HAMAS-ISRAELI PROXY WAR 2023: ITS REGIONAL CONSEQUENCES AND LESSONS FOR WEST AFRICAN LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT
The study focusses on the ongoing proxy wars in the Middle East between Hamas and the state of Israel in terms of the supports given to Hamas by Hezbollah, Houthi and other militant groups affiliated to Iran, and highlighted regional consequences and lessons for West Africa leadership. It adopted case studies research design, whereby a particular case is intensively studied in a manner that the nuances and implications are seen as architype for generalisation. The paper relies chiefly on secondary data which are sourced from textbooks, scholarly journals, publications of governmental and non-governmental organisations, and the internet. The data were qualitatively presented and analysed thematically. The study argued that Hamas – Israeli conflict of 2023 is an architype of proxy war, with regional and global consequences. It highlighted lessons to learn by West African leadership, given the renewed interest of Russia and China in the subregion which may lead to proxy wars with the West, especially France, and the impacts of intensive spread of Islamic fundamentalism in the region. It concluded that being an agent of a proxy war is a political gambling with short term benefit, but proxy wars leave behind wreckages and loss of lives, difficult to replace. Therefore, political actors in West Africa should avoid becoming proxy agents for imperial ambition of any power bloc.

Introduction

Israel is not new to armed attacks on its territory and citizens, as its history is rich with such attacks; this is rooted in its journey to nationhood (Gordis, 2016; Brenner, 2018). The creation of the state of Israel in the heart of the Palestine generated negative reactions from the Arab cum Islam dominated enclave since 1948. The desire to wipe out the 'Zionist settlement' have led to different Arab Coalitions that led to Seven Days war, Yom Kippur War, and the resultant 'oil embargo' by Arab States in 1973 to

protest the supports of the West to the Jewish state (Feldman, Khalil & Abdel, 2013). There was also Israeli - Lebanese war fought to eliminate Hezbollah militants from southern Lebanon. With time, Egypt, Jordan and some Arab states which had hitherto refused to accept the existence of Israel began to accept the realities of coexistence of Israel in a two-state solution model in the Palestine signed peace treaties with Israel (Tesler, 2009). Despite several efforts by the West to broker peace between Israel and its Muslim neigbours, some extremists in the region refused to renounce their rejection of the existence of the Jewish state and continuously call and work for the extermination of Israel. Such hardline states include Syria and Iran (Ross, 2015). With the ascendance of Shiite regime in 1979, the Islamic state adopted the destruction of Israel as part of its foreign policies, and thus recruit, train, and maintain proxy groups to further its aggressive foreign policies (Feldman, Khalil & Abdel, 2013; Keddie, 2006). This exercise led to the recruitment of Hezbollah, Hamas and Houthis among others as proxy militant groups to fight Israel and ensure the eviction of the Zionists from the Palestine land. The October 7, 2023, attacks on Israel were one in the series of proxy attacks on the Jewish state by agents of Iranian state (Dostri, 2023; Lustick, 2024)

The October 7, 2023, Hamas' attacks on Israel has degenerated into proxy wars with regional and global consequences. Such consequences include the continuous loss of lives and property, the destruction of infrastructural facilities in Israel, Gaza strip, Southern Lebanon, Iran, Yemen and Syria (Bouri, 2024). Indeed, barely a year after the outbreak of the conflict, Syria experienced regime change, as the agelong dictatorship of President Hafez Assad's Hashemite dynasty was swept away in November 2024 by rebels, who are leading the fragile state (Wedeen, 2025). Besides, most of the terrorists' infrastructures and assets of the dreaded Hezbollah in Lebanon have been decimated, and its leadership severely weakened. These came with a high toll on the government and people of Lebanon, who bore the unintended consequences of Israeli aerial bombardment of those structures, and military occupation of their domain, as well as the evacuation of the wreckages, and collateral damage to private and corporate concerns in the country (Abumbe, Terhile & Dede, 2024). The most devasting impact of the conflict is felt by civilians in Gaza, whose homes have been pulled down, and means of livelihood destroyed just like their loved ones, have been displaced, and some relocated to strange lands. Gaza has not been the same and may never be again, as Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) are working hard to wipe off the city in preparation for an expansion of Jewish settlements on the territory. Moreso, aid blockage by the IDF, and attacks on medical facilities have led to thousands of non-intended deaths in the Gaza strip (Bouri, 2024).

