

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2012 – 2013



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Chapter Five

The Palestinian Issue and the International Situation

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The Palestinian Issue and the International Situation

Introduction

The Arab Spring and the Iranian nuclear issue, the ramifications of the global financial crisis, the shifts of the Middle East's status in US geo-strategic thinking, and the decline of the Palestinian issue down the list of concerns, were some of the most important developments affecting the Palestinian issue in 2012 and 2013.

The result was that 2012 and 2013, though impacting the Palestinian issue from other angles, brought structural change to the Middle East through the change of Arab regimes; the upheaval of the position of Islamic movements in Arab societies; the revival of sub-cultures in the Middle East; and a rising Russian-Chinese role paving the way for a new international order. This order is likely to range between multipolarity or at least unipolarity but without the hegemony seen previously.

Such radical transformations could mean that traditional forms of Palestinian action must take these changes into account.

To have a clear vision of this new international reality, we must first assess two dimensions: constant elements of the international scene on one hand, and the variables on the other, considering their impact on the Palestinian scene.

First: The Quartet

The diplomatic efforts of the Quartet on the Middle East (the UN, EU, US and Russia) failed to impose an international solution on the parties of the Arab-Israeli conflict in general, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in particular.

A review of the data related to statements by the Quartet shows that the international body continued to orbit around in the same circle it had been moving in for more than a decade. In effect, the level of the Quartet's activity has not been consistent from year to year, and has been declining. Since 2002, the Quartet issued a total of 48 statements, as follows:¹



Table 1/5: The Diplomatic Activity of the Quartet 2002–2013

Year	2002–2004	2005–2007	2008–2010	2011–2013
No. of statements	5	21	12	10

The above table indicates that the level of the Quartet’s diplomatic activity has been declining sharply since 2005, with its 2011–2013 activity less than half of its 2005–2007 activity.

The Quartet issued three statements in 2012 and 2013, as follows:²

1. Statement on 11/4/2012: Confirmed continued support for the PA’s institution-building program, and called on the international community to provide \$1.1 billion to help the PA fulfill its commitments for 2012.

2. Statement on 30/7/2013: The Quartet welcomed the resumption of direct negotiations between the PA and Israel on 29/7/2013. The negotiations had been suspended since September 2010, following Israel’s rejection of a proposed freeze on settlement activity in the occupied territories. The Quartet confirmed in its statement support for efforts to reach a two-state solution within nine months. The Quartet welcomed the Arab League’s role in facilitating the resumption of the negotiations.

3. Statement on 27/9/2013: The Quartet stressed the need to observe the ceasefire reached on 21/11/2012 between the Palestinian resistance and Israel, and also emphasized the need to give attention to the humanitarian needs of GS.

Analyzing the general development of the Quartet’s role through its statements from 2002 to 2013 produces the following conclusions:

1. The activities of the Quartet were hindered by Israel’s resistance to “internationalizing” the Palestinian issue, as Israel sought to avoid having to confront an “international front” on some issues, such as settlements, human rights abuses and others. Israel preferred the bilateral approach (Palestine vs Israel) through direct negotiations, or through “US mediation,” because this allowed Israel to continue to take advantage of the balance of power that is skewed in its favor.

2. The Israelis had a desire to minimize the role of the UN and Russia (seen to be closer to the Palestinian position) on the one hand, and neutralize the European role given its global political and moral influence, on the other. On 9/12/2012, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov noted, “We are seeking the convocation

of the Quartet of international mediators. We are supported by the European Union and the UN while the United States, the fourth participant in this mechanism, does not want this.”³ In other words, the US hindered the work of the Quartet as well, given its desire to “monopolize” the peace process, in line with its interests. Perhaps Lavrov’s statement reinforces the general trend of a decline in the role of the Quartet, evident from the dwindling frequency of its meetings and statements regarding the Palestinian issue, which was consistent with the Israeli-American direction. It is sufficient to note that in 2012, the Quartet only issued one statement. In 2013, only 2 statements were made, compared to 10 in 2007, when after that the average number of statements began to decline.

3. The efforts of the Quartet were affected by the relations among its member states, especially the Western parties (the US and the EU) on one hand and Russia on the other. Political and economic relations between the parties in other arenas (Iran, Syria, Ukraine, etc.) affected the work of the Quartet, and has an impact on the Palestinian issue.

Second: The United States of America (US)

The suspension of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in September 2012, resumed in July 2013, reflected the failure of US efforts to reach a peaceful solution to the conflict. Things became more complicated with initial signs of shifts emerging in the US’s strategic vision of the structure of its international relations, particularly in the geo-strategic dimension. The US President’s National Security Advisor Susan Rice, laid out a framework for the new directions of US policy in the short and immediate terms. Rice said, “We can’t just be consumed 24/7 by one region, important as it is,” adding, “He [the president] thought it was a good time to step back and reassess, in a very critical and kind of no-holds-barred way, how we conceive the region.” The president’s goal, Rice continued, “was to avoid having events in the Middle East swallow his foreign policy agenda, as it had those of presidents before him.”⁴

Rice’s remarks are consistent with Obama’s previous declarations about the pivot to Asia-Pacific, which former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had alluded to, which could signal a change in the negotiating environment for both the PA and the Israeli government.



