

Egypt, Syria and the War on Gaza

*A Study on the Egyptian and Syrian
Foreign Policy Responses to
the 2008/2009 Gaza War*



By

Muslim Imran Abu Umar



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**Al-Zaytouna Centre
For Studies & Consultations
Beirut - Lebanon**

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مصر وسورية والحرب على غزة: دراسة حول تفاعلات السياسة
الخارجية المصرية والسورية تجاه حرب غزة 2009/2008

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Abstract

The 2008/2009 Gaza War was detrimental for the people and infrastructure of Gaza and was divisive for the Arab states. Arab states were divided in this war into two camps; the “Moderate Camp” headed by Egypt and the “Defiant” or “Radical Camp” headed by Syria. As the countries of both camps responded to the Gaza War, the gap between the two became wider. This thesis focuses on the differences and similarities in the foreign policy responses of Egypt and Syria towards the 2008/2009 Gaza War. Five domestic and external factors are used to compare the foreign policy responses of Egypt and Syria, these are; Arab Nationalism, Islam, security concerns, economic concerns, and type of alliance. This work is based on news reports and other documents published during and after the war. The official statements of the officials of Egypt, Syria, Israel, Hamas and the Palestinian Authority are analyzed to understand, classify, and compare the policies adopted. A qualitative approach in which a content analysis is carried out is used to reach conclusions. The study concludes that while Islam and Arab Nationalism were very influential factors for the Egyptian and Syrian public, they had a minimal impact on foreign policy makers in the two states. Both security concerns and the type of alliance were very influential in the foreign policy making of the two states. Economic concerns were less important in both Egyptian and Syrian responses to the 2008/2009 Gaza War.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to the martyrs of Palestine, Syria, and Egypt who sacrificed their lives in order to preserve the dignity of the *Ummah* (nation)...

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I thank my Lord *Allah*, (all praise be to Him) for enabling me to complete this work.

I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ishtiaq Hossain who guided me throughout this academic project. I also wish to thank all my political science lecturers at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). I also thank the International Islamic University Malaysia for all the facilities it provided during my work on this study especially the invaluable help I got from its Library.

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Finally I thank my beloved parents Imran Abu Umar and Raja' Dwaik, my beloved siblings Areej, Habib, Hassan, Tasneem and Asma and my beloved wife Aisyah, who have always showered me with their love and continued motivation.

Preface

The 2008/2009 Gaza War was a turning point in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It undoubtedly shocked the entire world, not just the Middle East. It is not a secret that all major world powers have interests in the Middle East and, therefore, are concerned about any peace or war taking place in the region. Knowing the importance of any development in the region on world peace and on international relations at large, this study sought to highlight the political repercussions of the 2008/2009 Gaza War on regional relations in the Middle East.

In fact, the huge number of civilian casualties in this war was unbearable, and the people of Gaza continue to suffer from the consequences of the war until today. Hence, this study tried to touch on some social, political, economic and psychological impacts of this war on the people of the region.

While working on this study it was very obvious that there is a huge gap in the existing literature on this subject matter. This gap exists, in particular, in the field of comparative Arab foreign policies. This is very true in the case of the Egyptian and Syrian foreign policies as it is very difficult to find any significant work comparing Egyptian and Syrian foreign policies towards such important issues like the Palestinian-Israeli conflict or Arab relations with the Palestinian resistance. Moreover, there is a significant gap in the literature on the patterns of relations and alliances among Arab states, before and after the war. Therefore, this study tried to fill some of the gaps by answering some questions about the 2008/2009 Gaza War and the Syrian and Egyptian foreign policy responses to it. The main questions this study tried to answer are:

1. What were the Egyptian and Syrian governments' responses to the 2008/2009 Gaza War?
2. What are the main differences and similarities in the Egyptian and Syrian foreign policy responses to the 2008/2009 Gaza War?
3. What are the domestic and external factors responsible for the similarities and differences in Egyptian and Syrian foreign policy responses towards the 2008/2009 Gaza War?

The study comes in four chapters. Chapter one introduces the issue and highlights the theoretical framework used in this study. Chapter two discusses the background and developments of the 2008/2009 Gaza War and exposes the strategic and political outcomes of the war. Chapter three traces the Egyptian

foreign policy and highlights its response in the case of the war on Gaza. Chapter four looks into the Syrian foreign policy and discusses its orientation during the Gaza War. We finally wrote a conclusion presenting the outcomes and recommendations of this study.



Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction

Introduction

In recent years the Palestinian struggle to achieve Independence from Israeli occupation has grown drastically. Liberation movements and factions¹ have taken every opportunity to push for independence; they have fought on all fronts including the diplomatic one. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) led this struggle for long. However, her inability to achieve either peace or independence paved the way for newer resistance movements to challenge this leadership.

The Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS)² joined the second Palestinian Parliamentary Elections in January 2006 and won a majority of 74 seats out of the 132 Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) seats. This entitled Hamas to form the Tenth Palestinian government. Ever since Hamas assumed the leadership of the Palestinian Authority (PA), the movement has been rejected by the United States (US) and other Western powers. Moreover, Palestinian National Liberation Movement (FATAH)³ disputed Hamas' authority in the West Bank (WB) and Gaza and challenged its leadership, leading to a seizure of power by Hamas in the Gaza Strip (GS) in June 2007.

At the end of 2008, the Israeli army waged a massive military operation against the Hamas-ruled GS. While Israel calls this conflict the “Cast Lead Operation,” Hamas calls it “*Al-Furqan Battle*.” One common name of this war is the “2008/2009 Gaza War”;⁴ this name will be used throughout this study.

¹ Dozens of Palestinian factions and movements exist in the Palestinian occupied territories and in the Diaspora and almost all of them have militant wings. The main groups are Hamas, Fatah, Islamic Jihad, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP).

² HAMAS is the transliterated acronym for “*Harakatul Muqawama Al-Islamiyyah*” or “the Islamic Resistance Movement,” the acronym itself is an Arabic word that means “zeal.”

³ FATAH is the reversed transliterated acronym for “*Harakat ATahrir Al-Watani Al-Filistini*” or “Palestinian National Liberation Movement.”

⁴ According to Griffiths, O’Callaghan and Roach, war is defined as “the use of armed forces in a conflict, especially between countries.” They also consider any conflict a war if it amounts to at least 1,000 battle deaths, see M. Griffiths, T. O’Callaghan and S. Roach, *International Relations: The Key Concepts*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 326.

In the 2008/2009 Gaza conflict, Saleh concludes that 1,334 Palestinians and at least 9 Israelis were killed in the conflict. Hence, the term “war” is a suitable characterization of this conflict, see Mohsen Saleh, *The Palestinian Issue: Historical Background and Contemporary Developments* (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2014), p. 136.

International responses to this aggression⁵ ranged from the cutting of ties with Israel or the freezing of relations to massive demonstrations in the streets of Arab and Muslim capitals.

Being the largest Arab country and the only international crossing from the GS to the outside world, Egypt was always involved in this issue. Egypt's role in this conflict, however, was criticized by the Arab public because its government was not viewed as backing the Palestinians. Critics usually cite the Israeli foreign minister's speech in Cairo, two days prior to the attack on Gaza, in which Tzipi Livni threatened to "change the situation in Gaza."⁶

Syria, on the other hand, was hosting several Palestinian leaders as well as the headquarters of some Palestinian resistance factions during this conflict. The country was viewed by many of the Arab public as the main supporter of Hamas in its struggle against Israel. This view, however, changed after the start of the Syrian uprising in 2011 and Hamas' eventual decision to move out of the country in 2012.

The geographical distance between Syria and Gaza made it difficult for Damascus to play the same role it played in 2006 when it backed the Lebanon based Hezbollah in its war against Israel.

Former American Secretary of the State, Henry Kissinger, said once; "The Arabs can't make war without Egypt; and they can't make peace without Syria."⁷ Knowing this and looking at the size, history, and roles of both Egypt and Syria, one finds it necessary to study the foreign policy responses of the two countries toward the 2008/2009 Gaza War.

First: Statement of the Problem

The 2008/2009 Gaza War was detrimental for the people and infrastructure of Gaza and was divisive for the Arab states. Arab states were divided in this war into two main camps; the "Moderate Camp" and the "Defiant" or "Radical Camp." The "Moderate Camp" included Egypt, Jordan, and five of the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states; Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA),

⁵ The Israeli attack on Gaza in 2008/2009 is described as an aggression by most Arab authors; it is certainly an aggression in the eyes of Palestinians. However, this is not the case for many Israeli and Western authors who see the Israeli attack differently. In order to overcome this discrepancy, the term "war" will be used throughout this study.

⁶ *Al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper, London, 26/12/2008.

⁷ Flynt Leverett, *Wirathat Suriyyah: Ikhtibar Bashshar bi al-Nar* (Inheriting Syria: Bashar's Trial by Fire), translated by Imad Fawzi al-Shu'aybi (Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers, 2005).

United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Oman and Kuwait, along with the PA in the WB. Their natural leader was Egypt.

The “Defiant Camp,” on the other hand, included Syria along with non-state actors like Hezbollah and Hamas and was backed by a non-Arab state; Iran. Syria was the natural Arab leader of this camp. Other Arab states were divided in their loyalty to these two camps during the Gaza conflict. Qatar and Sudan, for instance, sided with the “Defiant Camp” while some other states sided with the “Moderate Camp.”

As the different countries responded differently to the Gaza war, the gap between the two camps became wider. This thesis focuses on the differences and similarities in the foreign policy responses of Egypt and Syria.

In order to see these differences and similarities in a comparative perspective, five factors are taken into consideration. Thus, this thesis studies and compares the foreign policy responses of Egypt and Syria towards the 2008/2009 Gaza War in relation to five domestic and external factors, these are; Arab nationalism, Islam, security, economy and type of alliance.

Second: Research Questions

This study aims to find answers to the following questions:

1. How did the Egyptian and Syrian governments respond to the 2008/2009 Gaza War?
2. What were the differences and similarities in the Egyptian and Syrian foreign policy responses to the 2008/2009 Gaza War?
3. What were the domestic and external factors responsible for the similarities and differences in Egyptian and Syrian foreign policy responses towards the 2008/2009 Gaza War?

Third: Conceptual Framework

This study analyses the Egyptian and Syrian foreign policy responses to the 2008/2009 Gaza War. These two responses summarize the Arab responses to the war because these two states represented the two different camps existing in the Arab World during the war. In order to develop a workable framework of analysis for this study, it is important to understand the regional context which, in our case, is the Arab World.

1. The Arab World as a Regional System

Although Arabs share several commonalities such as language, culture, history, and religion, there is no collective sovereign political body with which they all can identify. Arabs are scattered throughout the Middle East, with the majority living in 22 different Arab nation-states. Despite belonging to one transnational institution (i.e., the Arab League), these 22 states pursue different national interests and have conflicting policies even at some critical times. While most of these states have been independent for almost half a century, the state system in most of them is still in the process of consolidation.⁸ The populations of these 22 states include, alongside the Arab majority, some sizable minorities like the Kurds, the Turkmen, the Africans and the Amazing people.

Arab states make up what many see as one regional system; the Arab World⁹ or at least the core of a wider regional system; the Middle East.¹⁰ A Regional System can be defined as “a set of states affected by at least one trans-border but local externality that emanates from a particular geographic area.”¹¹ The term “Middle East” is a new terminology that was coined by Admiral Alfred Mahan, a famous American naval officer.¹² This term was first used in Mahan’s article “The Persian Gulf and International Relations” published in September 1902 in the *National Review*.¹³ It is noteworthy that neither the Middle East, nor the Arab World, has a homogenous foreign policy or a common regional alliance.

Before the start of the Arab Spring, Arab states could be classified, in terms of their foreign policy and patterns of alliance, into three main groups or camps:

⁸ Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2002), p. 1.

⁹ Jamil Matar and Ali al-Din Hilal, *Al-Nizam al-Iqlymi al-‘Arabi: Dirasah fi al-‘Alaqat al-Siyasiyyah al-‘Arabiyyah* (The Arab Regional System: A Study in the Arab Political Relations), 5th ed. (Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1986), pp. 28–38.

¹⁰ Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, p. 30.

¹¹ D.A. Lake and P.M. Morgan, *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World* (Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1997), p. 48.

¹² Ahmad Said Nufal, *Dawr Israel fi Taftit al-Watan al-‘Arabi* (The Role of Israel in the Fragmentation of the Arab World) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2007), p. 115.

¹³ R. Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power, and War, 1902–1922* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 22–23.

The Moderate States, the Defiant States, and the Middle (or Other) States, i.e., neither moderate nor defiant.¹⁴

- a. **Moderate Arab States:** are those Arab states close to the American Administration and whose foreign policies are usually in line with American policies in the region. This axis included eight countries; the six GCC members plus Egypt and Jordan. In this axis, Egypt was the most dominant.
- b. **Defiant Arab States:** are those Arab states which oppose American hegemony in the region and refuse to recognize the existence of Israel. This axis was led by Syria; it included some major non-state actors like Hezbollah and Hamas, and was allied to Iran.
- c. **Other (middle) Arab States:** are those Arab states that are neither moderate nor defiant. These states reacted differently to the 2008/2009 Israeli attack on Gaza, with many aligning themselves with the defiant axis.

This study will focus on the responses of Egypt and Syria, the leaders of the two main camps: the Moderate and the Defiant.

2. Foreign Policy and Comparative Foreign Policy

Foreign policy refers to the “totality of a country’s policies toward and interactions with the environment beyond its borders.”¹⁵ It is the “ideas or actions designed by policy makers to solve a problem or promote some change in the policies, attitudes, or actions of another state or states, in non-state actors (e.g., terrorist groups), in the international economy, or in the physical environment of the world.”¹⁶ Hence, the foreign policy of a state means the ideas, actions and inactions of its policy makers towards the outside world. In light of these definitions, this study will be looking for actions and statements that make up the foreign policies of both Egypt and Syria.

A state foreign policy response refers to the external actions taken or positions adopted or statements released by a certain government with regard to a certain issue. This response, hence, refers to both tangible and intangible activities such

¹⁴ Abdul-Hameed al-Kayyali (ed.), *Dirasat fi al-'Udwan al-Isra'ili 'Ala Qita' Ghazzah: 'Amaliyyat al-Rasas al-Masbub/ Ma'rakat al-Furqan* (Studies on the Israeli Aggression on Gaza Strip: Cast Lead Operation/ Al-Furqan Battle) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2009), p. 175.

¹⁵ M. Breuning, *Foreign Policy Analysis: A Comparative Introduction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 5.

¹⁶ K. J. Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, 7th ed. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1995), p. 83.

as financial aid, military response, or diplomatic engagement or disengagement. Examples of state foreign policy responses include: Venezuela's cutting of diplomatic ties with Israel during the 2008/2009 war on Gaza, Turkey's official condemnation of the Israeli attack, and Qatar's efforts to hold an Arab Summit to discuss the conflict.

This study offers a comparative foreign policy analysis that explains the differences and similarities in the responses of Egypt and Syria. Comparative foreign policy analysis is a field that first appeared during the mid-1960s and works by "comparing the domestic sources of external conduct in different countries, using standard criteria of data selection and analysis," and seeks to "develop generalized accounts of foreign-policy performance."¹⁷

3. A Comparative Approach

There are a number of ways to study the foreign policies of Arab states. One way is to take a single Arab country as a case study and analyze its foreign policy through examining domestic and international factors such as its military capabilities, economic strength, and its regional or global alliances.

Although one can learn a lot from case studies, such studies fail to offer general conclusions or practical generalizations. Case studies offer a unique analysis, something decision makers cannot rely much on in the task of analyzing foreign policy. Foreign policy analysis aims to offer explicit knowledge about foreign policy roles, attitudes, behaviors, and issues. This can only be achieved through systematic contrasting and comparison.¹⁸

The second approach to the study of the foreign policies of Arab states is to apply a comparative framework of analysis. This can be implemented by comparing and analyzing certain elements and processes such as the decision making process. It can also be done through a systematic comparison of the foreign policies of two or more countries. In such cases, certain key factors of foreign policy will be considered.

This study adopts the second approach or the comparative foreign policy approach which will be used to analyze the responses of Egypt and Syria during the 2008/2009 war on Gaza.

¹⁷ Site of Encyclopedia Britannica, Comparative Foreign-Policy Analysis, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/129631/comparative-foreign-policy-analysis>

¹⁸ Breuning, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

As suggested by Gonzalez,¹⁹ the comparative study of Arab foreign policy can be conducted in various ways. One way is to observe the effects of the global system on the external behavior of the state or states in question. Other relevant issues would include the influence of a superpower or the world economy on Arab foreign policy.

Another approach is to focus on the Arab leaders who dominate the foreign policy decision making process. This approach suggests that leaders matter in foreign policy making.²⁰ In fact, leaders of Third World countries have few, if any, institutional constraints in their task of making foreign-policy decisions. Hence, it would be wise to study the personalities of the leaders of such countries.

One other unique approach that can be used in the comparative study of Arab foreign policies is the *Regional Approach*, which employs the distinctive regional characteristics of the region of interest.²¹ The distinctive features of any region, the Middle East in this case, will definitely influence the domestic and foreign policies of countries within it. The Arab World is no exception to this rule, and hence, this approach can be applied to it. Arab states share a rich socio-political and religious history which influences their internal and external policies. Therefore, the Regional Approach will be adopted in this study.

4. A Regional Approach to the Comparative Study of Arab Foreign Policy

The four distinctive domestic features that will be used in our case are: Arab Nationalism, Islam, national security, and the economy. These four concepts along with another important external concept used by Ishibashi, which is “the type of alliance institution,”²² will be used in this study as independent variables.

These variables denote the following:

- a. **Arab Nationalism:** Although its influence has declined since its peak in the 1950’s and 1960’s, Arab Nationalism or Pan-Arabism can still evoke strong emotions in the Arab World.
- b. **National Security Concerns:** The Arab-Israeli conflict has, so far, resulted in five major wars (in the years; 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, and 1982) along

¹⁹ R. Gonzalez, *Jordanian and Syrian Foreign Policy During the 1990–1991 Gulf Crisis: A Comparative Study*, unpublished master thesis, University Microfilms International, American University, 1991, pp. 1–3.

²⁰ Breuning, *op. cit.*, pp. 27–29.

²¹ Gonzalez, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

²² N. Ishibashi, *Diverging Allies of the Super Power: Alliance Security Dilemma and German and Japanese Responses to the U.S. Invasion of Iraq, 2001–2003*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 2010.

with some other intense conflicts. This situation has resulted in a deep feeling of anxiety for the major regional actors until today.

