fundamentality and strategic relevance to the conflict. The Gaza Strip represents a small densely populated and strategically located border territory between Israel and Egypt. The strip became the stronghold of Hamas since it took over the control and governance of the area in 2007 after winning the legislative elections in Palestine in 2006 (BBC News, 2024).

Hamas on its own is both an Islamist political movement and a militant group. The group was founded in 1987 when the first Intifada against Israeli occupation took place. Hamas was a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood which means Islamic Resistance Movement with about 30,000 fighters (BBC News, 2024). The group is consistently against what it says is Israeli illegal occupation of Palestinian land. In place of this illegal occupation, Hamas wants an Islamic based state to be established across the illegally occupied Palestinian territories of Gaza, West Bank, and East Jerusalem and not relinquishing its claim to all of historically related Palestinians (Bordas, 2024).

According to BBC News on 21 October, 2024, Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel on 7 October, 2023 killing approximately 1,200 Israelis while taking more than

250 hostages. This Hamas action was in total breach of the Gaza-Israel barrier. Israel declared war against Hamas in retaliation and commenced an extensive bombing campaign against them (Gilboa & Sigan, 2024). The sustained Israeli military offensive against Hamas in Gaza has resulted in the death of thousands of Palestinians and heavy destruction of the region (Bordas, 2024). It has also escalated tension across the region and influenced global security architecture. However, before the 7 October, 2023 attacks, Hamas several other notable conflicts have erupted between them and Israel as demonstrated in table 1.

Table 1: Some key Hamas Conflicts with Israel

S/N	Date of Conflict	Conflict Triggers	Israeli Response
1	2008-2009	Gaza War Rocket fire from Gaza into Israel	Israeli airstrikes in response
2	2012	conflict Escalation caused by significant rocket attacks from Gaza	Israeli retaliatory airstrikes
3	2014	Gaza War Kidnap and murder of three Israeli teenagers	Subsequent military operations by Israel
4	2021	Escalation Tensions in East Jerusalem over evictions and clashes at Al-Aqsa Mosque, Hamas launched rockets into Israel	Israeli extensive military response
5	2023	Gaza war Hamas Attack during the Nova Music Festival killing over 1200 at three different locations (Kibbutz Re'im, Kfar Aza and Be'eri) and took over 200 hostage	Israeli military response and protracted war

Source: Compiled by the author from available online data.

Consequences of the Russia/Ukraine War

The consequences of the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine cannot be exaggerated because of its multifaceted dimensions. They not only felt within the immediate battlefield but extended beyond to the global security environment. This research categorizes the consequences of this war into three broad types, which include; economic impacts, humanitarian crises, and geopolitical shifts.

Economic Impacts

There is no doubt that this war has interrupted the global market. Some of the major areas disrupted by this war are the food and energy sectors. According to Economics Observatory(2023), prior to the war, more than a third of the international wheat and half of sunflower oil exports come from Ukraine and Russia. Unfortunately, there was a decline in agricultural output and rise in prices of goods because of the invasion. This has influenced to global cost of living crisis especially in Europe where most of these products are exported. Correspondingly, the World Bank has warned of escalating food crisis resulting in inflation and has prompted the largest global commodity shock in over 50 years (World Bank Group Report, 21 October, 2024).

Various forms of sanctions were also imposed on Russia by the Western nations as a result of her invasion of Ukraine. For instance, a BBC report on 23 February, 2024 indicated that there were more than 16,500 sanctions already imposed on Russia since her invasion of Ukraine in 2022 by the US, UK and EU and other allied countries. These unprecedented sanctions were targeted against Russia's key economic sectors especially her energy export sector. This sector has continued to experience sharp decline in revenues for the country and its economy (BBC News, 23 February, 2024). The BBC report further highlighted some of the implications of these sanctions of the Russian economy as stated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In the first year of the war, for instance, Russia's economy shrank by 2.1%. Also, according to the International Energy Agency as reported by the European Council, Russia equally saw a drop of over a quarter in her oil revenues in January 2023, compared to January 2022 and about 40% significant decline in February 2023 (European Council, 12 October 2023).

