

**Drexel GPS: Geopolitical Update**  
**The Israel/Hamas Information War: Has Hamas Already Won the IO Battle?**  
**11/10/23**

The ever-increasing speed and flow of information made possible by today's advanced telecommunications networks makes the adage "A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes" more impactful on events in the geopolitical realm than ever before.

**What is Information Warfare?**

Information warfare (IW) (different from cyberwarfare that attacks computers, software, and command control systems) is a concept involving the battlespace use and management of information and communication technology (ICT) in pursuit of a competitive advantage over an opponent. Information warfare is the manipulation of information trusted by a target so that the target will make decisions in the interests of the one conducting the information warfare.

As a result, it is not clear when information warfare begins, ends, and how strong or destructive it is. Information warfare may involve:

- the collection of tactical information, assurance(s) that one's information is valid.
- spreading of propaganda or disinformation to demoralize or manipulate the enemy and the public.
- undermining the quality of the opposing force's information and the denial of information-collection opportunities to opposing forces.
- Information warfare is closely linked to psychological warfare.

The United States Armed Forces' use of the term favors technology and hence tends to extend into the realms of electronic warfare, cyberwarfare, information assurance and computer network operations, attack, and defense. Other militaries use the much broader term Information Operations (IO) which, although making use of technology, focuses on the more human-related aspects of information use, including (amongst many others) social network analysis, decision analysis, and the human aspects of command and control.

**IO in the Israel/Hamas War:**

To understand the likely course of the IO portion of this we must determine how both sides conceive their objectives and the broadest ways in which they intend to use force to achieve them:

- Both sides are driven by total objectives.
- For Hamas, this is nothing new: In its 1988 covenant, it committed itself to the annihilation of the state of Israel, and the extermination of as many of its citizens as possible.
- Behind its strategy is a long-term theory of victory: that such attacks, coupled perhaps with strikes by Hezbollah and Iran, or the risings of Palestinians in the West Bank, will cause Israel to collapse.
- In Hamas's view, Israeli counterattacks on Gaza, which will inevitably kill many civilians, contribute to its objectives because they undermine support for Israel abroad, and inflame its many enemies.

The Israel-Hamas war both sides are using various tactics to shape perceptions and influence the narrative. It is important to understand the objectives of both sides and the broadest ways in which they intend to use force to achieve them. This understanding can help us gain a more nuanced perspective on the conflict and its likely course.

#### **Drexel GPS Assessment:**

- In the IW phase of the battle, which is being waged through a combination of traditional major broadcast news outlets and social media coverage of the conflict, Hamas is winning. Both sides are using various tactics to shape perceptions and influence the narrative. For instance, at the earliest stages of the war Hamas, along with other entities, were using deepfakes and AI-generated images to discredit the Israeli response and sway public opinion. As a counter the IDF are conducting daily news briefings designed to defend its use of military force and attempt to justify incidents where its targeting results in civilian casualties.
- In the court of public and political opinion Israel is increasingly losing support for its conduct in the war. The IDF is increasingly being accused of not using appropriate restraint and consideration of civilian casualties with its targeting of Hamas. Viewed against the public perception of its vastly superior military might in comparison to Hamas, the social media-driven optics of the aftermath of airstrikes into civilian areas of Gaza feed fuel into what is almost assuredly a pro-Hamas IO campaign that is designed to portray the IDF as indifferent to the destruction it inflicts on Gaza's civilian population.

## U.S. Military's IO Warfare Integration Matrix

INFORMATION OPERATIONS INTEGRATION INTO JOINT OPERATIONS (NOTIONAL)						
Core, Supporting, Related Information Activities	Activities	Audience/Target	Objective	Information Quality	Primary Planning/Integration Process	Who does it?
Electronic Warfare	Electronic Attack	Physical, Informational	Destroy, Disrupt, Delay	Usability	Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOEPES)/Targeting Process	Individuals, Governments, Militaries
	Electronic Protection	Physical	Protect the Use of Electro-magnetic Spectrum	Security	JOEPES/Defense Planning	Individuals, Businesses, Governments, Militaries
	Electronic Warfare Support	Physical	Identify and Locate Threats	Usability	Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace(JIPB)/SIGINT Collection	Militaries
Computer Network Operations	Computer Network Attack	Physical, Informational	Destroy, Disrupt, Delay	Security	JIPB/JOEPES/Targeting Process	Individuals, Governments, Militaries
	Computer Network Defense	Physical, Informational	Protect Computer Networks	Security	JOEPES/J-6 Vulnerability Analysis	Individuals, Businesses, Governments, Militaries
	Computer Network Exploitation	Informational	Gain Information From and About Computers and Computer Networks	Security	JIPB/Targeting Process	Individuals, Governments, Militaries
Psychological Operations	Psychological Operations	Cognitive	Influence	Relevance	JOEPES/Joint Operation Planning	Businesses, Governments, Militaries
Military Deception	Military Deception	Cognitive	Mislead	Accuracy	JOEPES/Joint Operation Planning	Militaries
Operations Security	Operations Security	Cognitive	Deny	Security	JOEPES/Joint Operation Planning	Businesses, Governments, Militaries
Supporting Capabilities	Information Assurance	Informational	Protect Information and Informatin Systems	Security	JOEPES/J-6 Vulnerability Analysis	Businesses, Governments, Militaries
	Physical Security	Physical	Secure Information and Information Infrastructure	Usability	JOEPES/Defense Planning	Businesses, Governments, Militaries
	Physical Attack	Physical	Destroy, Disrupt	Usability	JOEPES/Joint Operation Planning	Governments, Militaries
	Counterintelligence	Cognitive	Mislead	Accuracy	JIPB/Human Intelligence Collection	Governments, Militaries
	Combat Camera	Physical	Inform/Document	Usability, Accuracy	JOEPES/Joint Operation Planning	Governments, Militaries
Related Capabilities	Civil Military Operations	Cognitive	Influence	Accuracy	JOEPES/Joint Operation Planning	Governments, Militaries
	Public Affairs	Cognitive	Inform	Accuracy	JOEPES/Joint Operation Planning	Businesses, Governments, Militaries
	Public Diplomacy	Cognitive	Inform	Accuracy	Interagency Coordination	Governments

