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EXPLAINING ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE DEFICIENCY TO PREVENT 7 OCTOBER HAMAS ATTACK

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Abstract: The Hamas attack of October 7 was a pretext for the Israeli retaliation that was a deliberate move to wipe out the Palestinian population of Gaza. The retaliation has ended in considerable territorial gains not only in Gaza but also in the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria. Observation of Israeli reconnaissance failure and the succeeding Hamas attack invites an abductive form of explanatory reasoning. A candidate hypothesis is Israeli over confidence about their intelligence services leading to their evaluation of the impossibility of such an attack. Yet, it is established that Israeli intelligence services were informed of Hamas attack preparations. Hence, Hamas attack preparations and no prompt Israeli reaction is to be explained. The explanation is that Israeli government willingly let Hamas attack the kibbutzim. The assumption of rationality does not explain Israeli inactivity during Hamas attack and Hamas preparations to attack. The assumption explains Israeli inactivity only by letting Hamas attack first and then retaliate to conquer the territory of Gaza first and later other territories Israeli government evaluates as strategic regions and locations. What are the global implications of Israeli retaliation? The central implication is that if Ukraine-Russia war ends by some way or another, then Trump can pay more attention on the Middle East and China. Hence, any end of the Ukraine-Russia war would prompt the U.S. to earmark more resources in supporting Israel fueling conflict further in the Middle East and animosity level in U.S.-

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China relations. Therefore, whether the end of the war between Russia and Ukraine would benefit global security remains as a question mark.

Keywords: Israel, Gaza, Hamas, Explanation, Necessary Condition, Israeli Intelligence

İSRAİL İSTİHBARATININ 7 EKİM HAMAS SALDIRISINI ÖNLEME YETERSİZLİĞİNİN AÇIKLANMASI

Öz: İsrail istihbaratının gözlemlenen etkisizliği ve bunun devamında gelen Hamas saldırısı abdüktif akıl yürütme anlamında açıklama gerektiren bir durumdur. İsrail 7 Ekim 2023 Hamas saldırısını Gazze nüfusunu yok etmek ve sadece Gazze topraklarını değil Suriye, Lübnan ve Batı Şeria'da toprak elde etme amacı için bahane olarak kullandı. İsrail istihbaratı bu saldırıyı önceden biliyordu. Bu durumda iki abdüktif akıl yürütme açıklaması getirilebilir. Birinci akıl yürütme açıklaması saldırıdan evvel İsrail'in Hamas'ın böyle bir saldırıyı yapma yeteneğinde olamayacağını, Hamas'ın bu saldırıyı gerçekleştirebilecek kapasiteye sahip olmadığını düşünerek İsrail'in hemen tepki göstermediğini öne sürer. İkinci akıl yürütmesi ise İsrail'in bilerek Hamas'ın saldırı yapmasını sağladığını iddia eder. İki akıl yürütmeye de İsrail'in gerekli koşullar ve ussalık varsayımı, yani kazançların kayıplarından fazla olan kararların alındığı tezi temel oluşturmakta ve ikinci akıl yürütme açıklaması güç kazanmakta. Özetle, İsrail saldırıya karşı intikam olarak Gazze'yi yerle yeksan etti ve stratejik önem arz ettiğini düşündüğü toprakları da ele geçirdi. Küresel politikalar anlamında ise Ukrayna-Rusya savaşının sona ermesi durumunda Trump'ın dikkatini daha çok Orta Doğu ve Çin'e kaydıracağı ve İsrail'e desteğini daha da arttıracığı gerçeği ortaya çıkmaktadır. Böyle bir politika seçimi Orta Doğu'da ve küresel çapta çatışmaları daha da körükleyecektir. Bu nedenle Ukrayna-Rusya savaşının sona ermesinin küresel güvenliğe nasıl etki edeceği de bir soru işareti olarak kalmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İsrail, Gazze, Hamas, Açıklama, Gerekli Koşul, İsrail İstihbaratı.

Introduction

This paper asks the following question: "Why did the Israeli intelligence services remain unresponsive towards Hamas attack preparations on October 7 while they were informed of them?"¹ The answer is offered through William H. Dray's explanation approach relying on the concept of necessary condition.² A necessary condition for the occurrence of an event is defined as "a circumstance in whose absence the event cannot occur."³ Accordingly, a previous paper explained Hamas attack by claiming that the attack could not have occurred in the absence of an Israeli intelligence failure. Hence, the

¹ Israel Knew Hamas's Attack Plan Over a Year Ago - The New York Times (accessed February 1, 2025)

² William H. Dray, "On Explaining How-Possibly", *The Monist* 52, no.3 (1968): 390-407.