Humanitarian Crises

The war has equally led to humanitarian crises, rising civilian casualties and disturbing level of displacements. A data published by the Economics Observatory, there are over

26,000 reported cases of civilian casualties in Ukraine as at August 2023 since the inception of the war (Economics Observatory, 2023). While additional millions of people have been internally displaced, others millions have fled the countries to seek refuge (Bocquillon, *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, the destruction of local infrastructure has negative implications on access to basic needs and essential services. More than 16 million people in Ukraine do not have access to clean water due to destruction of water supply sources. Shortages of medical supplies severely disrupt normal medical hospital operations as they struggle to meet their daily increasing demands amidst the growing war (Rescue.org, 2023).

Geopolitical Shifts

Across the globe, the Russia-Ukraine war has great influence. It has prompted security discussion among world leaders especially among European leaders. Within these discussions, security policies of NATO member states and other European countries feature prominently. Because of the potential vulnerability of the security architecture of European countries which the war underscores, the attitude of these countries towards Russia has been deeply compromised. It has dwindled foreign relations between many of them and Russia. The security spending of most of the European countries that support Ukraine had also increased dramatically over time (Bocquillon, *et al.*, 2024).

Additionally, the global community may experience a shift and realignment in their sources of products. European countries that overtly rely on Russia for oil and gas supply may likely review their energy policies to reduce over reliance on Russia for the products. This would prompt re-alignments among new supply countries and renegotiation between Russia and her existing consuming countries (Ilman, & Anam, 2023, Bocquillon, *et al.*, 2024).

Consequences of the Israel-Gaza/Hamas conflict

As with the case in Russia-Ukraine war, the Israel-Gaza/Hamas conflict equally has its implications. This research highlights four broad implications. Among them are; humanitarian crisis, economic impact, political implications, and social consequences.

Humanitarian Crisis

Like in any war or armed conflicts, there are casualties and displacement. The Israel-Gaza/Hamas conflict is not an exception. The conflict as expected has brought about the death of thousands and displacement of many. For instance, more than 46,000 Palestine have been killed since the inception of the conflict including women and children (Aljazeera News, 9 October, 2023). See table 2. The percentage of dead women and children from this figure stands at about 70% (BBC News, 8 November 2024). The implication is that an average of about 130 people is killed every 10 minutes in Gaza (United Nations, 15 August, 2024). This exacerbates an already dire humanitarian situation in the conflict region.

Area	Number Killed	Children Killed	Women Killed	Injured	Missing Persons	Displaced Persons
Gaza	45,885	17,492	Over 10,000	109,196	Above 11,160	Over 19 Million
Occupied West Bank	841	172		6,700		
Israel	1,139			8,730		

Source: Compiled by the author from available online data.

Apart from deaths, the destruction level in the Gaza region is unprecedented and these include private and public properties. Among the destroyed public properties are health and education facilities. For instance, recorded reports showed that more than 60% of health and education facilities in Gaza have been destroyed by the conflict (Ilman, & Anam, 2023). This also increased the pressure on existing yet to be destroyed facilities who hitherto struggle to meet the medical responsibility of caring for the increasing number of injured people. Other business related infrastructures were also destroyed in this war. Consequently, around 85% of Gaza workforce is forced out of jobs while the economy, which functions at about 16% production capacity, experience a sharp declined (World Bank Group, 2023).

There is also increased stress on the use and need for other public facilities such as clean drinking water which supply drastically declined leaving more than 95% of population of Gaza with inadequate or total lack of access to clean drinking water (Bocquillon, *et*

al., 2024). The situation enhances the vulnerability of cholera outbreak especially on children and women. Other public health challenges could also arise from improper disposal or accumulation of solid waste as a result of inadequate sanitation facilities occasioned by damage due to the war.

Economic Impact

The consequences of the war on the economy of Gaza are no doubt, very severe. The region is experiencing serious economic downturn as economic activities in Gaza are nearly halted due to adverse security challenges presented by the conflict situation in the area. Starvation, especially, among children and women, is also increasingly widespread and severe because thousands of people do not have consistent access to basic need for their survival (Bocquillon, *et al.*, 2024).