In addition, the perception of the US in the Middle East is increasingly negative, according to public opinion poll surveys in the region. A poll conducted by the Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project showed that confidence in Obama in Muslim countries had declined from 33% in 2009 to 24% in 2012, while approval of Obama's international policies fell from 34% in 2009 to 15% in 2012. The poll also showed that the level of support for the US in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Pakistan had dropped below the figures of 2008.⁵

In the same category falls the US drive for oil and gas independence from the Gulf region and other areas. In its 2012 edition of the World Energy Outlook (WEO), the International Energy Agency (IEA) proclaimed, "Extraordinary growth in oil and natural gas output in the United States will mean a sea-change in global energy flows." According to WEO's central scenario:

The United States becomes a net exporter of natural gas by 2020 and is almost self-sufficient in energy, in net terms, by 2035. North America emerges as a net oil exporter, accelerating the switch in direction of international oil trade, with almost 90% of Middle Eastern oil exports being drawn to Asia by 2035.⁶

This reinforces the perception that for the US, the strategic value of the Middle East is declining, which worries some Arab countries, and has raised questions among Israeli pundits regarding regional balances that could be deeply affected by this profound change.⁷

Amid these American developments, Palestinian-Israeli negotiations came to a halt, mainly because of Israel's refusal to suspend settlement activity. In the last three months of 2012 and throughout 2013, the US worked hard to get the negotiations back on track, probably to reinforce the impression that the peace process had not completely stopped. This is evident from the fact that the US Secretary of State John Kerry, who took office in January 2013, visited the area 10 times in 2013 (the last of which took place near the end of 2013 and the start of 2014). However, the frequency of Kerry's visits to the Middle East represented less than a third of his overall diplomatic activity on other international issues, if we use the total number of visits as the benchmark.⁸

However, what was intriguing about the way the US managed the crisis of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations was the political economy of these negotiations, where Palestinian negotiators were incentivized to return to the table through the

issue of economic aid to the Palestinian side, either by promising more of it or threatening to suspend it.

Such diplomacy was renewed in 2012 and 2013, with the US announcing in May 2013 it would provide economic aid, followed by announcing the resumption of negotiations (without any Israeli commitment to stop settlement building) in July 2013. This was one of the demands Obama had made during his second visit to the WB in March 2013, which he had previously visited in 2008.

From reviewing congressional resolutions and statements, it is clear that linking US aid to Palestinian political conduct has been one of the most striking features of the American position. One Congress report stated that funds may be provided to the PA if the president could prove that it was important to the US national security interests.⁹ The main US demands when linking aid to Palestinian political conduct can be summed up as follows:¹⁰

1. Stressing the need to ensure that aid does not reach armed resistance or “terrorist” groups, specifically Hamas.
2. The Palestinian side postpones its bid to join international organizations and conventions.
3. Warning the Palestinian side not to take any unilateral action.
4. Re-stressing the need for the PA to return to the negotiating table despite the continuation of settlement building.

The cessation of the negotiations was accompanied by disputes within the US administration regarding aid to the PA. The US Department of State made a lot of effort to unlock pre-approved aid to the PA in 2012 (worth \$495.7 million) and 2013 (\$200 million),¹¹ and succeeded in its efforts in March 2013. The US government also interceded with Congress to secure aid for the PA in 2014 worth \$440 million, including \$70 million for the security sector. The text of the bill for aid to Palestine states that “The FY 2014 request will help advance a negotiated, two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”¹²

The use of economic incentives in US diplomacy culminated on 26/5/2013 with the US Secretary of State John Kerry announcing, during a meeting of the World Economic Forum at the Dead Sea in Jordan, a plan backed by the Quartet Representative Tony Blair based on economic support for the PA to support the private sector in the occupied territories to the tune of \$4 billion, with private



sector experts giving advice to the PA in this area. Kerry said that these experts believe they could raise the Palestinian GDP by 50% over three years, lower the unemployment rate from 21% to 8%, and raise the median annual wage by 40%, which would make the PA less reliant on international aid.

Kerry revealed a new direction, namely, to replace governments with private sector in the provision of aid because “most governments don’t have the money, and in certain places, the private sector actually has a greater ability to move things faster than government does,” he claimed.¹³

Obama had called for increasing aid to Israel from \$3.029 billion in 2011 to \$3.098 billion in 2012 and \$3.115 billion in 2013.¹⁴ In comparison, we see that the value of US aid to the PA fell from \$545.7 million in 2011 to \$495.7 million in 2012, and then to \$426.7 million in 2013.¹⁵ The total US contribution to UNRWA for the year 2013 was \$244.5 million.¹⁶

Interestingly, on the subject of developing the Palestinian private sector, the US position is identical to the one contained in a study by The World Bank, which called for developing the private sector, integration into the global economy, and investing in education.¹⁷

On the other hand, the second concern (i.e., after the resumption of the negotiations) of US diplomacy in 2012–2013 remained focused primarily on Israeli security, as evident from:

1. Emphasizing the need to preserve the cease-fire in the GS, which had been reached on 21/11/2012, through mediation efforts made by deposed Egyptian President Muhammad Morsi, one day after the arrival of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. In a press conference with Egyptian Foreign Minister Muhammad Kamel ‘Amr, she thanked “President Morsi for his personal leadership to de-escalate the situation in Gaza and end the violence.” She then added “Now that there is a ceasefire, I am looking forward to working with the Foreign Minister and others to move this process.”¹⁸ The fighting between the Israeli army and units of the Palestinian resistance in the GS had lasted for a period of eight days.