³ Irving M. Copi, *Introduction To Logic*, (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 355.

explanation of the Hamas attack stipulates that the attack could not have occurred in the absence of a fully operational and efficient Israeli intelligence system.⁴ The explanation begs another question: why was the Israeli intelligence system inefficient? The question requires successive explanatory problems related to further necessary conditions.

The Hamas attack could not have happened in the absence of an Israeli calculated plan to retaliate against Hamas attack. The attack was a pretext for the Israeli retaliation that was a deliberate move to wipe out the Palestinian population of Gaza and making considerable territorial gains not only in Gaza but also in the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria.⁵ Israel found out that territorial gains should not be limited to Gaza over the course of the events. Hence, the Israeli government has overlooked Hamas attack preparations and let Hamas perpetrate its attack intentionally. If one accepts the dual nature of Israeli grand strategy consisting of territorial expansion and securing water resources whenever possible, then new Israeli occupations of Gaza, West Bank, Golan Heights in Syria home to the sources of Jordan and Hasbani rivers and adjacent Lebanese territories become clearly understandable.

1. Concepts of explanation

Explanations constitute foundations of sciences and analytic thinking. They come in different varieties as explanation-what, explanation-how, explanation-why, and explanation how-possibly that is an abdüktif form of explanation.⁶ Explanation-what reports successive events. Thus, the description of successive events leading to war in Gaza constitutes an answer to the following question: what is Gaza war? Similarly, the description of events leading to Israeli reconnaissance failure to ward off the Hamas attack, either intentionally or not, is an explanation-what. A problem of the explanation-what is the following: should the description of successive events of Gaza war start

⁴ Serdar Ş. Güner, "On Explaining Hamas 7 October Attack in the Global Context", *İsrailiyat: Journal of Israeli and Judaic Studies* 13, no.1 (2023): 5-18.

⁵ The Naksa: How Israel occupied the whole of Palestine in 1967 | Features | Al Jazeera; Israel to expand Golan Heights settlements after fall of Assad; Under cover of Gaza war, Israel is seizing Palestinian land (Accessed February 1, 2025)

⁶ Carl Hempel and Paul Oppenheim, "Studies in the Logic of Explanation." *Philosophy of Science* 15, 2 (1948): 567-579; Richard B. Braithwaite, *Scientific Explanation: A Study of the Function of Theory, Probability and Law in Science*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953); Patrick L. Gardiner, *Theories of History*, (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press 1959); Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, (London: Hutchinson, 1959); Ernest Nagel, *The Structure of Science: Problems in the Logic of Scientific Explanation*, (London: Routledge 1961); Peter Godfrey-Smith, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science*, (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press 2003).

in 1948, 1967, 1973, or more recently? The answer might depend on the type and content of research.

Causal explanations amount to the identification of sequences of events such that some events preceded others so that the predecessor events are qualified as cause and the succeeding events as effect. Hence, a causal explanation requires the location and identification of causes primarily. The identification of the causal sequence of events, that is, causal relations, is equivalent to explanation-why. Consider the following example: “the car’s brake system failed, the driver lost control, and the car hit the tree, or, the driver was inexperienced, he could not take the turn and hit the wall.” Why or how did the accident occur? The question is answered by causal sequences of the accident making it intelligible or understandable. The answer constitutes an explanation-why. The causal sequences ending in Hamas attack of October 7 and the Israeli intelligence deficiency constitute together an explanation-why of these events.

Explanation-why and explanation-how are closely related as both are causal explanations. They are interchangeable. It is one thing to know why something happened and another how did the thing happen. Yet the description of the temporal order is similar in both explanations. If one asks about the cause of the car accident, both explanation categories lead to the same answer. Why or how did the accident happen? The answer must state the causal sequence of events in both cases. Consequently, if one explains why Israel-Hamas war start and how it started, both require the determination of initial causes leading to the military conflict.