- c. Islam:** The Arab World is by no doubt the centre of the Muslim World. Moreover, many observers conclude that the Islamic movement is rising in the region as a dominant political power. Hamas, Israel's target in the 2008/2009 Gaza War is itself an Islamic movement and both Egypt and Syria have their own versions of the Islamic movement. Hence, Islam as a factor will be analyzed to understand the foreign policy responses.
- d. Economy (Economic Concerns):** Most Arab states have a low level of economic development. Some of the factors behind this economic underdevelopment are war, mismanagement, lack of resources and corruption. As a consequence of this situation, many Arab states have become dependent on foreign economic aid, especially from the US. This fact presents a major constraint for the independence of Arab foreign policies.
- e. Type of Alliance Institution:** Moderate as well as Defiant Arab states belong to different regional alliances and have, therefore, different foreign policy alignments.

It is important to note that the importance of each of these factors will vary according to the situation in hand. While some factors can be principal in one situation, others might be more significant in other situations.

Chapter Two

The 2008/2009 Gaza War: A Background

The 2008/2009 Gaza War: A Background

Introduction

The foreign policy responses of Egypt and Syria towards the 2008/2009 Israeli war on Gaza cannot be fully understood or analytically examined without, first, understanding what happened during the 22 days of this war. Investigating the political and military developments on the ground as well as the strategic outcomes of the war is very necessary for shaping a comprehensive view of the causes and consequences of the two state responses. Therefore, this chapter will cast some light on what happened in Gaza during the 22 days of war.

First: Parties to the Conflict

On 27/12/2008, Israeli air force fighter jets attacked several Palestinian targets in the GS killing hundreds of people, mostly police officers, and leading to all-out war that continued for 22 days. The parties involved in this military conflict were Israel on one side and Hamas on the other. Other Palestinian armed resistance groups also participated in this war in a smaller scale.

1. Israel

On 14/5/1948 the British pulled out their last soldier from Palestine ending about 30 years of Mandate. On the same day, David Ben Gurion, head of the World Zionist Organization and chairman of the Jewish Agency, declared the “Independence of the State of Israel” and became its first prime minister.¹ The establishment of Israel was a realization of the Zionist dream of a homeland for the Jewish people in historical Palestine.²

Palestine, at the turn of the nineteenth century, was part of the larger Ottoman Empire and remained so until the end of World War I when the British army invaded the whole of historical Palestine. In 1923, the League of Nations formally endorsed the British Mandate for Palestine.³

¹ Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (US: Random House, Inc., 1987), p. 35; and see also Israeli Declaration of Independence, site of Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israeli_Declaration_of_Independence

² Myra Immell (ed.), *Opposing Viewpoints Series: Israel* (US: Greenhaven Press, a part of Gale, Cengage Learning, 2011), pp. 49–51.

³ Saleh, *The Palestinian Issue*; and see also Wasif Abboushi, *Filistin Qabla al-Daya': Qira'ah Jadidah fi al-Masadir al-Baritaniyyah* (The Unmaking of Palestine), translated by Ali Jarbawi (London: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 1989), p. 65.

The British ruled Palestine until 1948 and throughout this period Jewish immigration to the country increased rapidly. The Jewish immigrants established several armed militias like Haganah and Irgun which managed to defeat several Arab armies in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.⁴ The war witnessed many massacres and resulted in the expulsion of more than 700 thousand Palestinians who became refugees in the WB, the GS, and the neighboring Arab countries.⁵

In 1948 Israel assumed authority over 78% of historical Palestine. 19 years later, in what is known as the Six Days War, Israel expanded its territories by occupying the Palestinian WB and GS, the Syrian Golan Heights, and the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula.⁶

On 6/10/1973, Egypt and Syria launched a joint attack on Israel but failed to liberate most of the occupied Arab territories. The Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, managed to capitalize on his political gains from the 1973 War and started a peace endeavor with Israel. In 1978, Sadat signed the Camp David Peace Accords with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Consequently, Israel pulled its troops out of the occupied Sinai Peninsula and Egypt was no more in a state of war with Israel.⁷

In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon in order to end Palestinian resistance attacks from the north. In 2000, Israel pulled out of Lebanon due to the mounting pressure from Lebanese resistance. Six years later, Israel waged a new war on Lebanon but faced a tough resistance from Hezbollah.⁸

In 2005, Israel pulled out of the GS unilaterally in an operation it dubbed the “Disengagement.” The following years witnessed a drastic rise of Hamas in Gaza which annoyed the Israeli government and prompted its military attack on the Strip in December 2008.⁹

⁴ Saleh, *The Palestinian Issue*, p. 45.

⁵ Adnan Abu Amer, *Al-Mawqef al-Isra'eli min Qadhiyat al-Laji'in: Arro'yah al-Tarikhiah wa Suluk Assiyasi* (The Israeli Position from the Refugees Problem: The Historical View and The Political Attitude) (Beirut: Thabit Organization for the Right of Return, 2007), p. 17; and see also Ilan Pappé, *The Israel/Palestine Question: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 118–120.

⁶ Immell, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁷ Saleh, *The Palestinian Issue*, pp. 99–101; and see also Mohsen Saleh, *Dirasat Manhajiyyah fi al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah* (Systematic Studies in the Palestinian Cause) (Kuala Lumpur: Fajar Ulung and Professional Eagle Trading Sdn. Bhd., 2003), pp. 456–459.

⁸ Saleh, *Dirasat Manhajiyyah fi al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah*, pp. 318–321.

⁹ Dov Waxman and Jonathan Rynhold, “Ideological Change and Israel’s Disengagement from Gaza,” *Political Science Quarterly* journal, Academy of Political Science, New York, vol. 123, no. 1, 2008; and see also Sara Roy, “Praying with Their Eyes Closed: Reflections on the Disengagement from Gaza.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, vol. 34, no. 4, summer 2005, pp. 64–74.

2. Hamas

Hamas was established on 14/12/1987, a week after the first *Intifadah* (uprising) erupted in the WB and GS. In its Charter, Hamas describes itself as “one of the wings of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine.”¹⁰

Although Hamas announced its establishment in December 1987, the Islamic movement suggests its historical roots can be traced back to the thirties of the last century. Syrian cleric, Izzuddin Al-Qassam, who was influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) General Guide Hasan Albanna while studying in Egypt, migrated to Palestine in the 1930s and founded “Al-Jihaddiyah Organization” to confront the British Mandate in Palestine.¹¹

Moreover, the Egyptian MB backed the Palestinian armed struggle against the British and its headquarters in Cairo was the meeting point of Palestinian resistance leaders throughout the 1930s; most notably during the 1936 Revolution.¹²

In a recently published autobiography of Adnan Maswady, a recently deceased WB-based Hamas leader, the author pointed out that a Palestinian chapter of the MB was active inside Palestine since the early 1970s. The leadership of this chapter made the decision in 1987 to establish Hamas and escalate the struggle against Israel.¹³ Other accounts suggest that the Palestinian MB in the Palestinian Diaspora, particularly in Kuwait, joined in establishing Hamas during the 1980s. Khaled Meshal, Hamas Politburo Chief, emphasized that “it was done in parallel with the WB and Gaza.”¹⁴

Dr. Musa Abu Marzouq, a Palestinian academic based in the US, became the movement’s first Politburo Chief in the early 1990s. In July 1995, Abu Marzouq

¹⁰ Abdallah Azzam, *Hamas Harakatul Moqawamah al-Islamiyyah fi Filisteen: Al-Juthor al-Tarikhyyah wal Mithaq* (Hamas the Islamic Resistance Movement in Palestine: Historical Roots and Charter) (Peshawar: Mujahedeen Services Office, 1989), p. 117.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 120; see Mohsen Saleh, *Al-Tayyar al-Islami fi Filistin wa Atharuhu fi Harakat al-Jihad 1917–1948* (The Islamic Current in Palestine and its Impact on the Jihad Movement 1917–1948), 2nd ed. (Kuwait: Maktabat al-Falah, 1989), pp. 310–312; and see also Paul McGeough, *Kill Khalid: The Failed Mossad Assassination of Khalid Mishal and the Rise of Hamas* (New York: The New Press, 2009), p. 53.

¹² Abd al-Fattah Muhammad el-Awaisi, *The Muslim Brothers and the Palestine Question 1928–1947* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998), pp. 34–45.

¹³ Bilal Mohammad (ed.), *Ila al-Muwajahah... Dhikrayat Dr. ‘Adnan Maswady ‘an al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi al-Diffah al-Gharbiyyah wa Ta’sis Hamas* (Towards Confrontation: Memoirs of Dr. Adnan Maswady Regarding the Muslim Brotherhood in the West Bank and the Founding of Hamas) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2013), pp. 93–101.

¹⁴ McGeough, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

was detained in the US and Khaled Meshal, who was born in the WB and later became a refugee in Kuwait, succeeded him.¹⁵

Hamas participated in the first *Intifadah* and later started to resort to military attacks on Israeli targets. This was intensified further after the establishment of Hamas' armed wing; Izzuddin Al-Qassam Brigades.¹⁶

Hamas opposed the Peace Process with Israel and emphasized that resistance is the only way to liberate Palestine. The movement's armed resistance activities led to its designation as a "terrorist organization" by the US, the European Union (EU), Canada, and Israel.¹⁷

The PLO which led the Palestinian armed struggle against Israel since the 1960s resorted to the peace process in the late 1980s. Its leader, Yasser Arafat, renounced violence and recognized the state of Israel in return for a promised peaceful settlement of the conflict. Hamas rejected this settlement and boycotted the 1996 PLC elections "because of its opposition to the Oslo framework that created the PA and the PLC."¹⁸

In 2000, the Second Palestinian *Intifadah* erupted after the failure of the Camp David Peace Talks between the PA and Israel. Israel attempted to curb the *Intifadah* in a way that resulted in a large number of Palestinian civilian casualties. This provoked Palestinian resistance groups, including Fatah, to respond against Israel through militant attacks.

One of the distinctive features of the second *Intifadah* was the development and use of rockets in the attacks against Israel. In 2001, Hamas developed a number of short-range homemade rockets in the GS. The most popular of these rockets was the Qassam rocket which had the range of 4 km. Other rockets and mortars were also smuggled into the Strip throughout the following years.¹⁹

After the 2005 Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, Hamas participated in the second PLC elections in 2006 and won a controlling majority that entitled the movement to form the Tenth Palestinian government. Ismail Haniyyeh, a Hamas leader from Gaza, became the new prime minister.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 78–94.

¹⁶ Jawad el-Hamad and Eyad al-Barghothi, *Dirasah fi al-Fikr al-Siyasi li Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah (HAMAS) 1987–1996* (A Study in the Political Ideology of the Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS) 1987–1996), 3rd ed. (Amman: Middle East Studies Centre, 1999), pp. 89–96.

¹⁷ Samuel J. Wilkes and Cynthia N. Jackson (eds.), *Hamas in the Middle East: A Closer Look* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2011), p. vii.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁹ Yiftah Shapir, "Hamas' Weapons," *Strategic Assessment* journal, The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), Tel Aviv, vol. 11, no. 4, February 2009.

3. Other Palestinian Resistance Groups

One misconception about the 2008/2009 Gaza War is that only Israel and Hamas were involved in the confrontation. This misconception is mainly because Hamas was the main target of the Israeli attacks. Other Palestinian resistance groups were also involved in this conflict.

In fact, several Palestinian factions operate in the GS and almost all of them have their own armed wings. These armed wings include: Al-Quds Brigades of the Islamic Jihad Movement (PIJ), Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades of Fatah, Abu-Ali Mustafa Brigades of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), National Resistance Brigades of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and Al-Naser Salahuddin Brigades of the Popular Resistance Committees.²⁰

These armed groups include around 9 thousand fighters and make up about half the estimated number of resistance fighters in the GS. Izzuddin Al-Qassam Brigades of Hamas is said to have some 6–12 thousand fighters alone.²¹ This fact, along with the concentration of Israeli propaganda on Hamas, meant that Qassam Brigades had to lead the Palestinian front.

Second: The Political and Security Situation in Gaza Before the War

The rapid shift in centers of political power in the Palestinian leadership had a negative impact on the Palestinian unity. This was intensified by the move of President Mahmoud Abbas to limit the powers of the new Hamas government through several presidential decrees. Among these decrees was the decree to limit the authority of the government over the police and other security forces and bring all Palestinian security bodies under the direct command of the president instead of the minister of interior. These decrees came only days after the announcement of Hamas' victory in the PLC elections held on 25/1/2006.²²

²⁰ Al-Kayyali, *op. cit.*

²¹ *Ibid.*; and see also A. Cordesman, *The "Gaza War": A Strategic Analysis* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009).

²² Mohsen Saleh (ed.), *Sira' al-Iradat: Al-Suluk al-Amni li Fatah wa Hamas wa al-Atraf al-Ma'niyyah 2006–2007* (Conflict of Wills Between Fatah and Hamas and Other Relevant Parties 2006–2007), *The Security File of the Palestinian Authority* (2) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2008), pp. 176–180.

1. Hamas' Seizure of Power in Gaza

Few months after forming its government, Hamas realized that Fatah, which led the PA for more than 10 years, was not ready for a full power transfer as it was clear that Fatah security forces tried to undermine the rule of Hamas government in GS and the WB.

On 17/5/2006 Hamas Home Minister Saeed Seyam established a new security apparatus, of three thousand men, that was named the Executive Force, in order to carry out the orders of his government. Seyam claimed that the existing Fatah-loyal security forces did not carry out his orders and were answerable directly to the president.²³ This move was necessary to implement the rule of law and enable the new government to perform its duties. President Abbas, however, responded by creating a new security force called the "Presidential Guard" for which the US allocated \$86.4 million.²⁴ This further complicated the situation between Fatah and Hamas.

Despite these tensions, reconciliation talks between the two parties continued, and on 7/2/2007 Hamas and Fatah signed a reconciliation agreement in Mecca, KSA, in which the two agreed to form the first Palestinian unity government. The unity government was sworn-in on 17/3/2007, but did not last more than three months as tensions between the two rivals continued to mount.²⁵

Hamas accused Mohammad Dahlan, a Fatah leader and the Commander of the Preventive Security apparatus in Gaza, of trying to undermine Hamas rule by creating instability in the Strip. The movement accused what it described as the "traitor faction within Fatah" of being responsible for the assassination of dozens of its members in 2006.²⁶ Dahlan was also accused of being responsible for the failed attempt to assassinate Prime Minister Ismail Haniyyeh on 14/12/2012.²⁷

These tensions led to an armed conflict between the security forces associated with Fatah, especially the Preventive Security, and the Executive Force associated with Hamas. In the second week of June 2007, Hamas military wing Izzuddin Al-Qassam Brigades clashed with the Abbas-loyal Preventive Security Force and seized full power in the GS. Over 160 people were killed

²³ *Al-Hayat* newspaper, London, 18/5/2006.

²⁴ Saleh, *The Palestinian Issue*, p. 144.

²⁵ See *Ibid.*, pp. 146–147.

²⁶ Years later Dahlan was dismissed from Fatah and accused by President Abbas of spying for Israel and of being involved in the assassination of some senior Palestinian resistance figures like Hamas armed-wing founder and Commander-in-Chief Salah Shihadeh, who was assassinated through an Israeli airstrike on his house in Gaza in July 2002.

²⁷ Site of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), 15/12/2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6182143.stm

in four days of clashes that finally resulted in Hamas taking over the complete authority in the GS.²⁸

Palestinian President and Fatah Chairman, Mahmoud Abbas, responded to these developments by dismissing the unity government headed by Haniyyeh and assigning Salam Fayyad, former minister of finance, to form an emergency government. This resulted in a geographical division between two governments; one in the GS led by Hamas, and another in the WB led by Salam Fayyad and backed by Fatah.²⁹ Over the following years, Hamas consolidated its rule in the GS but continued to face a strong crackdown in the WB.³⁰ This division continued for seven years and was only changed when Hamas and Fatah finally agreed to form a consensus technocratic unity government headed by Palestinian academician Rami al-Hamdallah in May 2014.

2. Capture of the Israeli Soldier Gilad Shalit

On 25/6/2006 a group of Palestinian resistance fighters attacked an Israeli military base bordering the GS killing two Israeli soldiers and capturing Israeli corporal Gilad Shalit. Five days later, Hamas military wing, Qassam Brigades, along with two other smaller militant resistance factions: Popular Resistance Committees and Army of Islam, assumed responsibility for the operation.³¹

Hamas demanded that a number of Palestinian prisoners be released in exchange for the captive soldier. Israel rejected the demands of Hamas in the beginning and tried to free Shalit through other ways. However, all Israeli attempts to free Shalit failed and eventually Israel started negotiating his release through Egyptian mediation. On 18/11/2011, Shalit was released from his prison in the GS in exchange for 1,027 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons.³²

3. The 2008 Ceasefire

Ever since Hamas assumed power in the GS, Israel viewed this situation in Gaza as a security threat and attempted to change it through different strategies including a blockade on the movement of goods and people in and

²⁸ Cordesman, *op. cit.*, pp. 5–6; and see also Archives and Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *Misr wa Hamas* (Egypt and Hamas), Information Report (7) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2009), p. 31.

²⁹ Saleh, *Sira' al-Iradat*, p. 186.

³⁰ Benjamin S. Lambeth “Israel’s War in Gaza: A Paradigm of Effective Military Learning and Adaptation,” *International Security* journal, MIT Press, Massachusetts, vol. 37, no. 2, fall 2012, p. 94.

³¹ Archives and Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *Misr wa Hamas*, p. 21.

³² Site of Sama News Agency, 18/10/2011, <http://www.samanews.com>

out of the GS.³³ The blockade included measures such as “restrictions on the goods that can be imported into Gaza and the closure of border crossings for people, goods and services, sometimes for days, including cuts in the provision of fuel and electricity.”³⁴

Although this blockade was criticized by international humanitarian organizations, for being unlawful under the Geneva Conventions of which Israel is a party, Israel maintained a tight grip around the GS.³⁵

Blockade alone was not sufficient to topple the Hamas government, hence, Israel carried out several military attacks on the GS. These attacks reached their height in February 2008 when the Israeli army waged the “Hot Winter Operation” on 27/2/2008, and ended it on 3/3/2008.³⁶

The Hot Winter Operation proved that bringing down Hamas rule and ending rocket attacks on Israel is not an easy task. Hence, by June 2008 Israel indirectly negotiated a ceasefire with Hamas through Egyptian mediation. The two sides reached a six-month ceasefire agreement which took effect on 19/6/2008, and expired on 19/12/2008.³⁷

On 4/11/2008, weeks before the expiry of the ceasefire period, Israel raided some Hamas operatives killing six. Hamas responded by firing some rockets into Israel. Israeli sources report that “some 190 rockets were fired into Israel in November [2008].”³⁸ These escalations suggested that an extension of the ceasefire was not easy to reach.

By the end of the six months, Hamas and its armed wing; Qassam Brigades announced that they were not interested in extending the ceasefire “due to the Israeli violations” of the recently concluded ceasefire.³⁹ Hamas cited 185 Israeli violations in which 21 Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire along with dozens of injuries and arrests.⁴⁰ Days later, Hamas resumed its rocket attacks

³³ Cordesman, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

³⁴ “Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict,” United Nations (UN), General Assembly, Human Rights Council, 12th session, Agenda item 7, 25/9/2009, A/HRC/12/48, site of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), p. 16, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/12session/A-HRC-12-48.pdf>

³⁵ Muhammad Huzaimi Sabri, *The United Nations Role in the Palestine-Israel Conflict: An Analysis*, unpublished master thesis, Universiti Kebangsaan, Malaysia, 2012, p. 34.