The head of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey pledged his country’s support for Israel’s efforts, and for security and intelligence cooperation between the US and Israel, to prevent smuggling into the GS via the Sinai, describing the practice as “very worrisome.”¹⁹

2. Continuously emphasizing Israeli security, and considering it non-negotiable, as Obama said in his speech before an American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) meeting in March 2012, in which he proclaimed, “Israel’s security is sacrosanct. It is non-negotiable.”²⁰

It seems that strategic US-Israeli alignment does not necessarily require tactical agreement. This is evident on the subject of Iran’s nuclear program, which was the subject of the strategic contention between the Israeli and American sides. During Obama’s visit to the region on 20/3/2013, the Israeli side appeared uncomfortable with the prospect of a peaceful solution between the US and the EU, and Iran, regarding the latter’s nuclear program, especially in light of the assurances made by Obama ahead of the visit, saying that “he does not want to see more conflict in the oil-producing Gulf region.”²¹

The US showed no interest in enforcing the UN resolution, approved by 176 countries, calling for “Israel’s accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA] safeguards, in realizing the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East.”²² However, controversy surfaced between the two sides with allegations that the US was spying on the email accounts of certain Israeli officials in 2013.²³ This re-raised the issue of the Israeli spy in the US, Jonathan Pollard, which reinforced the view that there are primordial cracks in the wall of strategic alignment between the two parties.

3. The US position with regard to ensuring Israel’s security is bolstered by continued US military aid to Israel. For example, the US granted Israel \$680 million to strengthen the Iron Dome anti-missile system, and “stockpiled in Israel \$800 million worth of Israeli weapons for emergencies.” These weapons, may be used by Israel in case of emergency, with American approval, and they include missiles, armored vehicles, and artillery ammunition.²⁴

4. Adapting agreements gradually to balance them in favor of the Israeli side, to reassure it over its security concerns. There were unofficial reports in the media about discussions led by Kerry for:

- a. Amending the Arab peace plan, which was declared in Beirut in 2002, to accept the idea of land swaps between the Palestinian and Israeli sides, an issue that President Obama had raised on 19/5/2011.²⁵ The Israeli media even reported that the swaps could include giving lands in the Palestinian



triangle (of the territory of Palestine occupied in 1948) to the PA, in return for keeping Israeli settlements in the WB under Israeli sovereignty.²⁶

- b. During a second visit in the second week of December 2013, Kerry proposed a plan to the Palestinians whereby Israel and the PA accept a security arrangement that would leave Israeli troops stationed inside a future Palestinian state, on the border with Jordan.²⁷

It seems that Kerry felt, with the end of 2013, that the deadline that was set for reaching an agreement between the two sides (April 2014) was no longer possible, given that no progress was being made. This prompted him to seek to persuade the two sides to take any measures that create the sense that progress was being made and that diplomacy had not yet hit a dead end. However, US diplomatic activity after mid-2013 continued without official clarification. At a time when the media reported US-backed projects like turning the Jericho area into an “economic hub”; bringing Jordan into a solution; maintaining Israeli deployment in the Jordan Valley for a certain period of time; and for Israel to withdraw from some areas such as the area north of the Dead Sea. However, none of these projects were officially declared.²⁸

5. Closely following developments in the Arab region (especially in the countries of the Arab Spring) and their implications for Israel’s security. The change that took place in Egypt with the ouster of the elected President Muhammad Morsi on 3/7/2013 was closely followed by the Americans and Israelis. This diverted attention away from the Palestinian issue at times, and at other times linked those changes to Israeli security, especially with the intensifying clashes between the Egyptian armies and the so-called Islamic groups, as well as the growing strength of similar groups in Syria and Iraq. These circumstances drove the US to close down its embassies in August 2013, because of what was described as “terrorist threats.”

6. US and Israeli officials were at pains to stress that there was no link between the Arab Spring and the Arab-Zionist conflict, because making this kind of link would have put more pressure on the Israelis. Both John Kerry and the Israeli President Shimon Peres emphasized the separation between the two, during speeches at the meetings of the World Economic Forum at the Dead Sea on 26/5/2013.²⁹

The US Congress has often acted to obstruct and resist any progress on the Palestinian issue. After Palestine was recognized as a non-member observer state of the UN on 29/11/2012, members of Congress called for closing down the Palestinian mission in the US.³⁰ The spokesperson for the US Department of State Victoria Nuland confirmed the US's rejection of the PA to be rebranded the "State of Palestine."³¹

7. The US insistence that the Palestinians abandon armed resistance. In remarks to the press, spokesperson Victoria Nuland said that Hamas, ahead of any dialogue, must meet the conditions of the International Quartet, namely to recognize Israel, renounce "terrorism," and recognize the agreements signed between Israel and the Palestinians.³²

On the other hand, President Barack Obama continued to emphasize the need to establish a Palestinian state. In a press conference in Ramallah in March 2013, he remarked that the "United States is deeply committed to the creation of an independent and sovereign state of Palestine," but blamed Hamas for the situation in the GS. He said:

I would point out that all this stands in stark contrast to the misery and repression that so many Palestinians continue to confront in Gaza—because Hamas refuses to renounce violence; because Hamas cares more about enforcing its own rigid dogmas than allowing Palestinians to live freely; and because too often it focuses on tearing Israel down rather than building Palestine up. We saw the continuing threat from Gaza again overnight, with the rockets that targeted Sderot. We condemn this violation of the important cease-fire that protects both Israelis and Palestinians—a violation that Hamas has a responsibility to prevent.³³

The US administration continued to express rejection of settlement policy, including in East Jerusalem.