Furthermore, Israel has successfully struck some critical facilities in Iran and Yemen and has been correspondingly hit by missiles and other aerial attacks from Iran and its proxies around the Middle East. Houthi missiles attacks on Ben Gurion Airport are recurring decimals which disrupt flight in and out of the facilities (Abumbe, Terhile & Dede, 2024). There is palpable fear and uncertain across the region as Israel may attack Iranian nuclear facilities, just like the Houthi hypersonic missiles are evading Israeli Air Defence system. Indeed, Middle East is burning and has been caught up in cyclical conflicts because of the proxy wars (Dostri, 2023; Lustick, 2024).

The renewed Chinese and Russian interests, and their meddlesome in West Africa may lead to clashes of interests with Western entities such as France, and the proliferation of proxy wars in the sub-region (Barbic, 2024; Hudson, 2023). Consequently, the objective of this paper is to reflect on the ongoing conflict between Hamas and Israel, outlined regional consequences and important lessons for West African leadership to learn. It is designed to answer the question: what can West African leadership learn from the proxy wars between Hamas and Israel in the Middle East?

Literature Review

Proxy wars share common denomination with other social science concepts, namely, the dearth of universal definition of the subject matter. They have been variously defined by authors in different for a. According to Mumford (2013) Proxy wars are indirect engagement in military conflict by third parties with the objective of influencing its strategic outcome. In other words, proxy wars are "conflicts in which a third party intervenes indirectly in a pre-existing war to influence the strategic outcome in favour of its preferred faction (Brown & Mealie, 2018). The RAND Corporation defines proxy wars as 'civil wars in which an external state sponsor provides at least one local warring party with the support that could be useful for waging armed

conflict' (Watts et al., 2022). The last definition focused on the 'civil wars' dimension of the concept, not all proxy wars are civil wars, they may be interstate wars, as experienced during the Iraqi / Iranian War in the 1980s, when Iraq was an agent of the West in containing the radical Iranian entity after the 1979 Shiite Revolution (Ahammad, 2024; Taremi, 2007). However, inherent in these definitions is the unmistakable utilitarian value of military force to further political purpose through proxies; an inseparable Clausewitzian dictum, which the Prussian prince of war summed up as politics by other means (Rudd & McDonough, 2004: 4).

Fox (2023) reflected on the differences between military alliance, coalition and proxy wars. He argued that coalition and alliance involve burden sharing in troops, equipment and funding of military operations based on identified common interest. They are more of parity partners willing to hit the ground with their boots, equipment and other logistic supports for combat activities in the desired territories is dictated by the agreement setting up such alliance, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is a typical example of an alliance (Brenner, 1998). Coalition is like alliance in terms of parity of membership. But emphasises volition participation in military conflict without binding agreement, as witnessed in alliance. Coalition participants are moved by solidarity on issue of common interest and value. This was thoroughly demonstrated by the US allies that took part in the 'Operation Desert Storm' against Saddam Hussein in the first Gulf War (Harnish, 2013). Proxy wars on the other hand centre on Principal and Agent relationship; whereby the principal (actor A) offloads high degrees of tactical risk (i.e.: the human and material costs of warfighting) to an agent (Actor B) to limit the impact of strategic risks (i.e.: the political cost of war) on its pursuit of self-interests. In most cases a *Principal* is stronger than an *Agent*, and therefore a *Principal* uses various nuances of power to manipulate an *Agent* in a manner that fulfils its objectives. This arrangement entrenches principal-agent relationship between the two actors, and this unique relationship is what prominently distinguishes alliances and coalitions from proxy arrangement (Fox, 2023:4).

In affirming the uniqueness of proxy wars, (Rauta, 2020:5) added that the subject matter is organised weaved around three distinctive but complementing components: (a) a *material-constitutive* feature with focus on the provision of supports to a proxy beneficiary /agent by principal/supporter; (b) *processual feature* designed to explain the basis for providing material-constitutive component; and (c) a *relational feature* which captures specific strategic behaviour and its character, including strategic bargaining. This does not necessary lead to the formation of an alliance. All said, typology and duration of proxy arrangements depend on the exigencies which led to their birthing; as five basic models are easily explained, and they are: coerced, transactional, exploited, contractual and cultural arrangements. While coerced and exploited proxy arrangements are short-lived and less suitable for complex military operations, transactional proxy arrangements last longer due to the enduring impact of business model agreement, and the perceived mutual benefits of arrangement. Howbeit, contractual and cultural driven proxy arrangements are durable due to tight bonding arising from shared values, and the binding of contractual obligations on both the principal and agent (Fox, 2023:1). Experience have also shown that proxy arrangement is never eternal and are done away as soon as the objective for which it was fabricated are achieved by both or either party. Besides, remarkable development in the international system, or the conflict for which the proxy arrangement was designed to serve may lead to its solvency, as illustrated by the West support for the Mujahid who fought Soviet invasion of Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989 (Reuveny & Prakash, 1999).