What are the other explanation categories relevant to the October 7 attack and the Israeli intelligence failure? A strong candidate is abduction, that is an inference explaining an observation.⁷ Abduction is not a deductive inference incorporating premises leading to a conclusion or an inductive one inferring a general conclusion on observed events. It is an alternative form of explanatory reasoning. An abductive inference proposes explanatory hypotheses observing a phenomenon. In fact, abduction is the most commonly used type of explanatory inference ranging from everyday puzzles to astronomy, medical diagnosis, and other fields. Observation of Israeli reconnaissance failure and the succeeding Hamas attack invites an abductive form of explanatory reasoning. A candidate hypothesis is Israeli over confidence about their intelligence services leading to their evaluation of the impossibility of such an attack; were the attack seriously prepared, Israeli services would find it out and prevent it. Yet, it is established that Israeli intelligence services were informed of Hamas attack preparations. Hence, Hamas attack preparations and no

⁷ Douglas Walton, “Abductive, Presumptive and Plausible Arguments”, *Informal Logic* 21, 2 (2001): 141-169; Igor Douven, “Abduction,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Summer 2017 Edition, Url=<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/abduction>.

prompt Israeli reaction is to be explained. One explanation is that the Israeli government let Hamas attack the kibbutzim willingly. Dray's concept of explanation how-possibly answers the question constituting an abduction example.

2. Abductive explanation of how-possibly

Instead of asking why a certain happened, explaining how possibly asks another question: how could it be that an event happened? According to New York Times, "Israeli officials obtained Hamas's battle plan for the Oct. 7 terrorist attack more than a year before it happened as documents, emails and interviews show."⁸ How was it possible that Israel not reacted immediately against Hamas but has waited more than a year? Two necessary conditions emerge as sound explanation candidates for this observation: either Israel did not take Hamas preparations seriously by underestimating Hamas organization and attack capabilities or Israel preferred to let Hamas attack first and then retaliated later to make territorial gains. Both necessary conditions correspond to hypotheses explaining Israeli action. Which explanation is the best? ⁹

The selection of the best explanation becomes possible by simplification. As both explanations rely on the Israeli choice, the assumption of unitary actor and rationality is the most useful and simple tool to compare them. The argument starts with the specification of principal Israeli strategic aims in the Middle East: expand territories and secure water resources. Israeli thesis of Hamas is unable to execute such an intricate and difficult plan that can be called as "underestimation" is an abductive inference. The underestimation explanation under rationality assumption implies huge Israeli losses in case of a Hamas attack. Even if there is a modicum of successful Hamas attack likelihood, the prospect of doing nothing implies high costs and negative returns. Costs were indeed high: Israel lost about 2000-3000 people during the attack and later military losses are added to these. Therefore, the underestimation hypothesis and the ensuing choice of doing nothing are eliminated right at start. The rationality assumption does not explain Israeli inactivity during Hamas attack and Hamas attack preparations. The assumption however explains the inactivity by letting Hamas attack and counterattack to retaliate so to conquer the territory of Gaza first and later other territories Israeli government evaluates as strategic locations and gains. Territorial gains and control through retaliation are huge indeed: not only Gaza strip but also the West Bank, Golan Heights, and some

⁸ Israel Knew Hamas's Attack Plan Over a Year Ago - The New York Times (accessed December 2, 2023).

⁹ Gilbert H. Harman, "The Inference to the Best Explanation," *The Philosophical Review* 74, 1 (1965): 88-95; Peter Lipton, *Inference to the Best Explanation* (London: Routledge, 2004).

parts of Lebanon. Israeli territorial gains are colossal. Perhaps Israeli government calculated that the retaliation would quickly succeed in locating hostages in tunnels dug by Hamas and therefore minimizing the human cost at tremendous territorial gains. First ignoring and then retaliating maximized Israeli benefit that is the difference between Israeli gains and costs. Consequently, the second explanation becomes credible and the best one.

3. Global Implications

Israel won enormous territorial gains by the end of direct military clashes and hostage releases in the region. We observe that Israel acquired West Bank by using Gaza war.¹⁰ Hence, the second explanation how-possibly gains further support, that is, Israel expanded its territories by using its clashes with Hamas and not preventing Hamas attack. The primary Israeli goal was territorial expansion; saving lives of the hostages was only the secondary goal of Israel.

President Trump's latest declaration supports Israeli territorial gains. His plan of ethnic cleansing of Gaza by forcing Palestinians to leave the region and transform Gaza as a resort, a real estate area is found as outrageous by Türkiye, China, Saudi Arabia and other states in the region. Unsurprisingly, the idea found as "refreshing" by the Israeli PM Netanyahu.¹¹ Trump Administration shows that the U.S. is the Israeli's principal ally. Dahl's definition of power, namely, the ability of making others do things they would not do otherwise, is instructive in comparing Israel and the U.S.¹² If one takes the U.S. as the unipole, so that the U.S. is the single superpower, then Israeli disobedience towards ex-president Biden's asking to stop killing civilians in Gaza demonstrates that the unipole U.S. had no power over Israel.¹³ Israel then appears as the superpower in the Middle East ignoring not only the U.S. but also international norms and law. Trump's policy of unifying Israeli and U.S. interests goes several steps further than the one of his predecessor and furthers Israeli superiority in the Middle East.