All of the above corroborates the diagnosis regarding the practical approaches of the US administration to ensure Israeli superiority, in a way that renders the results of the negotiating process hostage to the balance of power, which is tipped in favor of Israel.



American Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) That Support Palestinian Rights

There is a phenomenon worthy of attention in relation to political attitudes among the American public vis-à-vis the Palestinian issue. A report by the pro-Israel Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in 2013 looked at hundreds of “anti-Israel” groups operating in the US, pointing out that “the domestic anti-Israel movement has grown significantly since the second intifada in 2000 and, more recently, since the 2008–9 Gaza War.” The report indicates that “the groups that comprise today’s anti-Israel movement lob any and every accusation against Israel—including charges of Nazi-like crimes, apartheid policies, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and genocide.”³⁴

The report identifies 10 such groups as being the “worst of the worst.” The leaders of these groups speak on college campuses; distribute their literature in “anti-Israel” conferences; write editorials in local and national newspapers; appear on TV and radio shows; and are successfully gaining support through social media. The work of these groups developed after the war in Gaza in 2012 and the Arab Spring, with focus on Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel. These groups also work in coordination with each other and sponsor each other, in conferences, demonstrations, and public relations activities against Israel.³⁵ The following table shows the 2013 top 10 anti-Israel groups in the US, according to the ADL:

Table 2/5: The 2013 Top 10 Anti-Israel Groups in the US (in Alphabetical Order)³⁶

Name	Year founded	Social media presence	
		Facebook likes	Twitter followers
Act Now to Stop War and End Racism	2001	3,000	750
American Muslims for Palestine	2005	8,500	3,100
CODEPINK: Women for Peace	2002	13,200	22,800
Friends of Sabeel-North America	1997	1,400	260
If Americans Knew/ Council for the National Interest	2001	11,700	700
Jewish Voice for Peace	1996	30,100	9,600
Muslim Public Affairs Council	1988	13,000	3,800
Neturei Karta	1938	5,300	1,200
Students for Justice in Palestine	2001	21,400	1,300
US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation	2002	15,000	6,800

In addition to these groups, there is the Jewish American organization J Street, which was founded in 2008. J Street is considered less biased than the AIPAC. Its 2013 conference was attended by about 2,800 members in addition to members of Congress. J Street supports the two-state solution and an end to settlement in Palestinian territory.³⁷

Third: The European Union (EU)

A study supervised by the EU in 2013 on the state of the PA, 20 years after Oslo Accords, came to discouraging conclusions. The study found that the PA was in a serious crisis as a result of number of factors, including:³⁸

1. The crisis of legitimacy: The study argued that the PA had lost legitimacy and credibility, citing the protests in the WB in the months of August and September 2012, which were directed primarily against the PA, rather than the occupation. The frustration in Palestinian society was due to the belief that the “chances for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the next five years are slim to non-existent” (69% of Palestinians in the WB), while 77% of the WB residents believed that corruption was a problem in PA institutions.

2. The PA’s lack of a clear strategy: The European study mentions that ‘Abbas had offered a medley of alternative options such as the internationalizing the conflict via the UN; pushing for a restart of negotiations based on the 1967 borders and a settlement freeze; broad-based popular non-violent resistance; pursuing reconciliation with Hamas; or threatening to dismantle the PA. However, none of these strategies was adopted in the end, and the PA proceeded without a clear strategy.

3. The political exclusion of the Palestinian majority: The gradual replacement by the PA of the PLO has led to the marginalization of the majority of Palestinians in the Diaspora and denied them the institutional mechanisms to influence decision-making.

4. Israeli policies on the ground, especially the continuation of settlement construction and Israeli military incursions into PA-controlled areas.

5. The failure of the US, the EU, and the Quartet to achieve anything: The study finds that the failure of these powers to apply more consistent pressure on Israel



to fulfil its obligations under international resolutions and negotiated agreements has been particularly damaging. International support for the PA has unwittingly helped to consolidate the status quo, for example, with permit restrictions in Area C. In particular, the EU and the US have invested in the PA the resources usually devoted to post-conflict, while their policies have been tantamount to making the conflict more manageable, rather than aimed at making peace more of an imperative.

In its conclusions, the study makes a number of recommendations, such as resuscitating the PLO and separating it from the PA; holding elections for the PA; and reform within both Fatah and Hamas, as well as strengthening civil society and public policy.

Perhaps the contradictory statements attributed to the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process Andreas Reinicke on 3/12/2013—that the EU intends to suspend aid to the PA, which amounts to about €300 million (\$411 million) annually, if the ongoing negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian sides fail—underscore the debate within the EU regarding the crisis of dealing with the Palestinian issue. Reinicke even said that “some people suggested giving the money to other countries, like Syria, Mali and other places around the world.” He added that this issue could be raised again in the event of the failure of the peace talks at the end of the nine-month deadline, “because the question is, what’s the money for if a Palestinian state isn’t established?” Reinicke also said that the EU was well aware that if it cuts off aid to the PA, the latter “will collapse,” and that “the EU is considering a gradual cessation, if and when such a decision is made.” Reinicke added, “Were that to happen, the PA would cease to function and its security services and organizations would fall apart. Israel would then have to take the responsibility for the West Bank, including the payment to civil servants and public officials.”³⁹

But on the other hand, the spokesperson of the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Maja Kocijancic, in remarks to Italy’s news agency Adnkronos International (AKI), said that the EU had not made any declarations in this regard, adding that the issue was not being discussed. She also said that the EU still strongly supported the peace talks as the best way to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and achieve security and stability in the region.⁴⁰