Despite recrimination and sanctions, many proxy-sponsoring states in their characteristically trenchant manner have predominantly coalesced around the principles of regime survival and fundamental economic logic. They argued that proliferation of proxy wars aided by new technologies has profitably reshaped conflict in their favour, and thus, justify their negative strategic expressions. The problem herein with reactionary formulas is that their familiarity breeds an unwarranted confidence in its interpretation whether one is anchored in the 2000s or the century before (Gray, 1996). Even though there is no denying the unity of all strategic experiences regardless of the period, which Gray so succinctly pointed out (Gray, 1999).

When one examines the pertinent values in each argument for or against the necessity to sponsor proxy organisations in combination with the moral dilemma they create, it generates an

inconsistency since all major powers are guilty of this act. And that is why we must point out Russian involvement in the war in Syria; the activities of the quartet of Egypt, France, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Libya; Qatar's and Turkey's engagements in Libya, Syria, and beyond; as well as the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen (Gul, Rehman & Nasir, 2022; Reuveny & Prakash, 1999; Wedeen, 2025).

Surely many will propose compelling logic and delicate geopolitical nuances necessitating the use of proxies to further policy or interest. Rauta (2020) strongly argues that proxy wars have become a core feature of the contemporary and future strategic and security environment; proposes the relocation of proxy wars by conceptualising them as strategic bargains waged on more complex grounds than risk avoidance, cost efficiency, and deniability; and given that proxy wars strategic goals are coercing and coping with an adversary. The differences of which are presented by contrasting the rationale for the US decision to support Syrian rebels against President Bashar Al-Assad with the Iranian strategy of proxy war in Syria (Rauta, 2020; Wedeen, 2025).

It is not only in the Middle East and its periphery that proxy wars have become commonplace with former Marine Corps Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie noting that Russia and China were vying for power and influence through all aspects of national power. Concluding that Russia sought to undermine and disrupt U.S. influence to reassert its own identity as a global power (Garamone, 2021). In the same vein, Russia makes use of both formal and informal tactics to promote its strategic objectives in Africa through misinformation and disinformation, along with its deployment of security forces like the Wagner Group and covert operatives to manipulate everything from public sentiment to election results to the local security environment, all under the guise of plausible deniability (Hudson, 2023).

Accordingly, areas most badly impacted by the recent successions of proxy wars include the Sahel region, West Africa, and parts of Central Africa; and this is not forgetting the broader Middle East and its periphery in North Africa, which have been shaped by cycles of instability and insecurity resulting from conflicts involving local, regional and global actors (Aras & Karda, 2021; Okon, Ojakorotu & Iwara, 2024). Hudson (2023) specifically points to the fact that Russia in recent times, mostly in West Africa and the Sahel, used the formula of approaching countries in the throes of violence, instability, and political uncertainty. These subregions are plagued by dearth of transparency, rule of law or democratic institutions, needed to sell these countries' leaders on a basket of security, economic and political partnerships that benefit both countries elites. It is these benefits that make proxy linkages essential to diplomatic toolkits because the proxies do as they are told (Fox, 2023). Thus, it is obvious that the theatres for proxy wars are in the peripheral sphere of global power politics where Great Powers strive to promote their interests and influence through local agents in these areas by institutionalising security cum political partnership in bilateral engagements (Watts et al., 2022)

Ironically, many analysts, scholars and policymakers note that proxy wars have led to nothing but an era of 'turmoil and transition geopolitically' (USIP, 2019). This position is supported by some scholars' observation that proxy wars have mostly achieved nothing, but the altering of regional and extra-regional attitudes towards the issue of politics, while narrowing the scope of the very reform agendas it sets out to achieve. Besides, actual historical evidence suggests that no proxy actor's effort alone was enough to assist political transformation agendas (Lynch, 2021). This brings into focus the need to appreciate the role of geographical conditioning on both collective mentalities and policy choices by states or governments involved in or impacted by proxy wars.