³⁶ Site of Arabs 48, 3/3/2008, <http://www.arabs48.com>

³⁷ Site of The Palestinian Information Center (PIC), 19/6/2008, <https://www.palinfo.com/site/PIC/default.aspx>

³⁸ Cordesman, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

³⁹ *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, 20/12/2008.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

on Israel and justified them as “an appropriate response to [the] Israeli strike [on] the previous November 4, [2008].”⁴¹ These developments meant war was inevitable.

On 25/12/2008, Tzipi Livni, the Israeli foreign minister, called from Cairo, from a press conference with her Egyptian counterpart Ahmad Abu Elgheit, for an end of Hamas rocket attacks on Israel. Livni said “enough is enough; the situation [in Gaza] will change.”⁴² Two days later, the Israeli attack on Gaza started.

Third: The Political and Military Developments of the War

The war on Gaza started on Saturday 27/12/2008, at 11:30 in the morning with a massive Israeli aerial strike on several targets in the GS. Few days later the war entered a new phase when Israel started a ground invasion of Gaza. After 22 days of war, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert announced a unilateral ceasefire and started pulling his troops out of Gaza.

1. Objectives of the War

Many analysts suggest that the war on Gaza was launched at an optimum time for the Israeli government. Locally, Israeli parliamentary elections were due on 10/2/2009, and the ruling party, Kadima, needed popular support from the Israeli voters who were leaning towards the Right.⁴³

Regionally, Arabs were divided into two camps: the Moderates and the Defiants, and some key Arab governments were not comfortable with an Islamist party like Hamas in power, mainly because the main opposition groups in their own countries were Islamist as well.⁴⁴

Egypt’s position was of particular importance as it is the only country bordering Gaza and it has been playing the role of the mediator between Israel and Palestinian resistance factions since 2005. Hamas head of International Relations, Osama Hamdan, pointed that recent reports revealed that Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni informed Egyptian President Husni Mubarak of the Israeli plan to “launch a military attack on Hamas that would end the movement

⁴¹ Lambeth, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

⁴² *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, 26/12/2008.

⁴³ Yehuda Ben Meir and Olena Bagno-Moldavsky, *VoxPopuli: Trends in Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2004–2009*, Memorandum no. 106 (Tel Aviv: The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), November 2010).

⁴⁴ Michael Milstein, “The Challenge of al-Muqawama (Resistance) to Israel,” *Strategic Assessment*, INSS, vol. 12, no. 4, February 2010.

within 3 days.”⁴⁵ Egyptian foreign minister at that time, Ahmad Abu Elgheit, revealed in his autobiography years later that Livni was invited by Mubarak to visit Egypt and when she arrived in Cairo on 25/12/2008 she requested to meet Mubarak alone. Abu Elgheit and Egyptian Intelligence Chief, Omar Sulaiman, were called in 15 minutes later to be told that Israel is planning to respond to the Palestinian rocket attacks.⁴⁶

Hamas, which had an assessment that an Israeli attack on Gaza was coming soon, expressed its worries about the Israeli military activities near Gaza to the Egyptian Intelligence which, in return, responded that these activities were normal and that there was nothing to worry about.⁴⁷ Some reports, however, suggest that the movement did not expect that Israel would embark on such a large-scale military operation only weeks before its parliamentary elections.⁴⁸

On the international level, the US was in the midst of administration change. The Bush Administration was due to leave office in weeks and a new administration was about to take over, making it easier for Israel to go for war without much American pressure.⁴⁹ Moreover, recent reports revealed that Livni informed her American counterpart Condoleezza Rice about Israel’s intentions to launch a military operation against Hamas days before the operation started. Rice did not express any opposition to the Israeli plans.⁵⁰

It was apparent that Israel has learned a lot of lessons from its 2006 War on Lebanon. The main lesson Israeli leadership learned was to keep the objectives of its military operations vague and to lower the ceiling of expectations from such operations. Israeli political leadership was advised by its experts to “set relatively limited and attainable goals for the operation” and to avoid the use of terms like “victory” or “ending rocket attacks.”⁵¹ Hence, the military objectives of the Israeli operation were not stated clearly throughout the war. Consequently, the political objectives of this war remained vague as well.

⁴⁵ Interview with Osama Hamdan, Head of Hamas International Relations, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 30/1/2014.

⁴⁶ Ahmad Abu Elgheit, *Shahadati... Ahmad Abu Elgheit: al-Siyasah al-Kharijiyyah al-Misriyyah 2004–2011* (My Testimony... Ahmad Abu Elgheit: The Egyptian Foreign Policy 2004–2011) (Giza: Dar Nahdat Misr for Publishing, 2013), pp. 432–433.

⁴⁷ Interview with Osama Hamdan, 30/1/2014.

⁴⁸ Yehuda Ben Meir, “Operation Cast Lead: Political Dimensions and Public Opinion,” *Strategic Assessment*, INSS, vol. 11, no. 4, February 2009.

⁴⁹ Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé, *Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel’s War Against the Palestinians* (Beirut: All Prints Distributors and Publishers, 2010), p. 91.

⁵⁰ Abu Elgheit, *op. cit.*, p. 433.

⁵¹ Milstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–69; see also Cordesman, *op. cit.*, p. ii; and Lambeth, *op. cit.*, pp. 95–96.

However, despite the ambiguity that surrounded the objectives of the war, the different statements of the Israeli spokespersons and leaders and the developments on the ground point out to the following as the main objectives of the war:⁵²

- a. Ending or sharply reducing Palestinian rocket attacks on Israeli towns and cities.
- b. Ending or sharply reducing the smuggling of weapons into Gaza through underground tunnels.
- c. Changing the situation in Gaza by making it a safe zone.
- d. Freeing the captive Israeli soldier from Hamas.

Other possible military objectives include; restoring confidence in the Israeli army after their tough experience in Lebanon in 2006, and testing the Israeli military after two years of intensive training.⁵³

On the political level, there are differing opinions on what the main Israeli political objective from this war was. While some suggest that Israel aimed to change the situation in Gaza by toppling the Hamas government and handing authority to the Abbas-led PA or any other third party,⁵⁴ others suggest that Israel had no plans to “conduct a sustained occupation, to try to destroy Hamas or all of its forces, or to reintroduce the Palestinian Authority and Fatah.”⁵⁵ However, “such contingency plans and exercises may have existed.”⁵⁶

Since Israel was the one who launched the attack, so it is the one who set the objectives of the war. For Hamas, Israel’s main motive behind this war was clear; “to get rid of the Hamas rule in Gaza.”⁵⁷ Therefore, denying Israel from achieving its objective was the main goal Hamas set for itself in this war.⁵⁸

Following up the developments during and after the war, one can conclude that none of the Israeli objectives was successfully achieved despite the 22 days

⁵² See Archives and Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *al-‘Udwan al-Isra’ili ‘Ala Qita’ Ghazzah (27/12/2008–18/1/2009)* (The Israeli Aggression on Gaza Strip (27/12/2008–18/1/2009)), Information Report (8) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2009), http://www.alzaytouna.net/arabic/data/attachments/ReportsZ/8_Aggression_Gaza_4-09.pdf; see also al-Kayyali, *op. cit.*, p. 175; and Cordesman, *op. cit.*

⁵³ Al-Kayyali, *op. cit.*

⁵⁴ See Archives and Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *al-‘Udwan al-Isra’ili ‘Ala Qita’ Ghazzah (27/12/2008–18/1/2009)*.

⁵⁵ Cordesman, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Interview with Osama Hamdan, 30/1/2014.

⁵⁸ Milstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 67–68.

of attack. Palestinian rockets continued to hit Israeli towns and the situation in Gaza has not changed. On the contrary, Hamas further consolidated its rule in the Strip and continued to pose a threat on the security of Israel. Using the words of Israeli professor Yehezkel Dror; “Israel failed in its war on Gaza just like it failed in Lebanon.”⁵⁹ Dror emphasized that Israel failed to create deterrence against the Palestinian rocket attacks which continue to fall on Israeli settlements in the south.

2. Developments of the War

The Israeli military attack on Gaza was planned to take place in three phases. However, only two phases were implemented while the third phase was called off. The first phase was the aerial attacks on the GS; the second phase was the ground invasion of the Strip, and the final phase was the full military invasion. Phase three was not executed as Israel announced on 17/1/2009, a unilateral cease-fire and withdrew its troops from the GS.

a. Phase One: The Aerial Attacks

On the first day of the war, 110 Israeli fighter jets attacked 110 targets in the GS. This strike started at 11:30 am on Saturday 27/12/2008. Many of the targets were civilian targets such as police stations (30 stations were hit in the first strike) and other government offices. As a result of this strike, more than 285 Palestinians, mostly policemen, were killed and more than 900 were injured. The casualties included Gaza Police Chief, General Tawfeeq Jabr, and other senior police officers.⁶⁰

In its report, the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict concluded that Israel violated international humanitarian law by targeting policemen in Gaza. The report suggested that although “a great number of the Gaza policemen were recruited among Hamas supporters or members of Palestinian armed groups, the Gaza police were a civilian law-enforcement agency”; hence they did not lose their civilian immunity.⁶¹

Air strikes continued throughout the war and bombarded Gaza with about 1.5 million tons of explosives.⁶² Israel used in its aerial attacks dozens of F-16s

⁵⁹ Site of Aljazeera.net, 17/3/2009, <http://www.aljazeera.net/portal>

⁶⁰ *Al-Hayat*, 28/12/ 2008.

⁶¹ “Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict,” p. 17.

⁶² According to the British Medical Mission to Gaza Israeli air jets fired about 1.5 million tons of explosives on Gaza Strip during the war making the ratio of explosives/person = 1 ton/person. See Archives and Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *al-'Udwan al-Isra'ili 'Ala Qita' Ghazzah (27/12/2008–18/1/2009)*.

and Apache Helicopters as well as several Unmanned Vehicles (UMVs).⁶³ The Israeli civil intelligence branch, Shin Bet, supplied the Israeli Air Force with detailed information on Palestinian facilities making it easier for IAF to hit specific targets.⁶⁴

According to a senior Israeli Air Force officer, Israeli helicopters carried out 1,500 raids on targets in Gaza and launched 1,000 Hellfire and Orev missiles. In total, about 3,000 air raids were conducted throughout the 22 days of war, most of which were carried out before the start of the ground invasion on 3/1/2009.⁶⁵

Hamas on its part managed to absorb the shock of the first strike and remained defiant. The movement started launching its rocket attacks on Israeli towns in less than 48 hours of the start of the war. These rockets included hundreds of homemade Qassam rockets, Russian Grads as well as mortars. By the end of the first phase Hamas “had launched over 500 rockets and mortars into Israel.”⁶⁶

Other Palestinian resistance factions also launched their own rockets, and over the days of the war Palestinian rockets reached as far as Beer Sheva (*Bi'r al-Sabi'*) city, 40 km east of Gaza, and Ashkelon and Ashdod cities, 20 km and 30 km to the north.⁶⁷

b. Phase Two: The Ground Invasion

On 3/1/2009, tens of Israeli tanks invaded Gaza from four directions. Three Israeli brigades, 10 thousands each, joined this operation and 9 thousand reserve soldiers were recalled as the invasion progressed.

The United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict Report known as the Goldstone Report indicates that “the Golani, Givati and Paratrooper Brigades and five Armoured Corps Brigades were involved” in the attacks.⁶⁸ The tanks used included Israeli-made Merkava Mark III tanks, American-made Abrams, and other army vehicles. During this invasion some warships as well as one submarine were also used in order to cover the invaders.⁶⁹ The navy was used in order to “shell the Gaza coast during the operations.”⁷⁰

⁶³ See *Ibid.*; and Cordesman, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁶⁴ Cordesman, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁶⁵ See Archives and Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *al-'Udwan al-Isra'eli 'Ala Qita' Ghazzah (27/12/2008–18/1/2009)*.

⁶⁶ Cordesman, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁶⁷ See Archives and Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *al-'Udwan al-Isra'eli 'Ala Qita' Ghazzah (27/12/2008–18/1/2009)*.

⁶⁸ “Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict,” p. 16.

⁶⁹ See Archives and Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *al-'Udwan al-Isra'eli 'Ala Qita' Ghazzah (27/12/2008–18/1/2009)*.

⁷⁰ “Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict,” p. 16.

Hamas and the other Palestinian resistance factions fought back and denied Israeli troops entry to the centers of the Palestinian cities and refugee camps in Gaza. Resistance fighters used RPGs, some homemade grenades, and light weapons to clash with Israeli soldiers, and were able, over the days of the ground invasion, to entrap Israeli soldiers several times.⁷¹ Palestinian snipers also shot dead several Israeli soldiers making it risky for Israeli army to engage in street fights. Qassam Brigades alone claimed that their snipers shot down 48 Israeli soldiers during the days of combat.⁷²

c. Phase Three: The Attempted Full Invasion and the End of the War

On 7/1/2009 Israeli army announced the start of the third phase of their operation in which they planned to invade Palestinian cities in the Strip. In this phase, Israeli troops advanced few hundred meters into Jabalia city and later into Gaza city and remained there for few hours then pulled out.⁷³

On 17/1/2009, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, announced a unilateral ceasefire starting at 2:00 am on the second day.⁷⁴ On 18/1/2009, Hamas Deputy Political Bureau Chief Musa Abu Marzouq, also announced a unilateral ceasefire on behalf of the Palestinian resistance factions and threatened to resume rocket attacks if Israel did not pull its troops out of Gaza. On 21/1/2009, an Israeli army spokesman announced the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza.⁷⁵

Fourth: The Political and Military Outcomes of the War

One obvious outcome of the 2008/2009 Gaza War was the large number of civilian casualties. According to a report issued by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) on 28/1/2009, the number of Palestinians killed in the war was 1,334, including 417 children, 108 women, 120 elderly and

⁷¹ See Archives and Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *al-'Udwan al-Isra'ili 'Ala Qita' Ghazzah (27/12/2008–18/1/2009)*.

⁷² Ezzedeem Al-Qassam Brigades, Military Wing of Hamas Movement, Information Office, Sixth Part of Al Qassam Responses in Twenty Day in Gaza Strip, Military Communiqué, 16/1/2009, http://www.qassam.ps/statement-1249-Sixth_Part_of_Al_Qassam_responses_in_twenty_days_in_Gaza_strip.html

⁷³ See Archives and Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *al-'Udwan al-Isra'ili 'Ala Qita' Ghazzah (27/12/2008–18/1/2009)*.

⁷⁴ Lambeth, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

⁷⁵ *Asharq Alawsat* newspaper, London, 18/1/2009; *al-Sharq* newspaper, Doha, 19/1/2009; and site of Reuters News Agency, 21/1/2009, <http://ara.reuters.com/> (in Arabic)

14 medical aid personnel. The number of Palestinians injured, according to the same report was 5,450.⁷⁶

According to the Goldstone Report, numbers of casualties of the war vary between the different sources. Non-governmental organizations suggest that the number of people killed was 1,387–1,417 persons, the Gaza authorities report 1,444 fatal casualties, and the Israeli government claims only 1,166 Palestinians were killed.⁷⁷ In many cases during the war “the consequences of the Israeli attacks against civilians were aggravated by their subsequent refusal to allow the evacuation of the wounded or to permit access to ambulances.”⁷⁸

Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) reported on 12/3/2009 that 255 police officers were killed during the war, including Gaza Police Chief General Tawfeeq Jabr.⁷⁹ Hamas Minister of Interior Saeed Seyam, was also killed along with some of his family members in an Israeli air strike on his brother’s house in Gaza on 15/1/2009.⁸⁰

On the other side, the Israeli government reported that four Israelis were killed from rocket attacks, three of whom were civilians and one was soldier. In addition, “nine Israeli soldiers were killed during the fighting inside the Gaza Strip, four of whom as a result of friendly fire.”⁸¹ Qassam Brigades, however, claimed that its troops alone killed 40 Israeli soldiers and injured 350 in combat.

1. Israel

By the end of the war, Israeli Foreign Ministry announced that 9 Israeli soldiers were killed in the clashes in Gaza.⁸² Palestinian resistance armed groups; Qassam and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, claimed they killed a total of 67 Israeli soldiers in the battlefield and destroyed about 50 tanks in addition to hitting one Unmanned Air Vehicle (UAV) and four helicopters.⁸³

⁷⁶ Martyrs and Injured in Gaza Strip, site of Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), 28/1/2009, <http://82.213.38.42/DesktopModules/Articles/ArticlesView.aspx?tabID=0&lang=en&ItemID=1411&mid=12059>

⁷⁷ “Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict,” p. 17.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁷⁹ Confirmed figures reveal the true extent of the destruction inflicted upon the Gaza Strip; Israel’s offensive resulted in 1,417 dead, including 926 civilians, 255 police officers, and 236 fighters. See site of Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR), 12/3/2009, <http://www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en/>

⁸⁰ Cordesman, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

⁸¹ “Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict,” p. 17.

⁸² United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-occupied Palestinian territory (OCHA-oPt), Field Update on Gaza From the Humanitarian Coordinator 24–26 January 2009, 1,700 Hours, 26/1/2009, http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_gaza_humanitarian_situation_report_2009_01_26_english.pdf

⁸³ See Archives and Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *al-‘Udwan al-Isra’ili ‘Ala Qita’ Ghazzah (27/12/2008–18/1/2009)*.

Although the number of civilian and military casualties is important, it is not the main consideration in assessing the outcomes of a war. The more important consideration is whether the political and military objectives of a war were achieved or not.

In the case of this war, Israel's main objectives of ending Palestinian rocket attacks on Israeli towns and creating a situation of deterrence vis-à-vis Gaza were not achieved. Although some analysts, like Brom and Lambeth, suggest that the Gaza war was a success, this suggestion is highly questionable.⁸⁴ Lambeth suggests that Israel "achieved its immediate goal of dramatically curtailing two years of relentless rocket fire by Hamas into civilian population centers in southern Israel by means of a harsh and effective punitive reprisal."⁸⁵

These analysts failed to account for the fact that Palestinian rockets continued to hit Israeli towns, though in a less frequent pattern, and Israel failed to get any guarantee that Palestinians will not launch future rocket attacks on Israeli towns. Hamas even managed to reach farther inside Israel in November 2012, when its rockets hit Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

In fact, the whole idea of "Deterrence" as a war objective is questionable because deterrence should be a consequence of a successful strategy, not a strategic aim in itself.⁸⁶ It is also arguable whether a highly professional well-equipped army can consider deterrence with a non-state-actor, like Hamas, a situation of deterrence in the first place.