Such inconsistency in attitudes within the EU reveals some variation in European trends, but also shows the depth of the impasse in the peace process, and the inability of the EU to effect a quantum leap. European policies remained traditionally centered on the same points contained in the statement of the Council of the EU in May 2012, namely:⁴¹

1. Affirming “its commitment to a two-state solution and its conviction that the ongoing changes across the Arab world make the need for progress on the Middle East peace process all the more urgent.”
2. Recalling “the applicability of international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory, including the applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilians.”
3. Welcoming “the exchange of letters between the parties initiated on 17 April [2012],” and stressing the need “to resume direct negotiations on the basis of the Quartet statement of 23 September 2011.”
4. Reiterating commitment to Israel’s security and condemning the firing of rockets from GS.
5. Condemning settlement building and demanding the dismantling of all settlements built since 2001, according to the Road Map.
6. Condemning evictions and demolition of homes in East Jerusalem, and “the prevention of peaceful Palestinian cultural, economic, social or political activities.”
7. Condemning “the worsening living conditions of the Palestinian population in Area C... as well as plans of forced transfer of the Bedouin communities, in particular from the wider E1 area.”
8. Condemning “continuous settler violence and deliberate provocations against Palestinian civilians.”
9. Stressing the need to address the risks resulting from the financial difficulties of the PA.
10. Reiterating that “a way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two states.”
11. Calling for “intra-Palestinian reconciliation,” and looking forward “to the holding of elections as an important contribution to Palestinian state-building.”



12. Calling for facilitating “the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from the Gaza Strip,” with full recognition of “Israel’s legitimate security needs.”

Statements by the EU and its representatives did not deviate from these stances, as evident from the following statements:

1. A statement concerning settlement building, by the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton in November 2013, after the November 3 Israeli announcement that tenders were issued to build 1,859 housing units in East Jerusalem and the WB. Ashton said:

The EU has repeatedly stated that settlements are illegal under international law... The EU deplores the latest settlement announcement and calls on the Israeli government to reverse its decision. Any actions that could hamper or undermine the on-going negotiations must be avoided.⁴²

2. After the meeting of Catherine Ashton with the Palestinian president on 24/10/2013, the spokesperson of Ashton said:

The High Representative expressed full support of the European Union for the on-going Palestinian–Israeli negotiations which should lead to a two–state solution with the State of Israel and independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition... and reiterated the call for intra–Palestinian reconciliation as an important element for the unity of a future Palestinian state and for reaching a two–state solution.⁴³

3. The European Parliament had adopted a resolution in July 2012, with a majority of 291 members against 274, and 39 abstentions, calling on Israel to end the demolition of homes, evictions, and deportations against Palestinians, criticizing the Israeli actions in Area C of the occupied Palestinian territories. The European Parliament also expressed support for the two-state solution with the amendments that the parties themselves may agree to.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, European aid to the PA fell from €200 million (around \$257 million) in 2012 to €168 million (around \$223 million) in 2013. But interestingly, around €7 million (around \$9 million) from European aid goes to Area C of the WB (62% of WB area and inhabited by only 6% of the Palestinians), and is controlled by Israel and contains most Israeli settlements.⁴⁵ The EU also provided €153.5 million (around \$209.8 million) in 2013 to UNRWA.⁴⁶

On the other hand, there were a multitude of European statements regarding the boycott of Israeli products originating in Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and there were some financial restrictions on European enterprises that support the settlements, notably in Norway.⁴⁷ However, a report in 2012 drafted by Hans van den Broek (former EU commissioner for external relations between 1993 to 1999), with contributions from 22 European NGOs, confirmed that the EU had imported \$300 million worth of goods from settlements every year, which is 15 times more than imports from the Palestinians.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, labor unions of France, Ireland, Britain, Italy and Sweden signed an agreement to boycott goods from Israeli settlements, including telecommunication services in the WB.⁴⁹

However, on 30/6/2013 the European Commission adopted a Notice containing guidelines requiring all EU countries to refrain from any funding, cooperation, granting of facilities, scholarships, research grants, or awards to any party based in Jewish settlements in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, which consist of the Golan Heights, GS, and the WB, including East Jerusalem. These guidelines stated that any future agreement to be signed with Israel should include clauses stipulating that settlements are not part of Israel, and therefore, are not covered by any agreement. Moreover, the Official Journal of the EU published these guidelines on 19/7/2013.⁵⁰ Perhaps this was why Israel responded by preventing a delegation from the EU from entering the GS.⁵¹

The Europeans give special attention the issue of Palestinian prisoners through the activities of European NGOs such as the European Network to Support the Rights of Palestinians Prisoners—Ufree, or through the efforts of parliamentary blocs in the European Parliament, or the activities of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, which are all engaged in efforts for their release.