If this conceptual argument and logic then makes sense, can one argue with some passion that suggest that both Israel's measures and countermeasures, as well as Hamas' actions and reactions largely result from conditioning and their geographical realities, as permitted by their strategic cultures personify (Gray, 1996).

This strategic culture in reference, analysed through the prism of geography goes along to explain how states including Israel have historically behaved in the international system. In illustrative terms, it also explains the rationale behind their foreign policy decision-making process and how it impacts its regional neighbourhood. It attempts to elucidate, also, how discourse is constructed in their societies within the context of constraint and motivation. Mostly as they also seek legitimacy for their

actions. Justifying in totality then, the puzzle as to why Israel's regional policies are so assertive (Brenner, 2018; Maoz, 2006). Which necessitates our using the Israel/Hamas 2023 conflict as our contextual case study.

Hamas is an acronym for *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya*, which translates to Islamic Resistance Movement. It is a Sunni Islamist Palestinian terrorist organisation that has governed the Gaza Strip since 2007. Fundamentally, it is an outgrowth of the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood and was officially formed in 1987/8, at the onset of the First *Intifada* (uprising); it has an active military wing known as the *Izz al-Din al-Qassam* Brigade (Knudsen, 2005). This military wing has conducted many anti-Israel attacks in both Israel and the Palestinian territories since the 1990s. Incidentally, Hamas was designated a terrorist organisation by the U.S. State Department (Bureau of Counterterrorism, 2001). Finally, its antagonistic contentions lie around its principal objective to destroy the state of Israel and replace it with an Islamic Republic (Vidino, 2023). This situation has presented a significant gap for countries like Iran to fill in support of groups like Hamas, based on feelings of prejudice, rather than facts, reason, and logic. Now let us briefly look at Hamas' proxy nature, linkages and the Iran dimension in the context of the October 2023 attacks on Israel.

Considered the most notable state sponsor of terrorism, Iran is renowned for providing financial, training, and equipment supports to its proxy army of well over a dozen militias and terror groups to initiate revolution and disequilibrium across the Middle East in particularly, Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories, Syria, and Yemen (Feldman, Khalil & Abdel, 2013; Keddie, 2006). Iran's agents in these countries and some of their own social or political platform, mostly answer to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC); a paramilitary body formed in 1979 to protect Iran's fundamentalist ideology, as well as ensure regime survival (Liebermann & Britzky, 2024; Keddie, 2006).

Generally, Iran's deep connection with its proxies and militias has been a global source of global concern and moderate and secular states in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The State Department for example estimated that Iran spent over $16 billion in support of the Assad regime in Syria and its other proxies between 2012 and 2020 (AJC, 2023). In relation to the October 7 massacre, Hamas terror group in southern Israel killed over 1,200 Israelis and other foreign nationals and took over 240 hostages; these have further demonstrated the threat to global stability that Iran and its terror proxies pose (Abumbe, Terhile & Dede, 2024).

Hamas – Israeli proxy war of 2023

Hamas attacks on Israel in October 2023 has generated several debates in scholarship and policy circles since Hamas does not see itself as a terrorist or clandestine organisation; while Israel does (Dostri, 2023; Knudsen, 2005). Leading to the principal argument that the state of Israel does indeed have a right to self-defence when attacked because it is not an occupying state in practical terms. Which has some merit. The truth remains that debates about connected legal, strategic, geopolitical and moral dilemmas have been extensive for the duration of the last decade as Hamas and other proxy groups attacked the state of Israel, its citizens and vital interest. While Israeli reprisals have been decisive and with conviction about the justness of its actions (Brenner, 2018). These ensuing debates go to the heart of various competing logic and theories and this essay has elucidated on dimension of it with empirical facts. Demonstrating in clear terms that both supporters and opponents of Hamas and the state of Israel have major burdens to bear or prove (Ross, 2015).

Uncontestably, Dostri rightly points out that the planning of the October 2023 attacks on Israel had been underway for at least two years, involving psychological warfare and a web of long-term deception to blindside Israel. Concluding that it was executed with a high degree of military organisation and professionalism, resembling the tactics of a regular army's Special Forces rather than those of a typical terrorist organisation (Dostri, 2023). Does this suggest the culpability of Iran and the proxy status of the Hamas?