The effect of the war on the economy is also visible. Even though it is mild, the economic strain is obvious on their shrinking GDP and reduced consumption (Al Jazeera, 2024). Predictions by economic analysts put the cost of the war to approximate \$55.6 billion by 2025 (Al Jazeera, 2024).

Political Consequences

There is an obvious instability in the entire Middle East. There is heightened apprehension across region. The broader regional environment is experiencing insecurity and instability as a result of the conflict. Unfortunately, regional insecurity is also escalated by numerous attacks by Hama and Hezbollah allies on US Military bases as a retaliatory action against Israel (Al Jazeera, 2024). Various forms of advocacy protests for ceasefire and concerns around human rights violations have happen across the globe through human rights organizations. Though some of these organization perceive the conflict as an even to genocide against the Palestinians, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is undertaking a review of human right related cases brought to it against Israel (Bocquillon, *et al.*, 2024)

Social Consequences

It is not in doubt that the war has drawn a lot of public sentiment across the globe and even in Israel. Many protesting Israelites perceive the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu incompetent and unable to handle the security situation and humanitarian challenges caused by the conflict on the people of Israel (Al Jazeera News, 7 November, 2023). According to a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2023, the conflict significantly dislocated social services in the Gaza region. The situation has subjected many families and individuals complete reliance on humanitarian supplies and aid to sustain themselves and their families. As such, there is increased rate of depression among thousands of people because of their consistent exposure to violent and unstable conditions (UNDP, 2024).

Comparative Analysis

Similarities between the Israel-Hamas and Russia-Ukraine Conflicts

Broadly, both conflicts share certain similarities which include; aggression against sovereign states, violation of international law, and the quest for regional dominance. Just like the Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza is a cross-border aggression against Palestine, the Russia-Ukraine war share similar feature as an aggression against Ukraine. Thus, both conflicts represent an overt aggression against internationally recognised sovereign states. While Israel invaded Gaza in retaliation of Hamas attack against Israelis on 7 October, 2023, Russia invaded Ukraine to assert claims against the continued existence of Ukraine as an independent state.

One of the fundamentally overt inferences from both conflict situations is their violation of international law on invasion and/or aggression of a sovereign state against another (Zanotti, 2024). In other words, what is obvious in both aggressions is that Hamas and Russia engaged in common violation of international (Mandelbaum, 2024). Furthermore, the leadership of both Hamas and Russia both question the independent status Israel and Ukraine. While the leadership Hamas refuses to acknowledge Israel as an independent nation, Russia continues her denial against and recognition of the legitimacy of sovereign state of Ukraine (Mandelbaum, 2024).

Also, international response to both conflicts has significant implications for global politics. The wars have drawn varying degrees of support and condemnation from different nations, and this has affected global diplomatic relations especially among allied nations to Israel and Palestine, as well as Russia and Ukraine. For instance, while Ukraine, in her defense against Russian aggression, has continued to enjoy significant support from Western nations, Gaza and Palestine attracts empathy and support from the many Middle East nations. This shift has potential weakening implications on the international political system capable of sprouting alter alliances among states (United States Institute of Peace, 2023). This can be exemplified, for instance, by the stronger ties that exist between Russia and Iran with whom Russia now military collaboration through arms deals including drones.

Lastly, both wars are reflection of exhibition of regional influence. They represent an attempt by Israel and Russia to assert their regional superiority, leadership position and control. The conflicts both demonstrate how local struggles are affected by wider geopolitical competitions involving major powers (Zanotti, 2024). Conversely, Russia's actions in Ukraine have strengthened its ties with Iran as they collaborate militarily, particularly through arms deals that include drones (United States Institute of Peace, 2023).

Differences between the Israel-Hamas and Russia-Ukraine Conflicts

One of the primary differences between the two conflicts reflects in the context of their origins, history and ideology. The original cause of the Israel-Hamas conflict is the result of enduring territorial ownership dispute grievances around occupies West bank and the Gaza strip. This has resulted in historically documented sustained tension and conflict between Israel and Palestine. Though, there has been humanitarian crises challenge in the region, the ongoing war in Gaza has exacerbated the situation since its commencement in 2023.