Fourth: BRICS Countries⁵²

The importance of this group, which held its first summit in 2009, is that it includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (joined in 2010), and represents an emerging force that has increased its share of global economic output from 16% in 2000 to 23% in 2013, includes 42% of the world's population, is



responsible for 33% of the growth in global output, and is home to 42% of global monetary reserves.⁵³

These countries are traditionally seen as closer to Palestinian positions. This was clear from the few statements the BRICS group has issued since its inception. Between 2012 and 2013, the group issued a number of statements that clarified its positions on the Palestinian issue as follows:

1. The Delhi Declaration on 29/3/2012: After emphasizing the importance of security and stability in the Middle East, the BRICS countries agreed that “the period of transformation taking place in the Middle East and North Africa should not be used as a pretext to delay resolution of lasting conflicts but rather it should serve as an incentive to settle them, in particular the Arab-Israeli conflict.” The parties affirmed their “commitment to achieving comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of the universally recognized international legal framework including the relevant UN resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative.” The group urged “the Quartet to intensify its efforts and call for greater involvement of the UN Security Council in search for a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.” The group also called upon “Palestinians and Israelis to take constructive measures, rebuild mutual trust and create the right conditions for restarting negotiations, while avoiding unilateral steps, in particular settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.”⁵⁴

2. Statement by the Foreign Ministers of the BRICS countries on the sidelines of the 68th session of the UN General Assembly on 26/9/2013: The ministers welcomed the resumption of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations which they said was an “encouraging development.” They stressed that “the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a prerequisite for building a sustainable and lasting peace in the Middle East region.” They expressed hope that negotiations would “lead to a two-state solution with a contiguous and economically viable Palestinian state, existing side by side in peace with Israel, within internationally recognized borders, based on those existing on 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.” The ministers also called on the Quartet to submit reports regularly to the Security Council regarding its efforts, “which should contribute to concrete progress.” Moreover, the ministers “expressed concern about the construction of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which constitutes a violation of international law and is harmful to the peace process.”⁵⁵

When comparing the statements made by the BRICS countries to those of the Quartet and the EU, the following may be observed:

1. The position on Jerusalem is more pronounced in the statements made by the BRICS countries compared to the attitudes of other international bodies. The BRICS countries refer unequivocally to East Jerusalem as falling within the territory of a Palestinian state, while the US and most European countries say the fate of the city is subject to “negotiations,” rather than international law and international legitimacy.

2. The statements by BRICS countries do not refer to land swaps, unlike the statements of Western powers in general.

3. The statements by BRICS countries do not contain phrases usually attached to some issued in Western statements, for example the phrase “as agreed upon by the parties,” usually used when referring to issues such as the refugees, borders and Jerusalem. This phrase is common in most US official statements in particular and European statements in general. This is often attached to all issues, including the settlements despite their being condemned, as evidenced by the guidelines of the European Commission in 2013 when it declared that it would not recognize “any changes to pre-1967 borders, other than those agreed by the parties to the Middle East Peace Process.”⁵⁶

4. Emphasizing the need for a greater role for the Security Council in the BRICS group statements seems more pronounced compared to the statements of other parties, noting that Israel does not favor UN intervention in the conflict.

5. Emphasizing Israeli security is more pronounced in the statements of the EU, the Quartet, and the US, compared to those of the BRICS countries.

6. The statements of the BRICS countries seem more averse to condemning Hamas, especially the launch of rockets on Israeli positions and settlements.

7. There are many common points between the BRICS group and other actors on several issues, such as condemning settlement building as against international law, and the recognition of the need for a Palestinian state.

When addressing the attitudes of each member of this group separately, it is worth being aware of the strategic orientations of those countries that are particularly interested in the Palestinian issue, specifically Russia, China and India, without losing sight of other members.



1. Russia

The document published by the Russian Foreign Ministry and approved by President Vladimir Putin in February 2013 shows the most prominent features of Russian strategic directions; the document states:⁵⁷

International Priorities: The most important principles that Russian foreign policy will promote include:

- a. Emergence of a New World Order “based on international law and principles of equality, mutual respect and non-interference in internal affairs of states.”
- b. Ensuring the enforcement of, and respect for, international law, and preventing arbitrary and politically motivated interpretation of fundamental international legal norms and principles in favor of certain countries.
- c. Strengthening international security by “reducing the role of the use of force in international relations while enhancing strategic and regional stability,” and supporting “the process aimed at establishing zones free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.”
- d. International Cooperation in the Sphere of Economy and Environment.
- e. International Humanitarian Cooperation and Human Rights.

Regional Priorities: The Russian document arranged geopolitical regions in the world in order of importance as follows:

- a. Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (former Soviet Union Republics) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).
- b. The EU.
- c. Coordination with NATO.
- d. Balkan region.
- e. The US.
- f. Asia Pacific.
- g. India and China.
- h. The two Koreas, Japan and all ASEAN countries.
- i. The Middle East.
- j. Latin America and the Caribbean.
- k. Africa.

Although Russia's regional priorities are not detailed until paragraph 42 of the document (especially for CIS and the CSTO), the Middle East was not mentioned until paragraph 88 (i.e., it was preceded by 46 higher priorities). This means that the Middle East as a geopolitical region came in ninth place in order of importance out of the 11 zones mentioned in the document. The document clarifies the Russian position on the crisis in the Middle East on the basis of:

- a. The establishment of a Palestinian state.
- b. Achieving a peaceful settlement through negotiations between the parties.
- c. The establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

There appears to be a degree of convergence between the EU and Russia on foreign policy toward the Middle East, shown in the following statement issued by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and EU High Representative Catherine Ashton in December 2012, where the two sides:⁵⁸

- a. Called on the parties to engage in negotiations “on the basis of UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1515, 1850, the Madrid principles including land for peace, the Roadmap, the Arab Peace Initiative and the agreements previously reached between the parties.”
- b. Affirmed that “all parties must avoid acts which undermine confidence and the viability of a two-state solution.”
- c. Reiterated that “settlements are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace,” and opposed any actions that could “jeopardize the possibility of a contiguous and viable Palestinian state.”
- d. Would not “recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties.”
- e. Called “on Israel to avoid any step undermining the financial situation of the Palestinian Authority.”
- f. Called on the Palestinian leadership to constructively use its status as a UN non-member observer state and “not to undertake steps which would deepen the lack of trust and lead further away from a negotiated solution.”