One achievement of the Israeli operation was the destruction of a large number of Palestinian tunnels which were used, according to the Israeli authorities, to smuggle weapons into Gaza. This, however, did not last long as Hamas response to the recent Israeli war on Gaza, in November 2012, proved that the capabilities of Palestinian resistance were not affected by the destruction of those tunnels.

One important consequence of the war was the deterioration of Israel's image internationally. Many international human rights bodies blamed Israel for the disproportionate use of force in its war on Gaza. The number of Palestinian civilian casualties and the amount of destruction in properties was beyond imagination.

The Goldstone Report was a great blow to Israel's image internationally. The report documented Israel's violations throughout the war and resulted in

⁸⁴ Shlomo Brom, "Operation Cast Lead, January 2009: An Interim Assessment," *Strategic Assessment*, INSS, vol. 11, no. 3, January 2009; and Lambeth, *op. cit.*

⁸⁵ Lambeth, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁸⁶ Stuart A. Cohen, The Futility of Operation Cast Lead, BESA Center Perspectives Papers, no. 68, The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies (BESA), Tel Aviv, 16/2/2009, <http://besacenter.org/perspectives-papers/the-futility-of-operation-cast-lead/>

the worsening of the state's image and prestige internationally. Consequently, the Israeli government had to spend billions of dollars to manage this public relations (PR) crisis.⁸⁷

In the local context, the ruling party in Israel, Kadima, along with its allies failed to maintain a majority in the Israeli Knesset and lost the parliamentary elections that were held in February 2009. Extremist right-wing groups gained more seats and a right-leaning government was, eventually, formed and led by Benjamin Netanyahu.

2. Hamas

Hamas' armed wing, Qassam Brigades, announced by the end of the war that they lost 48 of their fighters. The number, however, increased to 175 after the Qassam Brigades released a full account of their gains and losses in war. Other resistance groups also announced the numbers of their casualties in the war which reached a total of 108 fighters. Hence, according to the Palestinian resistance factions, the total number of Palestinian fighters killed in the operation was 283.⁸⁸

Israeli authorities disputed Hamas' numbers and claimed that the movement lost a total number of 600 fighters during the operation.⁸⁹ This large difference in number is probably because Israel considered police forces to be combatants.

It is important to note that this war "was Hamas's most serious challenge, certainly since the group seized power in Gaza in 2007, and probably since it emerged during the first *Intifada* in 1988."⁹⁰

Since Hamas was on the defense in this war, one should assess their performance with respect to their success or failure in denying Israel the achievement of its objectives from the operation. The main Israeli objective was to change the situation in the GS, which means, to end Hamas rule or to make the Strip a safe zone. However, Israel failed to achieve its objective and Hamas managed to consolidate its rule in the Strip.

Although Hamas lost many of its fighters in addition to two of its senior leaders, Saeed Seyam and Nizar Rayyan, the movement kept the whole Strip under its rule. Moreover, the number of fighters Hamas lost is not that large

⁸⁷ Al-Kayyali, *op. cit.*, pp. 67–69.

⁸⁸ See Archives and Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *al-'Udwan al-Israeli 'Ala Qita' Ghazzah (27/12/2008–18/1/2009)*.

⁸⁹ Cordesman, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

⁹⁰ Yoram Cohen and Jeffrey White, *Hamas in Combat: The Military Performance of the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement*, Policy Focus no. 97 (US: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2009), p. ix.

if compared to the estimated total number of its forces; 10–12 thousand.⁹¹ Palestinian resistance fighters also continued to fire their rockets on Israeli towns throughout the days of the war and gave no guarantee to end their attacks in the future.

On the international level, the political siege imposed on Hamas government continued but the movement gained a huge popularity among the Arab and Muslim masses.

A number of Arab governments continued to back Hamas throughout the war, and Qatar took the initiative of inviting the leaders of Hamas and other Palestinian resistance groups to attend the Emergency Arab Summit in Doha. Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Meshal, spoke on behalf of the Palestinian resistance while PA President Mahmoud Abbas, was absent.

By the end of the war, Hamas spokesman and Deputy Chief Mousa Abu Marzouq, announced ceasefire from Damascus. In a televised speech, Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyyeh, declared that “the Palestinians have won a great victory against Israel.”⁹² Haniyyeh explained this “victory” by asserting that “The enemy has failed to achieve its goals.”⁹³

In his analysis of the war, Milstein suggests that in Hamas’ version of the war; “there was no loss or defeat because the movement fulfilled the principles of the concept of resistance.”⁹⁴ This was exhibited in Hamas’ success in “preventing Israel from obtaining a classical military decision” and the movement’s ability to demonstrate operational capabilities, albeit fairly limited, throughout all the phases of the war.⁹⁵

3. Palestinian Authority

The Fatah backed Ramallah-based PA was not involved in the fighting that occurred in Gaza in 2008/2009. Nonetheless, the PA was heavily influenced by this war. Images of Palestinian suffering in Gaza forced President Mahmoud Abbas to condemn Israeli actions and call for national unity with Hamas. The PA was, nevertheless, unable to exert any “influence over Israel... during the fighting and it was Hamas that was able to start the aid effort after the

⁹¹ Cordesman, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁹² BBC, 18/1/2009.

⁹³ See Nidal al-Mughrabi, Hamas and Israel Separately Announce Gaza Ceasefire, site of Reuters News Agency, 18/1/2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/01/18/us-palestinians-israel-idUSLI52680720090118>

⁹⁴ Milstein, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

ceasefire.”⁹⁶ This lack of influence over Israel had severely weakened Abbas’ position internally and regionally.

Despite of Abbas condemnation of Israel, PA-loyal media outlets in the WB continued to accuse Hamas of being responsible for the fighting and the suffering in Gaza.⁹⁷ This, however, outraged many in the Arab public who saw Fatah and the PA accomplice with the Israeli side.⁹⁸

Fatah fighters in Gaza joined Hamas in combating Israeli forces, albeit in small numbers, and lost dozens of their fighters in the operation. This, however, was not the official position adopted by the Fatah leadership which continued to back Salam Fayyad government in the WB and continued to accuse Hamas of dividing the Palestinian people and territories.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Cordesman, *op. cit.*, pp. 79–90.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁹⁸ See Archives and Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *al-‘Udwan al-Israeli ‘Ala Qita’ Ghazzah (27/12/2008–18/1/2009)*.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Chapter Three

The Egyptian Foreign Policy Response to the 2008/2009 Gaza War

The Egyptian Foreign Policy Response to the 2008/2009 Gaza War

Introduction

Being the leader of the “Moderate Camp” meant that Egyptian foreign policy had to go in line with the American policies in the Middle East. Since the 1948 Arab-Israeli War onwards, the Palestinian cause remained an important one in which Egypt had great influence. The foreign policy of Egypt has been transformed over time but it never lost interest in the Palestinian cause. The 2008/2009 Gaza War was not an exception to this fact. This chapter will illustrate and analyze the Egyptian foreign policy towards Palestine and the Palestinians, especially, during the time of the 2008/2009 Gaza War.

First: The Foreign Policy of Egypt

“Egypt is the most important country in the world,” Napoleon Bonaparte is reported to have said. Thomas Friedman, reiterated the same idea, albeit in more modest terms, when he called Egypt; “center of gravity of the Arab world.”¹

Egypt is, undoubtedly, the cultural leader of the Arab World, and has, geopolitically speaking, the most strategic location and features in this region. Egypt not only stands as the most populated Arab state (with over a quarter of the Arab world population), but also appears as the center where “every social, intellectual and political movement of note in the Arab world finds its roots.”²

More than any other country in the Middle East, Egypt fits the classic model of a nation state perfectly.³ Almost 98% of the Egyptian people are Egyptians who share a common history, language and culture. This gives Egyptian policy makers a better ability to shape a dynamic and effective foreign policy. Although Egypt faces tough economic, social and political challenges, the country remains a middle power with many resources at its disposal.

¹ E. Lust, *The Middle East* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, SAGE Publications, Inc., 2011), p. 387.

² *Ibid.*

³ L. Carl Brown, *Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers* (London: I. B. Tauris and Co Ltd., 2004), p. 97.

For the sake of this study the Egyptian foreign policy is categorized into two periods; before and during the era of former President Mohammad Husni Mubarak (1980–2011). The Egyptian foreign policy is, hence, analyzed accordingly.

1. Egyptian Foreign Policy Before Mubarak

Throughout the last six decades of the Egyptian republic, its foreign policy underwent two major processes of foreign policy restructuring.⁴ The first one was during the early days of President Gamal Abdel Nasser's rule (1954–1970), and the second was during the days of President Anwar Sadat (1970–1981). The foreign policy of the era of President Husni Mubarak was characterized by stability and continuity.

According to Korany and Dessouki,⁵ *Foreign Policy Restructuring* refers to “major alteration or breakup in the orientation of an actor in favor of establishing a new set of commitments and alliances.” Only a change in the patterns of a country's diplomatic, military, cultural, and commercial relations with the outside world can suggest a change in its orientation, consequently a foreign policy restructuring.⁶

a. Nasser's Egypt

In the first process of restructuring during the mid–1950s, Nasser led a series of confrontations with the United Kingdom (UK), France, and the US and moved closer to the Soviet Union and the Eastern Camp. In his analysis of Egypt's spheres of influence, Nasser gave priority to the Arab, African, and Islamic spheres. This was reflected in his policies throughout his rule.⁷

Nasser adopted Pan-Arabism as his state ideology and led Egypt and the Arab world into several armed conflicts with Israel.⁸ Nasser's radical version of Pan-Arabism was perceived as a threat by many conservative Arab monarchies which saw his ideal of a political Arab unity as equivalent to overthrowing

⁴ Bahgat Korany and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Globalization* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2009), p. 167.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Egyptian Foreign Policy Between Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Muhammad Husni Mubarak, retrieved 9/6/2013 from https://sites.google.com/site/misraffairs/readings/egypt_fp (in Arabic)

⁸ Hasan Abu Talib, *'Alaqaat Misr al-'Arabiyyah 1970–1981 (Marhalat al-Sadat)* (Egypt's Arab Relations 1970–1981 (During the Time of Sadat)) (Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1998), pp. 53–55.

them out of power.⁹ These regimes were more interested in maintaining the *status quo* and capitalized on Egypt's ongoing confrontation with Israel by pushing Nasser to stay engaged in this struggle. This struggle meant he would be busy challenging Israel rather than challenging them.¹⁰

Nasser's foreign policy paid attention to national liberation movements worldwide and he portrayed himself as one of the top charismatic leaders of the newly decolonized developing countries. This policy granted Nasser a significant influence in the African arena, which was witnessing the rise of national self-determination movements.¹¹ Nasser was also among the supporters of the newly born PLO in the mid-1960s. In fact, the Palestinians were inspired by the success of the Algerian Revolution, which Nasser also supported, and hence created their own national liberation framework in 1964.¹²

On the regional level, although Egypt emerged as the leader of the Arab world, the country was defeated militarily in its major armed confrontations with the West-backed Israel; in 1956 and 1967. The last of these defeats, the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, was viewed by some Egyptians and Arabs as a sign of the failure of Nasser's domestic and foreign policies.¹³

Domestically, the 1967 defeat triggered unprecedented public protests in February and October 1968. This public anger led Nasser to blame his Socialist Union, Egypt's only political party, for its failure to represent public interests.¹⁴ It is argued that, the era of Abdel Nasser witnessed significant foreign policy activism for Egypt at the expense of its internal social and economic development. Nasser suppressed domestic opposition to his rule and hindered the progress of democracy in Egypt. He adopted a one-party system which impeded democracy and restricted freedoms and human rights. Moreover, head opted socialist economic policies that weakened Egypt's economy.¹⁵

⁹ Salwa Sha'rawi Jum'ah, *Al-Dublamasiyyah al-Misriyyah fi 'Iqd al-Sab'inat: Dirasah fi Mawdu' al-Za'amah* (Egyptian Diplomacy in the 1970s: A Study on the issue of Leadership) (Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1988), pp. 33–35.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 35–36.

¹¹ Egyptian Foreign Policy Between Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Muhammad Husni Mubarak.

¹² Mohsen Saleh (ed.), *Munazzamat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyyah: Taqyym al-Tajribah wa I'adat al-Bina'* (Palestinian Liberation Organization: Evaluating the Experience and Restructuring) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2007), p. 23.

¹³ Egyptian Foreign Policy Between Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Muhammad Husni Mubarak.

¹⁴ Ali al-Din Hilal, *Al-Nizam al-Siyasi al-Misri Bayna Irth al-Madi wa Afaq al-Mustaqbal 1981–2010* (Egyptian Political System: Between the Heritage of the Past and the Prospects of the Future) (Cairo: The Egyptian-Lebanese House, 2010), p. 305.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 303–305.

Regionally, Egypt had to come to truce with its Arab rivals, especially the conservative oil-producing Gulf monarchies, because the country was in dire need of their economic aid after the war. Egypt's economy was devastated in the 1967 War because of its loss of Sinai oilfields, the closure of the Suez Canal, and the collapse of tourism.¹⁶ This economic challenge crippled Egyptian foreign policy for years to come.

All in all, despite these military defeats and the weakened Egyptian economy, many still view Nasser as the man who transformed Egypt's politics and society and made the country a key player in the international politics of the Middle East.

b. Sadat's Egypt

The second foreign policy restructuring took place in the mid-1970s during the time of President Anwar Sadat.¹⁷ Sadat departed from the economic, social, and political norms he inherited from his predecessor. His domestic and foreign policies were not like those of Nasser, he highlighted this when he told American President Jimmy Carter, that it is wrong to see him as, simply, Nasser's successor, because his real predecessor was Ramses the Second.¹⁸

On the domestic level, Sadat liberalized the country's economy breaking away with the socialist policies of Nasser, this economic transformation, however, created serious socio-economic challenges including a public uprising in 1979, dubbed the "Revolution of the Hungry."¹⁹

Sadat's domestic transformation included changing the country's constitution and setting up a multi-party system along with more political openness.²⁰ This transformation was coupled with an improvement in the regime's relations with the main opposition groups like the Wafd Party and the MB.

Sadat's foreign policy marked the end of the era of Pan-Arabism.²¹ Sadat viewed Egypt's national identity to be more of an Egyptian identity than that of an Arab one.²²

¹⁶ Jum'ah, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

¹⁷ Korany and Dessouki, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

¹⁸ Hilal, *Al-Nizam al-Siyasi al-Misri Bayna Irth al-Madi wa Afaq al-Mustaqbal 1981–2010*, p. 309; and Jum'ah, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

¹⁹ Abu Talib, *op. cit.*, p. 65; and Hilal, *Al-Nizam al-Siyasi al-Misri Bayna Irth al-Madi wa Afaq al-Mustaqbal 1981–2010*, p. 308.

²⁰ Hilal, *Al-Nizam al-Siyasi al-Misri Bayna Irth al-Madi wa Afaq al-Mustaqbal 1981–2010*, pp. 305–308.

²¹ Korany and Dessouki, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

²² Jum'ah, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–69.

On the international level, Egypt's alliance with the Soviet Union was severely affected when, in July 1972, Sadat expelled thousands of Soviet military and economic advisors and technicians from the country.²³ Sadat then turned to the US for economic assistance and Egypt became "the second-largest recipient, after Israel, of U.S. bilateral foreign assistance."²⁴

After both Egypt and Israel signed the 1979 Peace Treaty, the two countries received billions of American dollars from the US. The US outlined its commitments to the two countries in "two separate memoranda accompanying the treaty."²⁵ In its letter to Egypt, the Carter Administration pledged to "enter into an expanded security relationship with Egypt with regard to the sales of military equipment and services and the financing of at least a portion of those sales."²⁶

It is argued that Sadat believed Egypt could play the role of America's main regional ally in the Middle East. A role, he thought, Egypt could play much better than Israel.²⁷

Interestingly, Sadat started his era with the same rhetoric of his predecessor; he promised to fight Israel and restore the occupied Arab territories. Although he waged a war on Israel in 1973, Sadat's post-1973 policies proved that this war was merely a political maneuver to strengthen his position in an upcoming peace process with Israel.

Sadat's foreign policy upset his Arab partners and his infamous visit to Israel, in November 1977, led to the expulsion of Egypt from the Arab League and an unprecedented decade-long of Arab boycott. The Arab League headquarters was moved from Cairo to Tunis from 1979 until 1989 when Egypt returned to the Arab folds.

Although Sadat's peace with Israel was much celebrated in the West, it faced a huge protest domestically and led to his assassination in October 1981. This paved the way for another army General to succeed Sadat, his deputy, Muhammad Husni Mubarak.

2. Egyptian Foreign Policy During Mubarak's Rule

The foreign policy of Mubarak was a continuation of the foreign policy of the Sadat era as it did not witness any attempt of major restructuring. A study by

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 61–62.

²⁴ Jeremy M. Sharp, "Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations," Congressional Research Service (CRS), Report for Congress, 26/2/2013, p. 7, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/206129.pdf>

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Jum'ah, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

Fillinger concluded that,²⁸ Egyptian foreign policy during Mubarak's time was determined by "Mubarak's desire to guarantee the influence and power of Egypt throughout the region, as well as a need for Mubarak to guarantee the security of his regime."²⁹

Mubarak's foreign policy was marked by a significant congruence with the American foreign policy in the Middle East despite the occurrence of a few incidents of disagreement between the two.³⁰ One case of disagreement was Egypt's insistence that the US compel Israel to join the non-proliferation treaty along with Egypt, in the mid-1990s, something the US refused to do.³¹

As a continuation of Sadat's foreign policy, Egypt remained the regional leader of the "Moderate Camp" during the time of Mubarak. The Moderate states are those Middle Eastern states whose foreign policies complied with the American policies and interests in the region.

Egypt's alliance with the US remained strong throughout the years of Mubarak's rule and the country continued to receive large amounts of American economic and military aid. The economic aid received included "large amounts of annual economic loans and grants, mainly to support large-scale USAID infrastructure projects in sanitation, education, and telecommunications."³² Although Mubarak welcomed this American aid, he strictly "rejected U.S. assistance for democracy promotion activities."³³ This rejection tensed the bilateral relations between Egypt and the US briefly during the Bush Administration, which prioritized democratization, but the overall relation remained strong.