Trump, considering a military action in Greenland, Panama, forcing Venezuela to take Venezuelan illegal refugees in the U.S. back, qualifying Canada as just another U.S. state plays the role of the insurmountable giant. Trump must allocate his attention however to various global issues, such as Ukraine-Russia war, China and U.S. relations with Europe. Hence, if Ukraine-Russia war ends by some way or another, then Trump can pay more attention

¹⁰ <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/under-cover-gaza-war-israel-seizing-palestinian-land> (Accessed on 5 February 2025)

¹¹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/hamas-official-says-trumps-remarks-about-taking-over-gaza-are-could-ignite-2025-02-05/> (Accessed on 5 February, 2025).

¹² Robert Dahl, "The Concept of Power", *Behavioral Science* 2, 3 (1957): 202-203.

¹³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-57152723>

on the Middle East and China. Therefore, any end of the Ukraine-Russia war would prompt Trump to earmark more U.S. resources in supporting Israel. Whether the end of the war between Russia and Ukraine would benefit global security constitutes a question mark. China and some other European states (even if they are NATO allies but whose interests do not perfectly align with the U.S. in the Middle East) would slowly find ways to balance the power of the U.S. The future of global political relations is uncertain and not very promising.

Conclusion

There are two central questions to be answered concerning Hamas-Israel conflict:

- 1) How was it possible for Hamas to attack the kibbutzim in 2023?
- 2) How was it possible for Israel not to prevent Hamas attack in 2023?

The first question is answered elsewhere.¹⁴ This paper answers the second question. Both questions are connected as the answer to the second one clarifies and develops the answer of the first one.

Explanations take different forms. Two central explanation categories exist. The first category identifies causal mechanisms and causal history including explanation-why, explanation-how and explanations how-possibly. Noncausal explanations either report sequences of events such as the concepts of explanation-what or unify range of events or phenomena under a single concept. Both questions are answered by using the concept of explanation how possibly. The explanation to the first question is based on the following necessary condition: Hamas attack would not have been possible in the absence of an inefficient Israeli intelligence system. The explanation to the second question is based on the following necessary condition: Israeli retaliation against Hamas attack would not have been possible in the absence of an Israeli willingness to expand by conquering Gaza and other territories. The intersection of the two questions lead to the conclusion that Israel let Hamas to attack the kibbutzim including Kfar Haza willingly.

Global implications of the Hamas-Israel conflict divulge a higher U.S. attention being allocated to its principal rival, namely, People Republic of China. U.S. President Donald Trump giving full support to Israeli policies in the Middle East can divert some of his attention to Ukraine-Russia conflict. Ukraine-Russia war might end on the basis of some U.S. mediated solution similar to Camp

¹⁴ Güner, 2023. "On Explaining Hamas 7 October Attack in the Global Context."

David Agreement ending the Egyptian Israeli conflict in 1978.¹⁵ The Camp David solution was based on the satisfaction of principal aims of both Egypt and Israel. Egypt aimed to get its territory of Sinai Peninsula occupied in 1967 by Israel back and Israel aimed at security. Egypt obtained Sinai back under the condition of its demilitarization under the agreement. Similarly, *grosso modo*, an end of Ukraine-Russia war may be possible through Ukrainian territorial concessions to Russia in return for Ukrainian NATO membership. Russian objective is to prevent Ukraine's NATO membership. Ukrainian objective is the inverse of the Ukrainian objective: to become a NATO member. Russian objective is to obtain security facing an enlarged NATO by controlling major parts of Eastern Ukraine. Thus, Russia can be satisfied by getting territorial concessions. The end of the Hamas-Israel conflict and the Israeli territorial expansion can free Trump's hands to strike a deal between Ukraine and Russia to fully spend efforts to compete with China. The world moves fast towards a multipolar structure with the central axis of conflict as being set between the U.S. versus China and Russia not excluding leading central European powers like Germany and France and India as well. Consequently, Israeli territorial gains represent a tremendous security and survival value for the Jewish state in such a multipolar world under the security umbrella U.S. provides for Israel. The ultimate question relates to the longevity of the U.S. support to Israel.

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¹⁵ Howard Raiffa, *The Art and Science of Negotiation: How to resolve conflicts and get the best*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), 205-217.

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