Reuters, for example, notes that since Hamas attacked in October 2023, other Iranian-backed proxies including Hezbollah in Lebanon, Houthis in Yemen, and militias in Iraq and Syria, have launched varying attacks on Israeli and U.S. assets and forces in the Middle East and its periphery in continuous aggression raising the risk of a wider regional war (Reuters, 2024). This is worrisome when one considers the

entrenched interest in each argument, which in combination leaves the world sitting on a keg of gunpowder (Hamza, 2024;).

Broadly, Iran's regional geopolitical attitude and goals are incompatible with stated Israeli strategic and operational objectives for the October 2023 war vis-a-vis Hamas, and this contradiction is evidenced by escalation and attacks along international sea-lanes around the Suez Canal and Strait of Hormuz, amongst other blowbacks, by Houthi forces, an Iranian non-state proxy that has fired rockets and projectiles on ships using those lanes. This has led to the U.S. and its allies carrying out countermeasures (Liebermann & Britzky, 2024).

Discernibly, for peace to reign, it would require Israel to reduce its war aims, which is to substantially destroy Hamas' governing and military capabilities as a form of self-protection (Lustick, 2024). The first challenge, in effect, is that the principal conditionality for peace is question-begging because Hamas sees control of "some parts" of Palestine as an interim goal prior to the establishment of an Islamic Palestinian state. (Carter & Mealie, 2023). Furthermore, it assumes legitimacy because it has political power to administer social and political appendages of state backed by the elements of state power. Which is a risky oddity since many global players simply see Hamas as a terrorist and proxy organisation despite the new trappings and nomenclature (Knudsen, 2005).

The challenge in the Middle East and its periphery is that belligerent nations often have all sorts of ways to create instability in neighbouring countries including the use of proxies. And within the context of the Hamas/Israeli war of 2023, Iran demonstrates its guile, intent and ambition through its proxies in the region with clear intent, win or lose (AJC, 2023b). Which is why Schanzer notes that "when Iran has supported Hamas in Gaza to threaten Israel there have been wars, but even if Israel carries out many airstrikes and appears to win, Hamas still declares victory?" Making it, in our opinion, an endless cycle of violence. And with a new and concerning threat from the Iranian backed Houthis marking a novel challenge for Israel, the question now is not whether Israel will be forced to fight on another front but when (Liebermann & Britzky, 2024).

The consequences of Hamas-Israeli 2023 proxy war on the Middle East

The ongoing proxy war between Hamas and Israel has destabilised the fragile political and security equilibrium in the Middle East, disrupted efforts at peace-making in the region, and generated gigantic humanitarian crises in Gaza and neigbouring countries (Abumbe, Terhile & Dede, 2024).

Middle East has been a conflict zone following Biblical, and subsequent accounts. However, prior to the outbreak of 2023 conflict, the region was relatively stable with Iran and Syria opposing the existence of Israel, while Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates were more accommodative of the Jewish state (Feldman, Khalil & Abdel, 2013). But much have changed since the outbreak of the conflict. Israel's total prosecution of the war has heavy toll on civilian population, and infrastructural facilities. It also carries a hallmark of ethnic cleansing and the desire to push the Gazans out of their territory. This has increased indignation against Israel, since many observers and scholars see those measures as the deployment of proportional force beyond self-defence (Bouri, 2024; Lustik, 2024).

Moreso, the entrance of Houthi rebels of Yemen as another proxy of Iran against Israel and it attacks on US vessels and other Western entities on the Red Sea increased insecurity in the region and threatened free movement of commercial vessels (Liebermann & Britzky, 2024). In addition, the end of Assad regime in Syria is an end of an era. Syrians' policy towards Israel was antagonistic and well known to all players during his reign. His forceful and chaotic exit brought in uncertainty associated with such change of government (Wedeen, 2025). Besides, there is high probability that sophisticated weapons in Syrian armouries have been looted and sold across the region and the beyond. The impact of this development will be felt in the coming days, in terms of sophisticated attacks by non-states actors in the region, thus increasing instability in the region (Hamza, 2024).

Before the October 2023 attacks by Hamas on Israel, the US and its Western allies were facilitating an 'Abraham Accords' with Saudi Arabia. This phase of the agreement was designed to bring in Saudi Arabia and other countries in the region into an umbrella peace settlement with Israel. Its essence was to

increase the possibility of permanent peaceful settlement between the Jewish people and their Arabs cousins (Vakil & Quilliam, 2023). However, the conduct of the parties to the conflict has delayed Riyadh's signatory to this accord. It may even derail the whole process, given that Saudi Arabia and other moderate Arabs are not comfortable with Israel's attempt to expand its settlement into the Gaza Strip (Abumbe, Terhile & Dede, 2024).