For many US policymakers, the key US goals from relations with Egypt are; "Egypt's peace with Israel, U.S. access to the Suez Canal, and general bilateral military cooperation."³⁴ For Mubarak, the US was the Superpower which dominated the international political system and which was capable of protecting his regime. Mubarak appeared to be a very important asset for the Americans in the post 11/9/2001 incidents as he became America's man in the "counter-terrorism efforts and the Arab Israeli peace process."³⁵

²⁸ Eric Fillinger, *Mubarak Matters: The Foreign Policy of Egypt under Hosni Mubarak*, unpublished bachelor's thesis, American University, 2009.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁰ Korany and Dessouki, *op. cit.*; and Brown, *op. cit.*

³¹ Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

³² Sharp, "Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations," p. 10.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Jeremy M. Sharp, "Egypt: The January 25 Revolution and Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy," CRS, Report for Congress, 11/2/2011, p. 14, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/157112.pdf>

³⁵ Sabri, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

As for Egyptian-Israeli relations during Mubarak's time, it is noticeable that this relation managed to withstand for over 30 years despite the many challenges. For instance, Egypt recalled its Ambassador from Tel Aviv after the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, later on, the country resumed its relations with Israel and Mubarak emerged as the broker of Arab Israeli relations. Mubarak remained loyal to Sadat's Peace Treaty and Egyptian-Israeli cooperation continued through the 2000s and reached an unprecedented level of coordination after Hamas seizure of power in Gaza.³⁶ Israel deeply appreciated Mubarak's position to the extent that he was once described as a "Strategic Treasure" for Israel by Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, Israel's industry and trade minister.³⁷ It is noticeable; however, that Mubarak, unlike his predecessor, never visited Israel throughout his rule.

On the regional level, Mubarak attempted in the early 1980s to bring Egypt back to the folds of the Arab League. Egyptian politician and diplomat, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, wrote in *Foreign Affairs* in 1982 that Egypt "has every intention of assuming fully her responsibilities as an Arab country."³⁸

Considerations of Mubarak's Foreign Policy

According to Boutros-Ghali, the foreign policy of a country is "the sum of various geopolitical, historical and economic components."³⁹ Boutros-Ghali asserts that "these same components have influenced and shaped the foreign policy of Egypt" from the time of Nasser to that of Mubarak.⁴⁰

Several considerations have shaped the Egyptian foreign policy in recent years. Among these considerations are; the evaluation of Egypt's geopolitical location and identity, the primacy of Egypt's internal economic problems, and the leader's approach to Egyptian public opinion.⁴¹

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Site of Islam Times, 9/6/2010, <http://www.islamtimes.org/vdcjmhe8.uqeaxz29fu.html>

³⁸ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "The Middle East: The Foreign Policy of Egypt in the Post-Sadat Era," *Foreign Affairs* magazine, Council on Foreign Relations, New York, spring 1982, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/36186/boutros-boutros-ghali/the-middle-east-the-foreign-policy-of-egypt-in-the-post-sadat-er>

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Al-Sayyid Amin Shalabi, A Fourth Era of Egyptian foreign Policy, *Al-Ahram* newspaper, Cairo, 23/3/2013. (in Arabic)

a. Egypt's Geopolitical Location and National Identity

The main consideration is Egypt's geopolitical location and identity. Egypt can be categorized in many different ways depending on how its leaders and policy makers identify their nation. The country is Egyptian, first, with an ancient history and civilization. It has a homogeneous Egyptian population. Secondly, it is an Arab country that is located in the heart of the Arab World and has about one third of its population. Thirdly, Egypt has an African identity as the Nile, which rises from the heart of Africa, is the source of the Egyptian life. Fourthly, the country is an Islamic nation which hosts Al-Azhar, the most prestigious institution of Islamic scholarship in the world, and has the most important Muslim scholars of this age. Fifthly, Egypt is a Mediterranean nation whose long history of interactions with the nations of this sea cannot be ignored. Finally, Egypt is a leading developing country and was a founding member of the Non-aligned Movement, which gives it another important identity.

The many identities explored above and the different orders they can follow have always had an impact on how Egyptian leadership shaped Egyptian foreign policy. Nasser for example saw Egypt as an Arab nation first, while Sadat viewed Egypt as an Egyptian nation first, thus their foreign policies varied.⁴²

Mubarak maintained the view that Egypt was both an Arab and Egyptian nation. This explains his policy of rapprochement with the Arab World. Mubarak inherited an isolated Egypt which was boycotted by most Arab countries for its Camp David Peace Treaty with Israel. Over the years of the 1980s Mubarak tried to approach the Arab World and break the isolation that Egypt was forced into. It was not until 1987, in Amman Summit, that this isolation ended when Egypt reconciled with its Arab partners.⁴³

As for the African dimension, although Egypt was a natural friend of most African nations, Mubarak neglected Egypt's African relations for a long while.⁴⁴ This is very true in the case of some important African states like Ethiopia and Sudan. Egypt-Sudan relations remained superficial during Mubarak's rule, while Egypt-Ethiopia relations received decreasing attention especially after the failed assassination attempt Mubarak faced in Ethiopia in 1994.

⁴² Jum'ah, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–69.

⁴³ Egyptian Foreign Policy Between Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Muhammad Husni Mubarak.

⁴⁴ Hasan Nafi'ah, Foundations and Pillars of Egyptian Foreign Policy in the Era of Mubarak, site of Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 13/10/2011, <http://studies.aljazeera.net/files/2011/08/20118873617259806.htm> (in Arabic)

b. The Primacy of Internal Economic Problems

The second consideration for Mubarak's foreign policy was Egypt's internal economic problems. This was the same in the case of Sadat as both presidents paid attention to Egypt's limited resources and deteriorating economic situation. Among the distinct features of Mubarak's Egypt is its reliance on foreign economic assistance for decades.

Since the end of World War II, Egypt relied heavily on foreign aid due to economic difficulties, however, the source of aid changed over time. By the end of Sadat's era, the US became the main source of foreign aid.⁴⁵ This was maintained throughout the three decades of Mubarak's rule.⁴⁶

Although some might argue that maintaining this aid over this long period was a foreign policy success, the very fact that there was a continued reliance on foreign aid puts serious constraints on the options of the Egyptian foreign policy maker.⁴⁷

c. The Leader's Approach to Egyptian Public Opinion

Egypt has undergone several revolutions in the last two centuries, some against foreign occupation and some against tyrant rulers. The country, however, failed to establish a sustainable democracy. Egyptian public opinion has never been of an important significance to the ruling elites because of the lack or absence of civil society and representative political parties. Egypt witnessed its first multi-cornered presidential elections only in 2005, and the inevitable winner was President Mubarak himself who won his fifth term with 88.6% of the votes.⁴⁸ This election was marred by allegations of fraud in addition to the low voter turnout (23%) which indicated lack of trust in the transparency of the elections in the first place.⁴⁹

Throughout the rule of Mubarak, Egypt witnessed an unprecedented level of corruption. Egypt's international ranking in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index was 105 out of 179 countries in the year 2007.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Sharp, "Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations," p. 7.

⁴⁶ Korany and Dessouki, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁴⁸ Hilal, *Al-Nizam al-Siyasi al-Misri Bayna Irth al-Madi wa Afaq al-Mustaqbal 1981–2010*, p. 131; and Jeremy M. Sharp, "Egypt: 2005 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections," CRS, Report for Congress, 21/9/2005, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/54274.pdf>

⁴⁹ Sharp, "Egypt: 2005 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections."

⁵⁰ See International Rankings of Egypt, Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_rankings_of_Egypt

Moreover, the country's economy suffered serious problems while the economic disparity between the haves and have-nots broke records.

The country maintained a democratic façade, with handicapped democratic institutions such as parliament and elections. However, ultimate power was in the hands of the president and a few personnel close to him and to his family. It seemed as if the country was set for a dynastic succession of power for the president's son; Gamal Mubarak. The country was a good example of a durable authoritarianism.⁵¹

This situation presented very few, if any, domestic constraints on the Egyptian foreign policy maker as the leaders did not have to justify their policies or seek public support for them. Moreover, Egyptian foreign policy maker had little structural and institutional constraints and barriers than what policy makers in democratic systems had. Mubarak enjoyed this situation for 30 years of his rule.

This illustration, however, changed after the 2011 Egyptian Revolution that brought an end to the rule of Mubarak. Egyptian policy makers now have to worry about being elected again in the next election. The levels of freedom of expression and media freedom have also improved significantly making it impossible for Egyptian foreign policy makers to ignore domestic public opinion anymore.

Second: Egypt and the Palestinian Cause

Historically and geographically, the relation between Egypt and Palestine is one of sisters. Historically, the powers that ruled Egypt always attempted to control Palestine and the powers that ruled Historical Syria (with Palestine as its southern part) attempted to control Egypt. The Byzantines, the Umayyads, the Crusades, the Fatimids, the Ayyubids, the Mamluks, the Ottomans, Napoleon, the British and the contemporary rulers of Egypt and Palestine have always tended to extend their domination over the two countries.

This historical dimension helps explain some of the causes of the modern day rivalry between Egypt and Israel. The fact that Egyptians and Palestinians are both Arab Muslim neighbors and that Egypt entered several wars against Israel further explains the Egyptian connection with Palestine and the Palestinians.

In 1948, when Israel declared its independence, Egypt along with other fellow Arab countries sent its ill-prepared underequipped troops to fight the better-trained and better-equipped Israeli troops. The country lost the war and

⁵¹ Lust, *op. cit.*, p. 388.

this humiliating experience led to a military coup in 1952 dubbed the Egyptian Revolution.

Many of the leaders of this revolution participated in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and were not pleased with the rise of the Israeli state in their backyard. Over the years to come, Nasser encouraged and facilitated the birth, in 1965, and rise of the PLO which assumed the leadership of the Palestinian people.

The Camp David Accords and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaties were viewed as a betrayal for the Palestinian cause by the PLO and other Arab regimes mainly because Egypt did not consult or coordinate its endeavor with the Palestinians or other fellow Arabs.⁵² Mubarak defended Sadat's position and followed on his footsteps in promoting a peaceful solution of the Arab-Israeli Conflict.⁵³

Egypt remained the Palestinians' Mecca throughout the following decades. Ever since the rise of Hamas in the Palestinian political arena, Egypt remained the patron of internal Palestinian reconciliation talks and despite of Mubarak's close ties with Israel and his view of Hamas as an opponent, Egypt continued to host Palestinian reconciliation meetings in which Hamas was a main participant. Hamas, on its side, never denounced Mubarak directly and reiterated its appreciation of Egypt's role in the Palestinian issue, despite of the restrictions imposed by the Mubarak regime on its rule in Gaza.

Third: The Egyptian Foreign Policy Response to the 2008/2009 Gaza War

On the first day of the attack, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmad Abu Elgheit called both Israel and Hamas to return to ceasefire and restore calm. However, he blamed Hamas for the escalation. He said in a press conference on 27/12/2008: "we sought [by inviting Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni to Cairo] to abort this operation."⁵⁴

Abu Elgheit claimed that 60 missiles were fired from Gaza in the same night Livni reached Egypt, implying that Hamas was trying to undermine Egyptian efforts to restore peace. Eventually, after the start of the war, the Egyptian ambassador in Israel returned home and Abu Elgheit summoned the Israeli Ambassador in Cairo to express Egypt's total rejection of the aggression.⁵⁵

⁵² Sabri, op. cit., pp. 48–49.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ *Al-Khaleej* newspaper, al-Shariqa, 28/12/2008.

⁵⁵ *Al-Khaleej*, 28/12/2008.

A day later Qatar called for an Emergency Arab Summit to be held for Gaza. This, however, was objected to by the Egyptian foreign minister who said priority was for the ceasefire not the summit.⁵⁶ Egypt continued to exert pressure on Hamas and called it several times to end its rocket attacks on Israel. The latter refused to end its retaliation before Israel ended its attack. Egypt also contacted the five permanent members of the United Nations (UN) Security Council and asked them to pass a resolution that calls for an end to the Israeli attacks.⁵⁷

On 7/1/2009 the Egyptian foreign minister presented an Egyptian Initiative to the UN Security Council which called for an immediate ceasefire, the start of dialogue and the renewal of the Egyptian call for PA and Palestinian factions to resume national unity talks.⁵⁸ Two weeks later, Israel declared a unilateral cease fire without consulting Egypt and ended its war on Gaza.

An important feature of the Egyptian position was that its government did not take a “hostile stand towards Israel.”⁵⁹ The reason for that is because Egypt continued to view Hamas as an extremist Islamist movement tied to the MB. Hamas was, therefore, considered a security threat by the Egyptian authorities. In a televised speech on 30/12/2008, Mubarak maintained the position that opening the Rafah Crossing would only happen if the Abbas-led PA takes charge of the border point, an offer Hamas could never accept.⁶⁰

Another feature was the huge Egyptian public anger expressed in the country’s media and public spheres. The Egyptian people blamed Israel for the suffering in Gaza, not Hamas, making it difficult for Egyptian officials to continue blaming Hamas instead of Israel.⁶¹

Fourth: The Factors Influencing the Egyptian Foreign Policy Response to the 2008/2009 Gaza War

Considering that Egypt is a major member of the Arab regional system, and that its foreign policy is influenced, like other Arab states, by several domestic and external factors, it is necessary to trace and analyze the impact

⁵⁶ *Alittihad* newspaper, Abu Dhabi, 29/12/2008.

⁵⁷ *Addustour* newspaper, Amman, 5/1/2009.

⁵⁸ *Al-Ahram*, 8/1/2009.

⁵⁹ Cordesman, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

these factors had on Egyptian policy-makers during the war. The five factors are; Arab Nationalism, Islam, Economic Concerns, Security Concerns, and Type of Alliance.

1. Arab Nationalism

Arab nationalism refers to the sense of belonging to the greater Arab *Ummah* (nation). It denotes Pan-Arabism that was championed in the 1950s and 1960s by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Although this notion declined in recent years, it still draws sympathy from the Arab masses in most Arab countries especially in Egypt and Syria.

Mubarak's Egypt did not claim championing Arab nationalism anymore, but it was still considered by other Arab states as the leader of the Arab regional system. Mubarak's foreign policy was more towards considering Egypt's national interests rather than Arab national interests. This can be seen in many of his speeches where he stressed that "Egypt's interests are above any other consideration" and that Egypt's national security must be preserved and should not be risked for any reason.⁶²

This shift from prioritizing Arab national interests and Arab collective security to prioritizing Egyptian national interests alone surely had an effect on the Egyptian position from Hamas as well as the Palestinian Issue as a whole. Egyptian masses protested against their government's weak position towards Israel and called for public strikes and other forms of public disobedience to push their government for a firmer stand against the Israeli government.⁶³ However, these voices were ignored and the Egyptian government continued to maintain close ties with the Israeli government. The Israeli Embassy in Cairo was not closed during the Israeli attack on Gaza proving that Arab Nationalism was declining as a factor in the foreign policy making in Egypt. During the days of Nasser, when Arab Nationalism was at its peak, no Israeli attack on another Arab country could go without a serious response.

2. Islam

Islam is yet another important consideration in the comparison of foreign policies of Arab states. Sunni Muslims constitute the vast majority of the Egyptian population with 90% of the total population of around 90 million being Sunni Muslim. The remaining 10% of the population is made of Coptic Christians alongside a tiny minority of other Christians. Palestinians are also

⁶² *Al-Ahram*, 31/1/2008.

⁶³ *Alarab* newspaper, Doha, 12/1/2009.

Sunni Muslims with a small percentage of Arab Christians. Both Egypt and the PA are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation or OIC (previously known as the Organization of Islamic Conference).

During Mubarak's rule, the MB was the main opposition group in Egypt. The MB is a transnational reformist Islamist movement that has strong grassroots support in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab and Muslim Worlds. It is a movement that asserts the "comprehensive nature of Islamic thought, seeing Islam not merely in terms of religious observance but as an integral way of life."⁶⁴

During the 2008/2009 War on Gaza, the MB mobilized thousands of its members and supporters to demonstrate their anger over the position of the Egyptian government from Hamas and other Palestinian resistance groups.⁶⁵ The movement announced that thousands of its members and leaders were arrested by Egyptian security in 2008 and 2009, many of whom due to their participation in activities supporting the Palestinians during the war.⁶⁶ The Egyptian government perceived Hamas as the Palestinian version of the MB and assumed that any concessions to Hamas meant a concession to the Egyptian MB; an idea Mubarak could not tolerate.

Knowing the significance of the Palestinian cause as an Islamic issue in the eyes of many Egyptians; the Egyptian government had to tolerate with the Egyptian public anger at Israel. Public opinion was clearly against the Israeli operation, to the extent that the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Ali Goma, described the attack as "a new Holocaust that exceeds the one Jews went through."⁶⁷ Scholars of Al-Azhar, the foremost Islamic Institution of religious teaching in the Muslim World, expressed their support for the Palestinian resistance on many occasions.⁶⁸ Knowing the role and size of Al-Azhar, Egyptian policymakers had to take its position into account.

This complex pattern of positions and considerations made it difficult for the Egyptian government to downplay the role of Islam in foreign policy making. However, this role was minimal, and did not compel Egypt's foreign policy makers to act aggressively in response to the Israeli attacks.

⁶⁴ El-Awaisi, *op. cit.*, p. ix.

⁶⁵ *Al-Khaleej*, 3/1/2009.

⁶⁶ *Assafir* newspaper, Beirut, 26/1/2009.

⁶⁷ *Al-Ahram*, 6/1/2009.

⁶⁸ *Al-Khaleej*, 9/1/2009.

3. Economic Concerns

Egypt is a densely populated country, ranked 16th internationally in 2007, with a relatively small GDP of \$158.3 billion. In 2007, the country ranked 115 out of 179 countries on the International Monetary Fund list of countries according to their GDP (nominal) per capita.⁶⁹

Although Egypt has adopted a liberal economic model and is fully integrated in the world economy, the country's economy is suffering from; reliance on foreign aid (especially from the US), and failure to generate jobs for a rapidly growing population.⁷⁰

In addition to these economic difficulties, Egypt has economic ties with Israel, as it used to supply Israel with tons of natural gas shipments daily.⁷¹ These economic ties make it more difficult for Egyptian foreign policy makers to decide freely on matters of war and peace with Israel.

The impact of the economic concerns on the Mubarak's government was significant. The Egyptian officials usually cited economic development as the main reason for their call to maintain peace and stability in the region. In fact, Egypt has, since the time of Sadat maintained an interest in having a stable region. This continued throughout the time of Mubarak and that explains Egypt's leading role in mediating ceasefires and truces between Israel and the Palestinians. The role economic concerns play in foreign policy making is, hence, important but it does not seem to be the most influential.

4. Security Concerns

National security as a factor influencing foreign policy making refers to how a country perceives its enemies and other security threats. It refers here to the fear from the possibility that an enemy would carry out a military attack on one's territory. It also includes non-traditional security threats related to armed conflicts and "terrorism."

The 1978 Camp David Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel changed the security perspective of both states. Throughout Mubarak's rule, Israel was not considered a strategic threat. Hamas, on the other hand, was seen as a new security threat due to its Islamic background and its perceived ties with the Egyptian MB. The movement's activities in Gaza like smuggling of weapons from the Sinai Peninsula were considered by the Egyptian government as acts of "terrorism." Several Hamas activists were detained in Egypt due to

⁶⁹ See International Rankings of Egypt, Wikipedia.

⁷⁰ Lust, *op. cit.*, pp. 388–399.