Figure I-3. Information Operations Integration into Joint Operations (Notional)

### A variety of factors work in Hamas's favor on the IO war front:

- The IDF's military superiority (Goliath) in equipment, funding and size compared to Hamas (David).
- The visceral reaction of the global public to unfiltered images of civilian casualties.
- Hamas's ability to post imagery of IDF strikes against civilians directly to the public via social media-and by doing so- bypassing traditional media outlets and filters.
- In Hamas's view, Israeli counterattacks on Gaza, which will inevitably kill many civilians, contributes to its objectives because they undermine support for Israel abroad, and inflame its many enemies.
- All the above conditions are also exacerbated by the negative adversarial sentiment, perception, and history that Israel shares with the greater Arab world, predating the Hamas attack of Oct 7<sup>th</sup>.

## **IDF Airstrikes on Civilians Helps Hamas Win the Information War**



### **Other Potential IO Factors and Actors:**

- Iran is likely using a variety of IO tactics related to the Israel/Hamas war to attempt to drive a wedge between the U.S. and Israel. They are the catalyst/impetus behind many of the anti-Israeli, anti-IDF rallies and protests globally.
- It is highly plausible that the Chinese and/or the Russians are also amplifying the same messaging through their networks. Russia/China have the mutual goal of pushing the U.S. influence in the Middle East out.
- Iran views the current war as an opportunity to engage in IO and take advantage of the current status of U.S. politics, a growing isolationist sect in the GOP, and a Socialist/Anti-Israeli body inside the DNC, to severely downgrade and dismantle Israel's influence in the region. This would theoretically, by default, do the same to the U.S. standing in the region.
- It is very plausible that amid a significantly enough downgraded U.S. and Israeli influence in the region, Iran will be emboldened to engage in a nuclear "coming out" test, because Israel would find it difficult if not impossible to take out Iran's full nuclear program on their own.
- Some evidence of a facet of this type of IO campaign in effect could be seen very early on in the conflict amid reports and rumors that any Israeli strike on Iran would be to their way of getting the U.S. involved to come and finish the job.

## Turkey's Influence and Pro-Hamas Policy update:

- Our previous Drexel GPS analysis regarding concerns the U.S. will likely face surrounding Turkey's Pro-Hamas stance are coming to bear. Reports from Turkish media still being vetted state that on a trip back from Uzbekistan, Erdogan recently stated Israel must free detained Palestinians to secure the release of civilian hostages held by Hamas. This statement is still being confirmed. Any prisoner release by Israel will be spun across the many pro-Hamas media/messaging channels as a victory and will be used as further justification for the Oct 7<sup>th</sup> attack by Hamas.
- Erdogan's criticism of Israel and the west included reminding reporters that 120 countries at the UN refused to stand with Israel and the U.S.
- Another statement Erdogan made to Turkish media was "People are dying, mothers are losing their babies, children are losing their parents. We are trying to do something to stop this bleeding wound. If the US starts to share this feeling, it will become even easier to stop Israel." This gives credence to the determination that going forward Turkey will embrace an even more robust support of Hamas in the face of intensified IDF military operations into Gaza. This will likely complicate the global politics surrounding the IDF's stated goal of eliminating Hamas from Gaza militarily as the war continues.

## Israel at War

Israel intensifies ground operations against Hamas, with troops entering Gaza City...



...as it fends off attacks from Hezbollah at its border with Lebanon in the north



Source: Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project  
Note: Attacks include rocket and mortar strikes, anti-tank fires and small arms combats from Oct. 15–Nov. 8 in Israel and the Golan Heights which was annexed by Israel in 1981. Claimed furthest Israeli advance and reported clearing operation as of Nov. 8, 2023.

Drexel GPS will continue to monitor this situation as it develops.

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