Moreso, France has condemned Israeli highhandedness and brutal operations around medical and non-military facilities, leading to her readiness to recognise Palestine as an independent state. The European Union is highly divided on the activities of the Israelis, especially lack of respect for the basic rights of Gazans and Lebanese in the occupied territories. These realities make peace-making between the Jewish state and other parties difficult and elusive (Gumus & Bardakci, 2025).

Again, Israeli air, land and sea blockade on Gaza have shortened food aid, medicine and supply of essential commodities to displaced population in the conflict zones reflected in the images of malnourished children and destroyed medical facilities amongst other humanitarian issues are disgusting to global community (WB, EU, & UN, 2024). Harghandiwal (2025) reported that by April 2025, over 13,000 children have died in the conflict and thousands more are injured, suffering from disabled traumatic injuries. Similarly, more than 180,000 adult deaths are said to have been reported by the Hamas-run administration in Gaza (Bouri, 2024). Furthermore, food insecurity has led to high rate of malnutrition, and about 60% of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) facilities have been destroyed, leading to the spread of infection and communicable diseases, such as acute respiratory infection, diarrhoea, scabies and jaundice (Harghandiwal, 2025). Indeed, it is estimated that the war has led to the destruction of more than $18.6 billion damage in the strip (WB, EU, & UN, 2024). The net import of these data is that Gaza is in deep humanitarian crisis, and its socio-economic sector is ruined. Besides, Southern Lebanon is under Israeli siege; Saana Airport and Seaport in Yemen is destroyed; and Iranian national security has been breached severally by Israeli. The Jewish state has corresponding suffered destruction of its airport and other facilities, and many deaths.

Lessons for West African leadership

The growing interest of Russia in West Africa is evidenced by its involvement in the security of the breakaway the Alliance of Sahel States (AES). This is against the rejection of Western entities in the subregion, especially France, which had hitherto enjoyed exclusive relationship with its former colonies (Okon, Ojakorotu & Iwara, 2025). The West may have left quietly, but they still have individuals and groups sympathetic to their interests in the AES, and the entire subregion. Western sponsored agents may organise rebellion against the current leadership in the AES, and therefore ignite proxy wars, as experienced in Syria in the last two decades and the current conflict between Hamas and Israel. It is therefore important for West African leadership to learn the following lessons:

i. No proxy arrangement last forever, as a principal may change its rule of engagement according to political exigencies. Iranian has not been able to sustain its support to the decimated Hezbollah and Hamas. Besides, Iran has instructed Houthi rebels to stop its attacks on US and Western vessels on the Red Sea to enhance regime survival in the two countries.

ii. Proxy wars lead to regional instability, as experience in the Middle East where the ongoing war between Hamas and Israel has greatly altered security equation in region, especially with the demise of Assad regime in Syria.

iii. The domain of agents in proxy wars pays the greatest price in proxy conflicts. Gaza strip is terribly destroyed and its inhabitant thoroughly dehumanised. Southern Lebanon is occupied, and critical infrastructural facilities were hit by Israeli airstrike. Iran is better off compared to its proxies in the ongoing war, in terms casualties and destruction critical infrastructure.

iv. Proxy wars lead to underdevelopment. The destruction in Gaza and southern Lebanon have disrupted developmental activities. The loss of critical infrastructures and

disruption of productive activities in the affected locations increases general poverty in the region. Besides, forced migration arising from the conflict leads to unemployment, and low productivity in the affected population.

v. Political power is transient, but the wellbeing of the citizenry remains a constant variable in every state. Therefore, in building security and political partnership, the wellbeing of the citizens should be paramount to West African leadership.

Conclusion

This study focused on the Hamas – Israeli conflict of 2023 which is an architype of proxy wars in the Middle East. It highlighted the consequences of the conflict on the regional security cum stability, as well as peace-making, and the overwhelming humanitarian crisis grounded on the destruction of critical infrastructural facilities in Gaza and other Iranian proxy zones. The paper outlined important lessons for West African leadership to learn from the ongoing Hamas- Israel conflict, given the renewed interest of Russia and China in the subregion which may ignite proxy wars with France. It concluded that outbreak of proxy wars will be detrimental to the stability and development of West Africa, as currently experienced in the Middle East, and recommended primacy of the wellbeing of citizenry above other considerations in building security and economic partnership with Great Powers in the subregion.

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