⁷¹ Site of Ikhwanonline, 12/1/2009, <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/>

accusations of smuggling weapons into the GS. Mubarak maintained that “Egypt would close its border crossings with Gaza until the Palestinian Authority regained control.”⁷² Days after the attacks Mubarak said: “We in Egypt are not going to contribute to perpetuating the rift (between Abbas and Gaza’s Hamas rulers) by opening the Rafah crossing in the absence of the Palestinian Authority and EU observers.”⁷³ Israel welcomed this Egyptian position and recommended that “the Egyptian and international role in preventing smuggling be strengthened.”⁷⁴

Throughout the war, Egyptian officials and media continued to accuse Hamas of violating Egyptian sovereignty and breaking into Egyptian borders, something Hamas continued to deny and condemn. On 28/12/2008, the Egyptian government accused Hamas of “shooting dead an Egyptian border soldier.”⁷⁵ Hamas denied doing so and assured the Egyptians it was concerned about Egyptian national security as much as it was concerned about Palestinian national security.⁷⁶ Egyptian officials accused Hamas of serving the agendas of foreign powers alluding to the strong ties the movement had with Iran. The movement refused these claims and stressed on the fact that it was a national liberation movement that welcomes the support of anyone willing to help.⁷⁷

This survey of Egyptian security concerns and its perceptions about Hamas highlight the significance of this factor of Egyptian foreign policy making and Egypt’s response to the war. Recalling that regime security was essential for Mubarak, one should conclude that security concerns had the most important impact on Egypt’s response to the Gaza War.

5. Type of Alliance

There are many patterns of alliance in this world. In case of the Middle East, two patterns were most dominant; one of the Moderate states allied to the US, and another of the Defiant states allied against the American policies in the region.

Egypt continued to be the leader of the first camp despite of its public denouncing of such categorization. The Egyptian regime of Husni Mubarak

⁷² Cordesman, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 77–78.

⁷⁴ Eran Etzion, “The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Situation Assessment for 2008–2009,” *Strategic Assessment*, INSS, vol. 12, no. 1, June 2009, p. 54.

⁷⁵ *Al-Ahram*, 30/12/2008.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Alquds* newspaper, 26/12/2008.

always viewed Hamas as a proxy for Iran and as an obstacle to peace in the Middle East.⁷⁸ Egypt's relations with Iran in the post-1979 Iranian Revolution era deteriorated drastically especially after Sadat hosted the deposed Shah in 1979. Mubarak backed Saddam Hussain in the Iraqi-Iranian War throughout the 1980s and always considered Iran a regional foe. This included a "large-scale arms transfers to Iraq" in addition to sending "thousands of military advisors" and "finally, Egypt sent civilian workers to Iraq to assist Iraq's economy."⁷⁹ This history of Egyptian enmity with Iran made it more difficult for Egypt to accept an Islamist Palestinian government allied to Iran at its borders.

This pattern of Egyptian alliance with the US and Israel was initiated by President Sadat, who reoriented Egypt's foreign policy in the mid-1970s from an anti-American anti-Zionist one to a pro-American and pro-Western one. This Egyptian alliance with the US was very influential on Egypt's policy towards Hamas and on the decisions and actions of its policy-makers during the war.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Egypt's foreign policy was restructured twice during the twentieth century. Mubarak's period witnessed an extended continuity of Sadat's pro-US foreign policy. In the case of Mubarak, it is apparent that economic and security concerns, along with the type of alliance played a major role in shaping his foreign policy towards the Palestinian issue.

⁷⁸ Sama, 2/1/2009.

⁷⁹ Fillinger, op. cit., p. 28.

Chapter Four

*The Syrian Foreign Policy
Response to the 2008/2009
Gaza War*

The Syrian Foreign Policy Response to the 2008/2009 Gaza War

Introduction

As a major Arab member of the “Defiant Camp,” Syria has always maintained a state of enmity to Israel and the American designs for the region. Israel remains the main security threat to Syria. Countering this threat is the cornerstone of any Syrian foreign policy decision. This security perception was a key factor influencing Syria’s decision to back Hezbollah in its 2006 armed conflict with Israel.

Moreover, Syria hosted, over the last decade, leaders of several Palestinian Resistance factions, notably from Hamas and Islamic Jihad. When the 2008/2009 Gaza War broke out, Syria had to react to this attack on its principal Palestinian ally, Hamas. The “Defiant Camp” members, including Syria, reacted in various ways to the Israeli attack. Syria’s stature and active role in the Arab regional system makes its foreign policy response the most important of all the responses. The following sections elaborate on Syria’s reaction to the 2008/2009 Israeli attacks on Gaza, its foreign policy background and the factors shaping this policy.

First: The Foreign Policy of Syria

The land of current Syria was host to some of the greatest ancient civilizations. The country is located at the crossroads of the Old World and is surrounded by larger and stronger countries on the three land directions. This middle location made Syria a gift for competing powers and superpowers over the long course of history. Syria was the center of power in the region only during the time of the Umayyad Caliphate when Damascus dominated the whole Arab Peninsula, Persia and North Africa along with Andalusia (Spain and Portugal).

Syria as a nation-state emerged after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. The country was carved out of its natural surroundings, better known as Greater Syria or *Bilād Al-Shām*, by the colonial powers Britain and France in the infamous Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1917. The history of the birth of modern-day Syria explains the complex pattern of interactions, alliances, and conflicts among the various political and social groups and polities in Syria and the rest of the countries of *Bilād Al-Shām* (Greater Syria).

The abnormal birth of the country led to an identity crisis from which it is, arguably, still suffering. Syria was the birthplace of the idea of Pan-Arabism, and the main pioneers of the idea were Christian Syrian activists who were educated in Europe and returned, in the mid-nineteenth century, to Syria and Lebanon to spread the idea.¹ Syria championed Arab Nationalism for decades; it attempted to create a political Arab unity in its merger with Egypt in 1958, and is currently the last Arab country ruled by an Arab-nationalist regime.

Pan-Arab ideology became the state ideology during the Baath rule, since 1963, and Syria attempted at times, although with minimal success, to claim leadership of all Arabs including the stronger and more established Egyptians. The country reconciles its Pan-Arab Unity dream with a vision of a more united Greater Syria. In fact, despite Syria's recognition of the Jordanian and Lebanese independence, and the Palestinian right of self-determination, the successive regimes in Damascus never renounced the claim to Greater Syria.²

Ever since the Baath Party came to power in Damascus, Syria "has oriented its foreign policy to ideologically represent Arab nationalism and has based its legitimacy on playing this role."³

1. The Geopolitics of Syria

Syria has a relatively small size and a small population, yet, the country is surrounded by threats from all directions. The geopolitical position of the country makes survival from regional security threats a life-long foreign policy goal. This offers some explanations for the country's long lasting adherence to Arab unity and its history of seeking and entering political alliances and even politically uniting with other Arab states.

Syria, however, enjoys a geographical advantage with respect to Israel if compared with Egypt and Jordan both of which have long borders with Israel. Both Egypt and Jordan have lost large strategic territories in previous combats with Israel. Syria lost the Golan Heights too, but it is way less important than the Sinai for Egypt or the WB for Jordan.⁴

2. Syria's Foreign Policy Before the Assad's

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, France seized Syria (and Lebanon) and assumed it as one of its protectorates. During their rule, the French granted

¹ Korany and Dessouki, *op. cit.*, p. 423; and Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), pp. 29–32.

² Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

³ Korany and Dessouki, *op. cit.*, p. 431.

⁴ Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

the Christian minority in Mount Lebanon independence, reducing the already reduced Syrian territory. The Syrian people used armed struggle to force the French out. By 1946 the French left and Syria became independent.

However, foreign influence and domination continued and the country underwent a series of coups and instability. In 1958, Syria's ruling elite decided to merge with the largest Arab country; Egypt and form the United Arab Republic (UAR). This was, they thought, the best way to avoid instability and security threats. This long held dream of Arab unity did not last long as the country opted out of the union after a military coup in Damascus in 1961.

Again, the ruling elite had to face a situation of insecurity and regional instability. Baath came to power in 1963 through a military coup.⁵ Three years later another internal party coup saw two Alawite Generals assume power in Syria; Salah Jadid and Hafez al-Assad. Jadid became the de-facto leader, though a powerless Sunni president was maintained. Throughout his four years in leadership Jadid adopted an active idealist version of Arabism. Jadid aimed at uniting all Arab countries politically and sought to end the existence of Israel through military struggle. Yet, he probably underestimated his enemy and this resulted in the 1967 defeat and loss of the Golan Heights.

3. Syria's Foreign Policy During the Rule of the Assad's

The Assad Dynasty started with the rise of Hafez al-Assad (1970–2000) to power from within the ruling elite through a white coup against his partner in the 1966 internal coup General Salah Jadid.⁶ Assad consolidated his power by getting rid of his rivals in the Baath establishment and in the army and managed to survive internal dissension from the late 1970's until the early 1980's.⁷ The Assad Dynasty continued when Bashar al-Assad assumed the leadership of the Baath Party and the country, in 2000, after the demise of his father Hafez al-Assad.⁸

One common thing about the two Assads is their style of governance in which the president controls everything and is fully responsible for the decision making process. Foreign policy making is not an exception. The Assads successfully deprived all state institutions, including the Baath Party, of this role. The whole state was an instrument to execute their wishes and decisions. In fact, the role of

⁵ Raymond Hinnebusch, "The Ba'ath Party in Post-Ba'athist Syria: President, Party and the Struggle for 'Reform'," *Middle East Critique* journal, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Lund University, Lund, vol. 20, no. 2, summer 2011, pp. 109–110.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 112–114.

domestic institutions in policy making was reduced to approving and justifying the president's policies.⁹

It is important to note in the study of Syria that the Assad family comes from the Alawite minority which had no access to political power in the pre-Baath regime. Syria has been traditionally ruled by notables from the Sunni majority. This changed with the rise of the *Baath* Party although the early *Baath* leadership was a reflection of the diversity of Syria's religious and social fabric as it included members from the Sunni majority as well as the Christian, Druze and Alawite minorities.¹⁰

Alawites gained more access to government and public institutions only in the post-independence era. The army was one of these institutions and it is the one from which Hafez al-Assad and Salah Jadid emerged. By 1966, Alawites rose to power and over the following decades Alawite families had great access to wealth as well. Top army generals were mostly from this sect as the president trusted them more than others.

Coming from a small minority was a big challenge for the Assad family as they had to win legitimacy through creative means. In this context, Arab nationalism and an anti-Israel foreign policy were the major tools of legitimacy for the regime. Hence, foreign policy to the Assad's was more than just a foreign policy; it was an instrument of regime's legitimacy and survival.

a. Syria Under Hafez al-Assad

Assad ruled with an iron fist and did not tolerate any dissension and resorted to massive power to crush his opposition. A good example is his repression of the Islamist uprising of the Syrian MB in the early 1980's and the subsequent crackdown on Hama in 1982 which resulted in over 30 thousand casualties.¹¹

Assad was realistic and pragmatic in applying his principles. This was demonstrated in his relations with the US as well as his behavior in the Arab World. For instance, although Assad "held the common belief that Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon were parts of natural Syria, which had been disjointed by imperialism" he accepted their sovereignty and independence "as long as they cooperated with Syria against their common enemies."¹²

⁹ Korany and Dessouki, *op. cit.*, p. 431.

¹⁰ Hinnebusch, "The Ba'th Party in Post-Ba'thist Syria: President, Party and the Struggle for 'Reform'," p. 109.

¹¹ Bassam Haddad, "Syria's Stalemate: The Limits of Regime Resilience," *Middle East Policy* journal, Middle East Policy Council, Washington, DC, vol. XIX, no. 1, spring 2012, p. 86.

¹² Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

During the Cold War, Assad succeeded, to some extent, in making use of the superpower rivalry to Syria's advantage. He continued to receive huge economic and military aid from the Soviet Union required for the Assad regime's survival.

After the fall of the Soviet Union and the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait, Syria joined the US and "moderate" Arab governments in their Alliance and the military operation against Iraq. This can be read as an attempt to appease the rising sole superpower. In return, Syria was granted a free hand in Lebanon and received loads of financial aid from Gulf countries.

Assad's relation with Iraq was an interesting paradox. Although the two countries were ruled by the same party; the Baath, and championed the same causes; Arab Unity and Anti-Zionism, the rivalry between them never ended. Assad viewed Saddam as a threat to his regime and continued his policy of enmity with Iraq till his demise.

On the other hand, Assad forged a holy alliance with Iraq's other rival; the post-Islamic Revolution Iran. Relations with Iran grew stronger over the years and Syria continued to back the Islamic Republic in its war against Iraq. This alliance might be explained by Syria's geopolitical rivalry with Iraq and by the now-obvious sectarian connection between the Alawites and the Shiites.

b. Syria Under Bashar al-Assad

The primary Syrian foreign policy goal during Bashar Al-assad's reign remained the same; "to place itself [Syria] at the center of regional politics." This goal is, however, beyond Syria's economic, political and military capacity, hence, "the regime had to pursue skillful, and to a great extent, unorthodox tactics to secure its bid for hegemony."¹³

Although Bashar came from a background different from that of his father, and had a radically different political socialization experience, he inherited certain political and diplomatic skills from him. The British-educated ophthalmologist sought a regional role by improving his country's relations with some regional actors like Egypt and KSA while strengthening his ties with Iran and some non-state actors like Hamas and Hezbollah.

Bashar introduced some liberal economic reforms in the state's weak socialist economy and emerged as a young reformer with whom Syria's mostly young population could identify. This image, however, did not last long as the country underwent a popular uprising seeking to oust Bashar and change the regime. This uprising should be viewed in the larger regional context of the ongoing "Arab Spring."

¹³ Korany and Dessouki, *op. cit.*, p. 437.

Bashar continued to view Israel as the main security threat for Syria and the Arabs and he did not fail to claim legitimacy for his regime from its anti-Israel foreign policy rhetoric. Arab nationalism was also recalled when necessary in order to rally support for his regime. After all, Syria's mostly Sunni Arab population harbored a lot of enmity towards Israel and its policies. Assad managed to make use of this proving that foreign policy can be used as a major source of regime legitimacy.¹⁴

Second: Syria and the Palestinian Cause

The conflict with Israel takes precedence in Syria over any other foreign policy consideration. In fact, Syrians feel more keenly about the loss of Palestine than other Arabs because Palestine was a part of historical Syria when it fell to the British. The loss of Palestine to the Zionists still stirs strong emotions among the Syrian people.¹⁵

Over the years, successive Syrian regimes strove to liberate Palestine through all means. Direct military confrontation in 1948, in 1967, and in 1973 as well as indirect encounters through backing Palestinian resistance groups were among the policies adopted by Damascus. Political boycott of Israel and lobbying against it were also employed for this cause. These efforts, however, have not born fruits yet.

Currently, over half a million Palestinian refugees live in Syria since the 1948 conflict. These refugees received a relatively better treatment than their fellow brothers in other Arab countries neighboring Palestine. They, however, were targeted several times and thousands of them fall victims of the ongoing Syrian crisis.

Although Bashar's Syria continued to view Israel as the main enemy and security threat, an attempt was made for peace with Israel through indirect talks mediated by Turkey in 2008. The talks collapsed and failed to achieve anything and Syria continued to insist that any Syrian-Israeli settlement should be part of a comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement that will include a Palestinian state.¹⁶

Despite of Syria's claim of championing Arab nationalism and Anti-Zionism, Syria failed to launch any operation against Israel since 1973, and its Golan borders remained calm since then. Although the outcome of the ongoing Syrian civil war is unclear, one fact remains present; Syria is the last Arab country in a formal state of war with Israel.

¹⁴ Leverett, *op. cit.*, pp. 224–225.

¹⁵ Korany and Dessouki, *op. cit.*, p. 430.

¹⁶ Lust, *op. cit.*, p. 695.

Third: The Syrian Foreign Policy Response to the 2008/2009 Gaza War

Upon the start of the Israeli attack on Gaza in 2008, a Syrian official told the Associated Press (AP) news agency that “the latest aggression closed all the doors for a settlement in the region.” Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad, told the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, that the UN should play its role “to guarantee an immediate end of the Israeli massacres committed against the unarmed Palestinian people in Gaza.”¹⁷

Syria blamed Israel for the attack and adopted Hamas’ position. However, Assad declared that the Syrian support for Hamas is only political. The Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Al-Muallem, confirmed that Syria would continue to back Arab Resistance and pointed out that President Assad will start a new regional round with the aim of holding an emergency Arab Summit. The Syrian support for Hamas, however, did not go beyond this political and media support. The Syrian front remained calm throughout the war despite many calls from the likes of Ahmad Jibril, leader of Palestinian Popular Front-General Command, who called for “opening all fronts with Israel to defend Gaza.”¹⁸

Although it offered only political support, Syria was instrumental in voicing out Hamas’ positions and demands. Syria also utilized its network of political relations in order to get the regional and international powers to pressure Israel to end its attack. The then-good Syrian-Turkish relations were utilized in this regard.¹⁹ After the war ended, Bashar received a delegation of leaders of the Palestinian resistance led by Khaled Meshal. He congratulated them for what he described as their “victory against Israel.” Meshal thanked Bashar for the Syrian support and called Syria “a partner in this victory.”²⁰

Fourth: The Factors Influencing the Syrian Foreign Policy Response to the 2008/2009 Gaza War

Since Syria is a key member of the Arab regional system, and because its foreign policy is influenced by several domestic and external factors, it is, therefore, necessary to analyze the impact of these factors on its foreign policy during the war. The following sections explain how these factors had an impact:

¹⁷ *Albayan* newspaper, Dubai, 29/12/2008.

¹⁸ See *al-Watan* newspaper, Doha, 9/1/2009; and site of Alwatan Online, 9/1/2009, <http://www.alwatan.com.sa/>

¹⁹ *Al-Sharq*, 16/1/2009.

²⁰ *Assafir*, 28/1/2009.

1. Arab Nationalism

Syria, the cradle of Arab nationalism, continued to champion the concept of Pan-Arabism throughout over seven decades of its independence. Baath Party; Syria's ruling party is the last Arab-nationalist party still in power. Although Assad family and the Alawite community hold the upper-hand in decision making, the Baath Party remained the main tool for policy implementation.²¹

According to basic Baathist ideology, Israel and Zionism are a disease that hit the heart of the Arab nation. Therefore, anti-Israel policies and ideas are not at odds with the opinions of the ruling elite. Syria's response to the Israeli war on Gaza can be better understood in this context.

During the war on Gaza, several conferences and public rallies were held in Damascus as well as other Syrian cities to show support for the government policy of supporting Hamas and Palestinian resistance.²² Bashar said, in the opening ceremony of the Emergency Arab Summit in Doha, Qatar that: "holding this emergency summit has become an urgent public demand by the Arab masses all over the Arab region."²³

Syrian official stand on Hamas in international forums was coherent with its earlier policy of backing Hezbollah against Israel. Hamas, however, expected more than just a political position. It is not clear though if other forms of support were extended to Hamas in the form of arms supply. Moreover, the Golan Heights remained very calm throughout the war on Gaza, raising questions over the credibility of Syria's claim of championing Arab rights. The Syrian response to the attack seems very much weaker than its rhetoric about Arab Unity and anti-Zionism. This makes it difficult to tell if Arab-nationalism had an important impact on policy making in this case.