- g. Welcomed the “21 November [2012] ceasefire between the Gaza Strip groups and Israel,” and called “for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of goods and persons to and from the Gaza Strip.”
- h. Called for “intra-Palestinian reconciliation.”

It seems that Russia understands the US predicament in the Middle East, and believes that it offers a greater opportunity for diplomatic engagement in the region. This has been evident during the crisis in Syria since 2011 and in Egypt since the ouster of Egyptian President Muhammad Morsi in July 2013, in addition to the Russian role in the Iranian nuclear program issue.

The formation of the BRICS group and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)⁵⁹ gave impetus to Russian approaches. Interestingly, however, statements by the SCO from its founding in 2001 until 2013, did not include any reference to Middle East problems, with the exception of one reference in the statement of presidents in June 2012 regarding the Syrian crisis, calling on the parties to engage in dialogue.⁶⁰

The Russian position on Hamas is different compared to the positions of other major powers. While European powers generally, and the US especially, treat Hamas as a “terror group,” Russia, as evident from repeated positions, does not perceive Hamas from this angle. This was expressed clearly by Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov in an interview with Rossiya-24 television channel on 28/4/2012, during which he said, “The West considers Hamas to be a terrorist organization. We do not think so and we have regularly worked with Hamas and continue this work.” Lavrov added, “Political Islam is a normal phenomenon. It does not raise any concern with us, and we do not have to try hard to learn to work with these parties because we have worked with them, the Islamists, for a very long time.” Lavrov said that “ignoring such parties and movements leads to negative results,” and added, “Hamas won elections in Palestine, won honestly, and everyone recognized that. The elections were free and fair but the West refused to recognize the results because the West considers Hamas to be a terrorist organization.”⁶¹

The Russian positions in this regard were reiterated continuously with frequent meetings between Hamas leaders and Russian officials in 2012 and 2013. Lavrov stressed that “the Palestinian issue must remain a top priority and should not be neglected as a result of the upheavals of the Arab Spring.”⁶²

As for Russian economic diplomacy on the Palestinian issue, it remains modest when compared to the size of European or American aid. In July 2012 Russia declared that it would provide \$2 million to UNRWA for 2013.⁶³

2. China

Chinese policy in the Middle East is consistent with the theory of China's peaceful rise developed by Chinese thinker Zheng Bijian, or the peaceful development of former President Hu Jintao. Both of these approaches focus on using soft power and avoiding neo-mercantilism or protectionism, where the growing strength of China economically and militarily is not be a threat to international peace and security. This means that China engages all with countries with fewer ideological restrictions.

The features of this policy are evident in the fact that Chinese trade relations continue to grow with both the Arab region and Israel, with oil being the center of trade with Arabs, and technology with Israel. This was the gist of Chinese policy toward the Middle East in 2012 and 2013.

Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping, during a meeting in Beijing with Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman in March 2012, stressed China's desire to deepen relations and build trust with Israel. Israel and China cooperate in the areas of communications technology. Agreements were signed between Israeli and Chinese companies in the Chinese city of Chengdu, which is one of the most important centers of Israel activity in China.⁶⁴

Sino-Israeli military cooperation is also growing, demonstrated by the increasing frequency of military meetings between the two sides. In May 2012, the chiefs of staff of the two countries' armies met. Moreover, Chinese warships visited the port of Haifa in August 2012, in preparation for a joint military exercise.⁶⁵

On the other hand, China supports the establishment of a Palestinian state, condemns the settlements, and condemns acts of violence. China also called on Israel to halt its raids on GS in March 2012, and to improve the conditions of Palestinian prisoners, and supported the accession of Palestine to the UN as a non-member observer state.

In a meeting between Palestinian President Mahmud 'Abbas and Chinese President Xi Jinping in May 2013 in Beijing, the Chinese president put forward a four-point proposal to resolve the conflict in the Middle East as follows:⁶⁶



- a. Establishing “an independent state enjoying full sovereignty on the basis of the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital...at the same time, Israel’s right to exist and its legitimate security concerns should also be fully respected.”
- b. Taking negotiation “as the only way to peace between Palestine and Israel.” Both sides should “meet each other half way.” Taking “credible steps to stop settlement activities, end violence against innocent civilians, lift the blockade of the Gaza Strip and properly handle the issue of Palestinian prisoners” should be an immediate priority. Moreover, “Comprehensive internal reconciliation on the part of Palestine will help restart and advance the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks.”
- c. “Principles such as ‘land for peace’ should be firmly upheld,” as well as “the relevant UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.”
- d. “The international community should provide important guarantees for progress in the peace process. Relevant parties of the international community should have a greater sense of responsibility and urgency, take an objective and fair position.” The parties should also “increase assistance to Palestine in such fields as human resources training and economic development.”