In contrast, the historical trace of the Russia-Ukraine war revolves around the tension roused by the independence at the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Zanotti, 2024). However, following Russia's support for separatist movement in Eastern Ukraine and their annexation of Crimea in 2014, the geopolitical tension between the two nations escalated. Currently, the situation degenerated in February 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine to counter the expansion of NATO towards Russian territories and reassert her influence over historically Soviet Union territories (AP News, 9 January, 2025).

In addition, the two conflicts also differ in terms of nature of the warfare used in either of them. On the one hand, the Israel-Hamas war is characterized by heavy aerial bombardments around the urban areas of Gaza and its environment (AP News, 9 January, 2025). According to an Amnesty International in 2024, the Israel-Hamas war involved hostage taking, substantial number of civilian casualties, accusation of human rights abuses and violation as well as various wars crimes (Amnesty International, 2024).

On the other hand, the Russia-Ukraine war is largely characterized large-scale military confrontations and the use of heavy war tanks, air fighters and artillery as well as the use of other notable conventional warfare. There is equally extensive use cyber warfare and misinformation campaigns in the conflict (BBC News, 2024).

On the humanitarian front, the Israel-Hamas conflict has far reaching implications on the increasing humanitarian crisis Gaza. The consistent bombardment of Gaza by Israel made major parts of the region hugely uninhabitable territory (Amnesty International, 2024).

Similarly, the Russia-Ukraine war has witnessed tremendous humanitarian crisis. The humanitarian impact of the war is so profound across ravaged areas where humanitarian access remains sternly restricted. This implicate is precipitated by extensive bombardment and destruction of many cities which left millions either internally displaced persons or across the borders refugees. This is more disturbing in highly destroyed cities such as Mariupol (BBC News, 2024).

Furthermore, there is high international involvement in the Israel-Hamas conflict as in the Russia-Ukraine war. Many countries of the international community have responded in various ways as to how to end the war. Some of these responses include calls for a ceasefire and call for Israel to allow or permit the movement of humanitarian aid into Gaza. Even though many countries have provided humanitarian aid for the people of Gaza and Palestine, military barricade mounted by Israeli soldiers have prevented movement of such aid in form of food, water, medications and other daily necessary needs of the people from entering the region. The US is among the countries that provided such humanitarian aid to Palestine in addition to their provision of military support to Israel (AP News, 9 January, 2025).

Similarly, the Russia-Ukraine war has also witnessed significant reaction from the international community either in support of or against their invasion of Ukraine. For instance, many NATO countries rolled out various forms of sanctions against Russia while others provided military support for Ukraine (AP News, 9 January, 2025). This conflict has reignited discussions about the role of NATO in Europe and security guarantees for Eastern European nations.

Concluding Remarks

This work, a comparative analysis of the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Gaza conflicts is aimed at unraveling complex challenges these conflicts pose to international peace, stability and security. Though the conflicts are contextually differently historically, ideologically, and geopolitically, they however related as both conflicts sprout from unresolved grievances, territorial disputes as well as external intervention on international peace. They are also remarkable similarities in nature of international responses to both conflicts as well as methods of warfare. The analysis of the two conflicts is thus, imperative to clearly highlight the similarities, differences and implications of the conflicts for global peace and security. While both conflicts have reshaped international norms and amplified hybrid warfare strategies, they have also bared the increasing of vulnerability of sovereign states in a globalized community. Both scenarios have equally demonstrated the exigent need for an organized global structure to tackle arms proliferation, refugee crises, and the escalation of extremist ideologies.

Moving forward, the study suggests strengthening multilateral institutions and fostering innovative conflict resolution mechanisms as imperative means of ending the conflicts. It also suggests the adoption of a dialogue prioritized approach, sustainable peace-building, and equitable humanitarian interventions as viable and effective efforts through which the international community, especially the powerful nations can foster a more stable and secure world and also mitigate their long-term implications.

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