2. Islam

When it comes to religion, Syria has a very mixed population. Syria is a "mix of Sunnis, Alawis, Shiis, Druze, Ismailis, and Greek Orthodox, Maronite and other Christians."²⁴ Sunni Muslims constitute about 75% of the population, forming the large majority of the people. Alawites make up less than 15% of the population; however, they dominate the political life in the country. The Syrian president as well as most senior Army Generals and Security officials come from this minority. Alawites are "mystical religious group centered in

²¹ Raymond Hinnebusch, "The Ba'th Party in Post-Ba'thist Syria: President, Party and the Struggle for 'Reform'."

²² Ikhwanonline, 12/1/2009.

²³ *Al-Sharq*, 17/1/2009.

²⁴ Haddad, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

Syria who follows a branch of the Twelver school of Shia Islam.”²⁵ The group is believed to have been founded by “a ninth-century religious propagandist” called Ibn Nusayr.²⁶ Alawites are considered deviant by major Sunni scholars like Imam Ibnu Taymiyah, who described them as “more deviant than Jews and Christians.”²⁷

The role of Islam in Syrian foreign policy making might not be strong or visible; however, it is difficult to rule it out altogether. The Syrian political life was dominated by the secular Baath Party which downplays the role of religion and highlights Arab-nationalism as its ideology and source of identification. It is difficult, though, to completely separate Arab-nationalism from its Islamic links and historical basis. In fact, the Baath regime under Bashar tried to “use for its own benefit the growing strength of Islam as a shared cultural vocabulary in Syrian society.”²⁸ Syria under Bashar attempted to use Islamic symbols and vocabulary in order to mobilize support and to “gain legitimacy and popularity among pious Sunni Muslims” a move that started under Hafez al-Assad but grew faster under Bashar.²⁹

Moreover, Islam plays a major role in the daily lives of the Syrian people. The Syrian people are religious people who value Islam very much. Therefore, the Imams of Syrian mosques were very influential in stirring emotions throughout the war. Imams delivered sermons about the war and called for Jihad to save the Palestinians.³⁰ During the war, Assad received a delegation of Muslim scholars led by, the well-known sheikh, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi. Assad called on the Muslim scholars to continue their efforts in rallying support for the Palestinian struggle.³¹

It is important to note that the main Syrian opposition to the Assad regime is the Islamist Syrian MB organization. The Syrian MB led a popular uprising in the late 1970s and early 1980s that was crushed brutally by the regime’s security apparatus. However, the Syrian MB contained its enmity to the regime during the war and announced the freezing of all of its opposition activities against the regime as a show of appreciation for the regime’s stand by the Palestinian resistance.³²

²⁵ See Alawites, Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alawites>

²⁶ Patrick Seale, *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris and Co Ltd Publishers, 1988), p. 9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 8–10.

²⁸ Paulo G. Pinto, “‘Oh Syria, God Protects You’: Islam as Cultural Idiom Under Bashar al-Asad,” *Middle East Critique*, vol. 20, no. 2, summer 2011, p. 191.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Aljazeera.net, 10/1/2009.

³¹ *Alarab*, 6/1/2009.

³² *Al-Khaleej*, 8/1/2009.

It is very probable that the Syrian policy makers took Islam into consideration due to the huge role it has in moving and inciting public opinion. Although the Syrian regime is classified by many as a totalitarian dictatorship, the last thing the regime wanted to see was the shift of public opinion against it. Such a public opinion appeared to be very significant and decisive as the 2011 Arab Spring reached Syria.

3. Economic Concerns

Syria is still struggling with its decaying state-controlled socialist economy. Although Bashar tried throughout the last decade to slowly liberalize and reform the state-reliant Baathist economy, he faced tough internal resistance and his efforts failed miserably.³³ This is partially due to the very corrupt nature of the Syrian economy. In 2008, Syria was ranked 147 out of 180 countries on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. The state-driven policies aimed at stimulating the Syrian economy have only benefited the small wealthy elite aligned, and usually blood-related, to the regime itself.

Although Syria's economy is weak, the country is not reliant on Western aid, particularly from the US. The country's economy is also isolated from Western economies making it more independent in foreign policy making. Syria, also, has no economic ties with Israel making it easier for its decision makers to pursue an anti-Israel policy.

4. Security Concerns

The Syrian government viewed Israel as a strategic threat and Hamas as a strategic ally. This however, did not translate into a Syrian military response. The Golan Heights, bordering Israel remained calm throughout the war except for a single shooting incident which took place on 11/1/2009. This attack was not claimed or endorsed by any Syrian official.³⁴

Syria, which was hosting Hamas leaders during the war, warned Israel from targeting Palestinian leaders on its territories.³⁵ Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Al-Muallem, expressed his confidence that Israel will not extend its aggression to Lebanon or Syria.³⁶

Knowing the dynamics of the Arab-Israeli conflict and tracing the developments during the war on Gaza one cannot but notice that security

³³ Hinnebusch, "The Ba'th Party in Post-Ba'thist Syria: President, Party and the Struggle for 'Reform'," pp. 114–118.

³⁴ *Asharq Alawsat*, 12/1/2009.

³⁵ *Almanar* newspaper, Palestine, 27/12/2008.

³⁶ *Asharq*, 12/1/2009.

concerns have the utmost impact on Syria's foreign policy decision making. For instance, Syria condemned the Israeli attack on Gaza but maintained calm on its borders with Israel. This is due to its understanding of the regional balance of power with Israel. It is clear then that Syria considered Hamas' clash with Israel as an opportunity to weaken its regional enemy and mix the regional balance of power. This meant security concerns were very influential in the case of Syria during the war.

5. Type of Alliance

Syria which views itself as the leader of the Resistance or "Defiant Camp" forged a strong alliance with Iran. Syria's alliance with Iran started in the early years of the Iranian Revolution when Iran entered a confrontation with Iraq and Syria appeared as its sole Arab ally. The Syrian Alawite regime, which was leading a battle locally against the Sunni Syrian MB looked for allies beyond its borders and found them in the form of a Shiite Iran. One can see Assad's attempt to satisfy his need for an Islamic umbrella in his fight against his local opponents in the form of an alliance with the Shiite Islamic Republic of Iran. Alawites, one should remember, are an offshoot of the Shia Sect.³⁷

Both Syria and Iran rejected the American policies and designs in and for the region; hence they also resisted Israeli policies as well. Syria, like Iran, recognized Hamas as the legitimate authority in Gaza and welcomed its officials in Damascus.³⁸

The expected behavior from the members of the Syrian-Iranian alliance was that they should extend their support to Hamas and condemn Israel as well as the "Moderate Camp" which was viewed as complicit with the attacks. Hence, one can conclude that the type of alliance Syria had was very influential on its response to the war.

Conclusion

As for a conclusion, despite the repeated change in Syria's leadership in the middle of the last century, the country remained in conflict with Israel. This is partly explained by Syria's history and geopolitical ambitions. Throughout the period of the Assad's, Syria maintained an anti-Israel anti-US position that was driven mainly by Syria's anti-Western pattern of alliance. Security concerns also remain very influential in this regard.

³⁷ Leverett, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

³⁸ *Alarab*, 2/1/2009.

Conclusion

Conclusion

In this conclusion, an attempt is made to summarize the findings. The comparison between Egyptian and Syrian responses was conducted in respect to five factors.

On Arab Nationalism, the comparison of the two positions leads to the conclusion that Arab Nationalism was more influential in the case of Syria. However, both responses to the events in Gaza were below the ceiling of the demands of the Arab public. Egypt downplayed the role of Arab nationalism in its foreign policy; instead Egyptian nationalism was more dominant. Hence, one can conclude that Arab nationalism, as a factor influencing foreign policy decisions during the Gaza War, was very minimal in the case of Egypt and a bit more influential in the case of Syria.

As for Islam as a factor, although it is difficult to conclude whether it was influential on foreign policy making during the war, one can observe certain similarities and differences while comparing the impact of this variable on the two regimes. The two countries have a large Muslim Sunni population while both had secular ruling parties. Moreover, both regimes had a strong Islamist opposition group that they both banned; the MB. Both regimes shared another important character; they were both military dictatorships.

The Syrian regime was more unique in the sense that its ruling elite came from the Alawite minority. Sunni Muslims have no real access to power in Syria making it clear that Sunni Islam has no role in state affairs. Concerns about regime legitimacy and popular sentiments made it necessary, though, for the Syrian ruling elite to take Islam into consideration when deciding on certain issues like the Palestinian Issue. This explains why Bashar received a senior delegation of Sunni scholars during the war and why he allowed some sort of freedom for Imams to speak about the issue in mosques during the war.

Islam in Egypt's case was less relevant as the ruling elite did not share the same legitimacy problem the Assad had. The Egyptian government was more concerned about containing its population because it felt that any public support for Hamas meant advancement for the Egyptian MB. It is clear, therefore, that the impact of Islam on foreign policy making in both states was minimal especially in the case of Egypt, despite of the huge role Islam has in the lives of the peoples of the two states.

As for the Economic Concerns, it is noteworthy that both countries share the same level of economic development, and economic issues had, in general,

a huge impact on their foreign policy decisions. While both countries are ranked as developing countries, Egypt has a liberal economic system that is dependent on world economy. Syria on the other hand has a state-controlled economy that is not integrated in the world economic system. Moreover, both countries have a very high level of corruption that has, for long, impeded economic development. The most important difference between the two economies, as far as this study is concerned, is that Egypt had economic ties with Israel and was, and still is, highly dependent on American economic aid. Syria on the other hand does not have any economic ties with Israel and does not receive any economic aid from the US.

This leads to the conclusion that the impact of economic concerns on the Egyptian foreign policy making was very high, making it essential for Egyptian officials to seek stability in order to achieve economic development. Syria on the other hand had no economic threats from such a war, and on the contrary, its policy makers saw this war as an opportunity to weaken their main enemy in the region; Israel along with their main Arab rival, Egypt.

With regards to security concerns, a brief comparison of the two perceptions of national security threats and concerns in the two countries leads to conclusion that there was a stark difference between the two states. It is basic to conclude that the divergence between the Egyptian and Syrian responses was very much influenced by the different views the two countries had with regard to their national security. Egypt viewed Israel as a friend and Hamas as an enemy, Syria viewed Israel as an enemy and Hamas as a friend. This is probably one of the most important explanations why the two countries took different, and sometimes opposing, approaches when dealing with this conflict.

As for the Type of Alliance, it is clear that the Egyptian alliance with the US was very opposite to that of Syria. Syria emerged as the leader of the Defiant Arabs who opposed Israeli and American hegemony in the region while Egypt emerged as the leader of the Moderate Arabs who were aligned with the American policies and therefore tolerated the Israeli attacks on Hamas. This comparison leads to the conclusion that the type of alliance was very influential on the two foreign policy responses of the two states during the war. Syria's pattern of alliance pushed it to back Hamas, while Egypt's pattern of alliance pressed it to condemn Hamas and its resistance.

To sum it up, the analyses presented in this study show a wide range of differences between the Egyptian and Syrian positions and responses in the war on Gaza in 2008/2009. Arab nationalism was influential on the Syrian response only, contrary to the Egyptians who did not take such a notion into account. Islam was not very influential in both cases, but it still had to be accounted for in

the two countries. Islam, if considered, urges both countries to react positively towards the Palestinians who were in urgent need of help. The economic situation was not the most influential despite the Egyptian economic ties with Israel which might lead to a conclusion that Egypt was worried about its business. However, these economic ties were weak and business between Egypt and Israel was not that big. As for the national security considerations, the study showed that there was a serious disagreement between the two countries on how they viewed their security threats. Israel was considered an accepted neighbor by Egypt while it was an enemy for the Syrians. Finally, the two countries belonged to two different alliances in the region which certainly made an impact on their positions and responses. This study leads to the conclusion that the internal and external factors considered in the study were influential on the foreign policy making of the two countries during the war.

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List of Publications for al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations

First: Arabic Publications

The Palestinian Strategic Report Series

1. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh and Basheer M. Nafi, editors, *al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-Filastini li Sanat 2005* (The Palestinian Strategic Report 2005), 2006.
2. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-Filastini li Sanat 2006* (The Palestinian Strategic Report 2006), 2007.
3. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-Filastini li Sanat 2007* (The Palestinian Strategic Report 2007), 2008.
4. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-Filastini li Sanat 2008* (The Palestinian Strategic Report 2008), 2009.
5. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-Filastini li Sanat 2009* (The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009), 2010.
6. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-Filastini li Sanat 2010* (The Palestinian Strategic Report 2010), 2011.
7. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-Filastini li Sanat 2011* (The Palestinian Strategic Report 2011), 2012.
8. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-Filastini 2012–2013* (The Palestinian Strategic Report 2012–2013), 2014.

The Palestinian Documents Series

9. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh and Wael Sa'ad, editors, *Mukhtarat min al-Watha'iq al-Filastiniyyah li Sanat 2005* (Selected Palestinian Documents for the Year 2005), 2006.
10. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh and Wael Sa'ad, editors, *al-Watha'iq al-Filastiniyyah li Sanat 2006* (Palestinian Documents for the Year 2006), 2008.
11. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh and Wael Sa'ad, editors, *al-Watha'iq al-Filastiniyyah li Sanat 2007* (Palestinian Documents for the Year 2007), 2009.
12. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, Wael Sa'ad and 'Abdul-Hameed F. al-Kayyali, editors, *al-Watha'iq al-Filastiniyyah li Sanat 2008* (Palestinian Documents for the Year 2008), 2011.
13. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh and Wael Sa'ad, editors, *al-Watha'iq al-Filastiniyyah li Sanat 2009* (Palestinian Documents for the Year 2009), 2012.

Am I Not a Human? Series

14. Abbas Ismail, *'Unsurriyyat Israel: Filastiniyyu 48 Namudhajan* (The Israeli Racism: Palestinians in Israel: A Case Study), Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (1), 2008.
15. Hasan Ibhais, Mariam Itani and Sami al-Salahat, *Mu'anat al-Mar'ah al-Filastiniyyah Tahta al-Ihtilal al-Israeli* (The Suffering of the Palestinian Women Under the Israeli Occupation), Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (2), 2008.
16. Ahmed el-Helah and Mariam Itani, *Mu'anat al-Tifl al-Filastini Tahta al-Ihtilal al-Israeli* (The Suffering of the Palestinian Child Under the Israeli Occupation), Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (3), 2008.
17. Firas Abu Hilal, *Mu'anat al-Asir al-Filastini fi Sujun al-Ihtilal al-Israeli* (The Suffering of the Palestinian Prisoners Under the Israeli Occupation), Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (4), 2009.
18. Yasser Ali, *al-Majazir al-Israeliyyah Bihaq al-Sha'b al-Filastini* (The Israeli Massacres of the Palestinian People), Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (5), 2009.
19. Mariam Itani and Mo'in Manna', *Mu'anat al-Laji' al-Filastini* (The Suffering of the Palestinian Refugee), Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (6), 2010.
20. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, *Mu'anat al-Quds wa al-Muqaddasat Tahta al-Ihtilal al-Israeli* (The Suffering of Jerusalem and the Holy Sites Under the Israeli Occupation), Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (7), 2011.
21. Hasan Ibhais and Kahled 'Ayed, *al-Jidar al-'Azil fi al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah* (The Separation Wall in the West Bank), Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (8), 2010.
22. Mariam Itani, Amin Abu Wardeh and Waddah Eid, *Mu'anat al-'Amil al-Filastini Tahta al-Ihtilal al-Israeli* (The Suffering of the Palestinian Worker Under the Israeli Occupation), Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (10), 2011.
23. Fatima Itani and Atef Daghlas, *Mu'anat al-Marid al-Filastini Tahta al-Ihtilal al-Israeli* (The Suffering of the Palestinian Patient Under the Israeli Occupation), Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (11), 2011.
24. Fatima Itani and Nitham Ataya, *Mu'anat al-Bi'ah wa al-Fallah al-Filastini Tahta al-Ihtilal al-Israeli* (The Suffering of Palestinian Environment and Farmer Under the Israeli Occupation), Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (12), 2013.

Information Report Series

25. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *Mu‘anat Qita‘ Ghazzah Tahta al-Ihtilal al-Israeli* (The Suffering of Gaza Strip Under the Israeli Siege), Information Report (1), 2008.
26. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *Ma‘abir Qita‘ Ghazzah: Shiryan Hayat Am Adat Hisar?* (Gaza Strip Crossings: A Vital Artery, or a Tool of Siege?), Information Report (2), 2008.
27. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *Athar al-Sawarikh al-Filastiniyyah fi al-Sira‘ ma‘ al-Ihtilal* (The Impact of Palestinian Rockets on the Conflict with the Israeli Occupation), Information Report (3), 2008.
28. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *Masar al-Mufawadat al-Filastiniyyah al-Israeliyyah ma Bayna “Annapolis” wa al-Qimmah al-‘Arabiyyah fi Dimashq (Kharif 2007–Rabi‘ 2008)* (The Israeli–Palestinian Negotiations Track Between Annapolis and the Arab Summit in Damascus (Autumn 2006–Spring 2008)), Information Report (4), 2008.
29. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *al-Fasad fi al-Tabaqah al-Siyasiyyah al-Israeliyyah* (Corruption in the Political Class in Israel), Information Report (5), 2008.
30. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *al-Tharwah al-Ma‘iyyah fi al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah wa Qita‘ Ghazzah: Bayna al-Haja al-Filastiniyyah wa al-Intihakat al-Israeliyyah* (Water Resources in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: Between the Palestinian Need and the Israeli Exploitation), Information Report (6), 2008.
31. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *Misr wa Hamas* (Egypt and Hamas), Information Report (7), 2009.
32. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *al-‘Udwan al-Israeli ‘Ala Qita‘ Ghazzah (27/12/2008–18/1/2009)* (The Israeli Aggression on Gaza Strip (27/12/2008–18/1/2009)), Information Report (8), 2009.
33. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *Hizb Kadima* (Kadima Party), Information Report (9), 2009.
34. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *al-Transfer (Tard al-Filastiniyyin) fi al-Fikr wa al-Mumarasat al-Israeliyyah* (The Transfer (The Expulsion of the Palestinians) in the Israeli Thought & Practices), Information Report (10), 2009.
35. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *al-Malaf al-Amni Bayna al-Sultah al-Filastiniyyah wa Israel* (The Security File Between the Palestinian Authority & Israel), Information Report (11), 2009.

36. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *al-Laji'un al-Filastiniyyun fi al-'Iraq* (The Palestinian Refugees in Iraq), Information Report (12), 2009.
37. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *Azmat Mukhayyam Nahr al-Barid* (The Crisis of Nahr al-Barid Refugee Camp), Information Report (13), 2010.
38. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *al-Majlis al-Tashri'i al-Filastini fi al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah wa Qita' Ghazzah 1996–2010* (The Palestinian Legislative Council in the West Bank and Gaza Strip 1996–2010), Information Report (14), 2010.
39. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *al-Unrwa: Baramij al-'Amal wa Taqyim al-Ada'* (The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA): Work Programs & Performance Evaluation), Information Report (15), 2010.
40. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *Dawr al-Ittihad al-Uruppi fi Masar al-Taswiyah al-Silmiyyah li al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah* (The Role of the EU in the Peace Process of the Palestinian Issue), Information Report (16), 2010.
41. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *Turkya wa al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah* (Turkey and the Palestinian Issue), Information Report (17), 2010.
42. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *Ishkaliyyat I'ta' al-Laji'in al-Filastiniyyin fi Lubnan Huquqahum al-Madaniyyah* (The Dilemma of Granting the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon Their Civil Rights), Information Report (18), 2011.
43. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *Hizb al-'Amal al-Isra'eli* (The Israeli Labor Party), Information Report (19), 2011.
44. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *Qawafil Kasr al-Hisar 'An Qita' Ghazzah* (The Convoys of Breaking the Siege of Gaza Strip), Information Report (20), 2011.
45. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *al-Istitan al-Isra'eli fi al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah 1993–2011* (Israeli Settlement Activities in the West Bank 1993–2011), Information Report (21), 2012.
46. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *Shalit: Min 'Amaliyyat "al-Wahm al-Mutabaddid" ila Safaqt "Wafa' al-Ahrar"* (Shalit: From the "Dispelled Illusion" Operation till "Devotion of the Free" Deal), Information Report (22), 2012.
47. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *al-Mawqif al-Isra'eli min Thawrat 25 Yanayir al-Masriyyah* (The Israeli Stance Towards Egypt's January 25 Revolution), Information Report (23), 2012.

48. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *al-Jaysh al-Isra'eli 2000–2012* (The Israeli Army 2000–2012), Information Report (24), 2013.
49. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *al-Ahزاب al-'Arabiyyah fi Filastin al-Muhtallah 1948* (Arab Parties in 1948 Occupied Palestine (in Israel)), Information Report (25), 2014.
50. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *al-Muqawamah al-Sha'biyyah fi Filastin* (The Popular Resistance in Palestine), Information Report (26), 2014.

Non-Serial Publications

51. Wael Sa'ad, *al-Hisar: Dirasah Hawla Hisar al-Sha'b al-Filastini wa Muhawalat Isqat Hukumat Hamas* (The Siege: A Study on the Siege of the Palestinian People & Attempts to Overthrow the Government of Hamas), 2006.
52. Muhammad Arif Zakauallah, *al-Din wa al-Siyasah fi America: Su'ud al-Masihyyin al-Injiliyyin wa Atharuhum* (Religion and Politics in America: The Rise of Christian Evangelists and Their Impact), translated by Amal Itani, 2007.
53. Ahmad Said Nufal, *Dawr Israel fi Taftit al-Watan al-'Arabi* (The Role of Israel in the Fragmentation of the Arab World), 2007, 2nd edition, 2010.
54. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *Munazzamat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyyah: Taqyym al-Tajrubah wa I'adat al-Bina'* (Palestinian Liberation Organization: Evaluating the Experience and Restructuring), 2007.
55. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *Qira'at Naqdiyyah fi Tajruba Hamas wa Hukumatiha 2006–2007* (Critical Assessments of the Experience of Hamas & Its Government 2006–2007), 2007.
56. Khaled Waleed Mahmoud, *Afaq al-Amn al-Isra'eli: Al-Waqi' wa al-Mustaqbal* (Prospects of the Israeli Security: Reality and the Future), 2007.
57. Hasan Ibhais and Wael Sa'ad, *al-Tatawurat al-Amniyyah fi al-Sultah al-Filastiniyyah 2006–2007* (Security Developments in the Palestinian Authority 2006–2007), The Security File of the Palestinian Authority (1), 2008.
58. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *Sira' al-Iradat: Al-Suluk al-Amni li Fatah wa Hamas wa al-Atraf al-Ma'niyyah 2006–2007* (Conflict of Wills Between Fatah and Hamas and Other Relevant Parties 2006–2007), The Security File of the Palestinian Authority (2), 2008.
59. Mariam Itani, *Sira' al-Salahiyat Bayna Fatah wa Hamas fi Idarat al-Sultah al-Filastiniyyah 2006–2007* (Conflict of Authorities Between Fatah and Hamas in Managing the Palestinian Authority 2006–2007), 2008.

60. Najwa Hassawi, *Huquq al-Laji'in al-Filastiniyyin: Bayna al-Shar'iyah al-Duwaliyyah wa al-Mufawadat al-Filastiniyyah al-Israeliyyah* (Rights of Palestinian Refugees: Between International Legitimacy and the Palestinian-Israeli Negotiations), 2008.
61. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *Awda' al-Laji'in al-Filastiniyyin fi Lubnan* (Conditions of the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon), 2008, 2nd edition, 2012.
62. Ibrahim Ghushah, *al-Mi'dhanah al-Hamra': Sirah Dhatiyyah* (The Red Minaret: Memoirs of Ibrahim Ghushah), 2008.
63. 'Adnan Abu 'Amer, *Durus Mustakhlisah min Harb Lubnan al-Thaniyah (Tammuz 2006): Taqirir Lajnat al-Kharijiyyah wa al-Amn fi al-Knesset al-Israeli* (Lessons Derived from the Second War on Lebanon (July 2006): Report of the Committee of Security and Foreign Affairs in the Israeli Knesset (Issued in December 2007)), 2008.
64. 'Adnan Abu 'Amer, *Thagharat fi Jidar al-Jaysh al-Israeli* (Breaches in the Wall of the Israeli Army), 2009.
65. Qusai A. Hamed, *al-Wilayat al-Muttahidah wa al-Tahawwul al-Dimuqrati fi Filastin* (The United States of America & the Democratic Transformation Process in Palestine), 2009.
66. Amal Itani, 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ali and Mo'in Manna', *al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah fi Lubnan Mundhu al-Nash'ah Hatta 1975 (Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah in Lebanon: From Its Beginnings till 1975)*, 2009.
67. Samar Jawdat al-Barghouthi, *Simat al-Nukhbah al-Siyasiyyah al-Filastiniyyah Qabla wa Ba'da Qiyam al-Sultah al-Wataniyyah al-Filastiniyyah* (The Characteristics of the Palestinian Political Elite Before and After the Establishment of the Palestinian National Authority), 2009.
68. Abdul-Hameed al-Kayyali, editor, *Dirasat fi al-'Udwan al-Israeli 'Ala Qita' Ghazzah: 'Amaliyyat al-Rasas al-Masbub/ Ma'rakat al-Furqan* (Studies on the Israeli Aggression on Gaza Strip: Cast Lead Operation/ Al-Furqan Battle), 2009.
69. 'Adnan Abu 'Amer, translator, *Qira'at Israeliyyah Istratijiyyah: Al-Taqdir al-Istratiji al-Sadir 'An Ma'had Abhath al-Amn al-Qawmi al-Israeli* (Israeli Strategic Assessment: Strategic Assessment Issued by the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS)), 2009.
70. Sameh Khaleel al-Wadeya, *al-Mas'uliyah al-Duwaliyyah 'An Jara'im al-Harb al-Israeliyyah* (The International Responsibility for Israeli War Crimes), 2009.

71. Mohammed 'Eisa Salhieh, *Madinat al-Quds: Al-Sukkan wa al-Ard (al-'Arab wa al-Yahud) 1275–1368 A.H./ 1858–1948 C.E.* (Jerusalem: Population & Land (Arabs & Jews), 1275–1368 A.H./ 1858–1948 C.E.), 2009.
72. Ra'fat Fahd Morra, *al-Harakat wa al-Qiwa al-Islamiyyah fi al-Mujtama' al-Filastini fi Lubnan: Al-Nash'ah-al-Ahdaf-al-A'mal* (The Islamic Movements in the Palestinian Community in Lebanon: Establishment-Objectives-Achievements), 2010.
73. Sami al-Salahat, *Filastin: Dirasat min Manzur Maqasid al-Shari'ah al-Islamiyyah* (Palestine: Studies from the Perspective of the Islamic Law Objectives), 2nd edition (in collaboration with Palestine Foundation for Culture), 2010.
74. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *Dirasat fi al-Turath al-Thaqafi li Madinat al-Quds* (Studies on the Cultural Heritage of Jerusalem), 2010.
75. Ma'moun Kiwan, *Filastiniyyun fi Watanihim la Dawlatihim* (Palestinians in Their Homeland, Not Their State), 2010.
76. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, *Haqa'iq wa Thawabit fi al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah: Ru'yah Islamiyyah* (Facts on the Palestinian Issue: An Islamic Perspective), 2010.
77. Abdelrahman Mohamad Ali, editor, *Israel wa al-Qanun al-Duwali* (Israel and the International Law), 2011.
78. Karim el-Gendy, *Sina'at al-Qarar al-Israeli: Al-Aliyyat wa al-'Anasir al-Mu'aththirah* (The Process of Israeli Decision Making: Mechanisms, Forces and Influences), translated by Amal Itani, 2011.
79. Wisam Abi 'Isa, *al-Mawqif al-Rusi Tjah Harakat Hamas: 2006–2010* (The Russian Stance Towards Hamas (2006–2010)), 2011.
80. Sami Mohammad al-Salahat, *al-Awqaf al-Islamiyyah fi Filastin wa Dawruha fi Muwajahat al-Ihtilal al-Israeli* (The Islamic Endowments in Palestine and Their Role in Facing the Israeli Occupation), 2011.
81. Nadia Said Al Deen, *Haqq 'Awdat al-Laji'in al-Filastiniyyin: Bayna Hall al-Dawlatayn wa Yahudiyyat al-Dawlah* (The Palestinian Right of Return: Between the Two-State Solution and the Jewishness of the State), 2011.
82. 'Amer Khalil Ahmad 'Amer, *al-Siyasah al-Kharijiyyah al-Israeliyyah Tjah Ifriqya: Al-Sudan Namudhajan* (The Israeli Foreign Policy Towards Africa: The Sudan Case), 2011.
83. Ibrahim Abu Jabir et al., *al-Dakhil al-Filastini wa Yahudiyyat al-Dawlah* (The Palestinian Community in Israel & the Jewishness of the State), 2011.

84. Abdelrahman Mohamad Ali, *al-Jara'im al-Israeliyyah Khilal al-'Udwan 'ala Qita' Ghazzah: Dirasah Qanuniyyah* (Crimes Perpetrated by Israel During Its Aggression Against the Gaza Strip: A Legal Study), 2011.
85. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, *al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah: Khalfiyyatuha al-Tarikhyyah wa Tatawwuratuha al-Mu'asirah* (The Palestinian Issue: Historical Background & Contemporary Developments), 2012.
86. Na'el Isma'il Ramadan, *Ahkam al-Asra fi Sujun al-Ihtilal al-Israeli: Dirasah Fiqhiyyah Muqaranah* (Islamic Rules Regarding Prisoners in the Israeli Jails: A Comparative Jurisprudence Study), 2012.
87. Hosni Mohamad Borini, *Marj al-Zuhur: Mahattah fi Tarikh al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi Filastin* (Marj al-Zuhur: A Key Event in the History of Islamic Movement in Palestine), 2012.
88. Ghassan Mohammad Duuar, *al-Mustawtinun al-Sahayinah fi al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah: Al-I'tida' 'ala al-Ard wa al-Insan* (The Zionist Settlers in the West Bank: Aggression on Land & Man), 2012.
89. Dalal Bajes, *al-Harakah al-Tullabiyyah al-Islamiyyah fi Filastin: al-Kutlah al-Islamiyyah Namudhajan* (The Islamic Student Movement in Palestine: The Islamic Bloc: A Case Study), 2012.
90. Wael El Mabhouh, *al-Mu'aradah fi al-Fikr al-Siyasi li Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah (Hamas) 1994–2006: Dirasah Tahliliyyah* (Opposition in the Political Thought of Hamas Movement 1994–2006: Analytical Study), 2012.
91. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *Azmat al-Mashru' al-Watani al-Filastini wa al-Aafaq al-Muhtamalah* (The Crisis of the Palestinian National Project and its Prospects), 2013.
92. Bilal Mohammad, editor, *Ila al-Muwajahah... Dhikrayat Dr. 'Adnan Maswady 'an al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi al-Diffah al-Gharbiyyah wa Ta'sis Hamas* (Towards Confrontation: Memoirs of Dr. Adnan Maswady Regarding the Muslim Brotherhood in the West Bank & the Founding of Hamas), 2013.
93. Ahmad Jawad al-Wadiyah, *al-Siyasah al-Kharijiyyah Tijah al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah 2001–2011* (American Foreign Policy Towards the Palestinian Issue 2001–2011), 2013.
94. Naser A. Abdaljawwad, *al-Dimuqratiyyah al-Za'ifah wa al-Hasanah al-Maslubah: Zafarat Na'ib 'an al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah fi al-Majlis al-Tashri'i al-Filastini* (The Fake Democracy and the Usurped Immunity: Sighings of a West Bank Deputy in the Palestinian Legislative Council), 2013.

95. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, *al-Tariq ila al-Quds: Dirasah Tarikhiyyah fi Rasid al-Tajribah al-Islamiyyah 'ala Ard Filastin Mundhu 'Usur al-Anbiya' wa Hatta Awakhir al-Qarn al-'Ishrin* (The Road to Jerusalem: A Historical Study of the Islamic Experience in the Land of Palestine Since the Time of the Prophets until Late Twentieth Century), 5th edition, 2014.
96. 'Abdullah 'Ayyash, *Jaysh al-Tahrir al-Filastini wa Quwwat al-Tahrir al-Sha'biyyah wa Dawruhuma fi Muqawamat al-Ihtilal al-Isra'eli 1964–1973* (Palestinian Liberation Army & Popular Liberation Forces & Their Role in the Resistance to the Israeli Occupation 1964–1973), 2014.
97. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah (Hamas): Dirasat fi al-Fikr wa al-Tajribah* (Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas): Studies of Thought and Experience), 2014.
98. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *al-Mawqif al-Isra'eli min al-Ahdath wa al-Taghayyurat fi Misr fi 'Am: Muntasaf Yunyu 2013–Muntasaf Yulyu 2014* (The Israeli Position on the Events & Changes in Egypt: 15 June 2013–15 July 2014), Information File 21, 2014.
99. Al-'Udwan al-Isra'eli 'Ala Qita' Ghazzah: 'Amaliyyat "al-'Asf al-Ma'kul"- 'Amaliyyat "al-Jarf al-Samid": 7/7/2014–26/8/2014 (Israeli Aggression on Gaza Strip: Operation the Eaten Straw (al-'Asf al-Ma'kul)-Operation Protective Edge: 7/7/2014–26/8/2014), Information File 22, 2015.
100. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *Munazzamat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyyah wa al-Majlis al-Watani al-Filastini: Ta'rif-Watha'iq-Qararat* (Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian National Council: Overview-Documents-Resolutions), 2007, 2nd edition, 2014.
101. Maher Ribhi Nimr 'Ubeid, *al-Bina' al-Tanzimi wa al-Fasa'ili li al-Asra al-Filastiniyyin fi Sijn al-Naqab* (The Organizational Structure of the Palestinian Prisoners in the Naqab (Negev) Prison), 2014.
102. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *Qita' Ghazzah: al-Tanmiyah wa al-I'mar fi Muwajahat al-Hisar wa al-Damar* (Gaza Strip: Development and Construction in the Face of Siege and Destruction), 2014.

Second: English Publications

The Palestinian Strategic Report Series

103. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh and Basheer M. Nafi, editors, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2005*, 2007.
104. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2006*, 2010.

105. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2007*, 2010.
106. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2008*, 2010.
107. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009/10*, 2011.
108. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2010/11*, 2012.
109. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2011/12*, 2013.

Am I Not a Human? Series

110. Abbas Ismail, *The Israeli Racism: Palestinians in Israel: A Case Study*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (1), translated by Aladdin Assaiqeli, 2009.
111. Hasan Ibhais, Mariam Itani and Sami al-Salahat, *The Suffering of the Palestinian Woman Under the Israeli Occupation*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (2), translated by Iman Itani, 2010.
112. Ahmed el-Helah and Mariam Itani, *The Suffering of the Palestinian Child Under the Israeli Occupation*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (3), translated by Iman Itani, 2010.
113. Firas Abu Hilal, *The Suffering of the Palestinian Prisoners & Detainees Under the Israeli Occupation*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (4), translated by Baraah Darazi, 2011.
114. Mariam Itani and Mo'in Manna', *The Suffering of the Palestinian Refugee*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (6), translated by Salma al-Houry, 2010.
115. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, *The Suffering of Jerusalem and the Holy Sites Under the Israeli Occupation*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (7), translated by Salma al-Houry, 2012.
116. Hasan Ibhais and Kahled 'Ayed, *The Separation Wall in the West Bank*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (8), translated by Baraah Darazi, 2013.
117. Mariam Itani, Amin Abu Wardeh and Waddah Eid, *The Suffering of the Palestinian Worker Under the Israeli Occupation*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (10), translated by Salma al-Houry, 2014.
118. Fatima Itani and Atef Daghlas, *The Suffering of the Palestinian Patient Under the Israeli Occupation*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (11), translated by Mohammed Ibrahim El-Jadili and Saja Abed Rabo El-Shami, 2012.

Non-Serial Publications

119. Muhammad Arif Zakauallah, *Religion and Politics in America: The Rise of Christian Evangelists and Their Impact*, 2007.
120. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh and Ziad al-Hasan, *The Political Views of the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon as Reflected in May 2006*, 2009.
121. Ishtiaq Hossain and Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, *American Foreign Policy & the Muslim World*, 2009.
122. Karim El-Gendy, *The Process of Israeli Decision Making: Mechanisms, Forces and Influences*, 2010. (electronic book)
123. Ibrahim Ghushah, *The Red Minaret: Memoirs of Ibrahim Ghushah (Ex-Spokesman of Hamas)*, 2013.
124. Mohsen M. Saleh, *The Palestinian Issue: Historical Background & Contemporary Developments*, 2014.

This Book

The 2008/2009 Gaza War was one of the most crucial battles that the Palestinian resistance engaged in, since 1948. Its outstanding performance, though with limited capabilities, was a center of focus for those interested in the Palestinian issue.

The Gaza War was detrimental to the people and infrastructure of Gaza and had a divisive impact on the regional relations, especially among Arab states.

During this war, Arab states split into two camps, the "Moderate Camp" led by Egypt and the "Defiant Camp" led by Syria. The Egyptian and Syrian responses to the war epitomized those of the two camps. This study analyzes the foreign policy responses of these two states, with respect to some internal and external factors.

Egypt, Syria and the War on Gaza

A Study on the Egyptian and Syrian Foreign Policy Responses to the 2008/2009 Gaza War



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