At the end of the talks, the two sides signed an agreement for economic and technical cooperation as well as for cooperation in the educational and cultural spheres.⁶⁷

3. India

Palestinian-Indian relations evolved to the level of embassies during a visit by Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas to India on 10–12/9/2012. India provided financial assistance worth \$10 million, and three agreements were signed between the two sides in the fields of information and communication technology, vocational training and construction of schools. India was among the countries that oversaw the drafting of a resolution for the recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer state of the UN in November 2012.⁶⁸

Indo-Israeli relations have also continued to evolve. In 2012, there were multiple visits by Indian officials and ministers to Israel, such as the visits of: minister of communication, information technology and human resource development (3–8/4/2012), ministers of agriculture (15–17/5/2012), a delegation from the Ministry of Defense (3–7/6/2012), minister of tourism (23–26/6/2012),

and secretary of the Ministry of Textiles (4–8/9/2012). Also, four ships of the Indian fleet visited the port of Haifa (30/7–2/8/2012). Moreover, the sixth round of India-Israel Free Trade Agreement negotiations was held in Israel (20–23/1/2013).⁶⁹

Fifth: Japan

Perhaps the most important development concerning Japanese efforts in the Middle East after the Corridor for Peace and Prosperity announced in 2006, was the hosting of the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD) on 13–14/2/2013, attended by Japan's Special Envoy for the Middle East Yutaka Iimura. The conference encouraged the two-state solution, and seeks to consult with aid agencies and Asian and Arab business leaders to expand trade and investment in Palestine.⁷⁰

In addition to this, Japanese officials were involved in efforts to support the peace process. Japanese Foreign Minister Koichiro Gamba visited the region in May 2012, following a visit by the Palestinian president in April 2012. In July 2013, the new Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida conducted a second visit.⁷¹

Statements issued by the Japanese government in 2012 and 2013 condemned the Israeli decision to build housing units in East Jerusalem.⁷² The statements also called for offering aid to counter the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the GS, and financial aid to Palestine and UNRWA. Japanese aid to the Palestinians from 1993–2013 is estimated to be in the vicinity of \$1.35 billion, including \$27 million to UNRWA in 2012, and \$28.8 million in 2013.⁷³

Sixth: The United Nations (UN)

By observing the activities of the UN, it is noticeable that the general characteristic of its role in the Palestinian issue is the continuation of its traditional attitudes in most of the topics that were discussed during the two years 2012 and 2013. However, a “relative” change was a UN resolution issued on 29/11/2012 to recognize Palestine as a non-member observer state of the UN. This was a significant legal development that confers greater legitimacy on the Palestinian entity, but did not alter the overall political behavior of the direct and indirect parties to the conflict.



Beyond this development, the activities of the UN remained in the confines of their traditional pattern, as is clear in the 67th and 68th sessions in 2012 and 2013, as follows:

1. The General Assembly

a. The 67th session of the UN General Assembly in autumn 2012: The General Assembly adopted 19 resolutions on the Palestinian issue, including most notably:⁷⁴

1. A resolution supporting the Palestinian people's sovereignty over their natural resources in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem (the same support was offered to the Arab population of the occupied Golan). The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 170 in favor to 7 against (including Israel and the US).
2. A resolution on 20/12/2012 supporting the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 179 in favor to 7 against.
3. A resolution deeming Israeli practices harmful to human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 164 in favor to 8 against.
4. A resolution rejecting settlement in the occupied territories and the Golan Heights. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 169 in favor to 6 against.
5. A resolution calling for the application of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War in the occupied Arab territories, including East Jerusalem. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 171 in favor to 6 against.
6. A resolution calling for supporting UNRWA. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 172 in favor to 6 against.
7. A resolution to provide aid to Palestinian refugees. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 170 in favor to 1 against (Israel).
8. A resolution calling for providing assistance to the Palestinian people. The resolution passed without being put to a vote.

9. A resolution emphasizing a peaceful settlement to the Palestinian issue. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 163 in favor to 6 against.
10. A resolution calling on the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat to continue its special information program on the question of Palestine. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 160 in favor to 7 against.
11. A resolution calling on the secretary-general for providing the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat with the necessary resources and ensuring that it continues to carry out its program. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 103 in favor to 7 against.
12. A resolution calling the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) to continue to exert all efforts to promote the realization of the rights of the Palestinians. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 106 in favor to 7 against.
13. A resolution on 29/11/2012 to recognize Palestine as a non-member observer state of the UN. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 138 in favor to 9 against.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that this resolution grants the state of Palestine “the right to sign the Rome Statute” establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC).⁷⁵

- b. The 68th session of the UN General Assembly in autumn 2013: The General Assembly adopted the following resolutions:⁷⁶
 1. Declaring 2014 a year for solidarity with the Palestinian people and calling on the CEIRPP to arrange this in cooperation with governments and other bodies. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 110 in favor to 7 against.
 2. Encouraging the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat to develop mechanisms for dialogue among peoples, and to promote peace in the region. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 163 in favor to 7 against.
 3. Calling for an international conference in Moscow, on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 1850 of 2008, to make progress and expedite



the resumption of the peace process in the Middle East. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 165 in favor to 6 against.

4. Deeming all legal and administrative actions taken by Israel to change the legal status of East Jerusalem illegal and invalid, and calling for halting all settlement activity and all actions that affect *al-Aqsa* Mosque. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 162 in favor to 6 against.
5. Calling on Israel to withdraw to pre-1967 borders including the Golan Heights, and emphasizing that peace and coexistence cannot be ensured until Palestinians obtain their legitimate rights. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 112 in favor to 6 against.

When examining the level of support for these resolutions, it becomes clear that the general average of support for Palestinian rights in the UN (General Assembly) in 2012 was 155 in favor, while the average of countries opposed was 7. The general average of support in 2013 was 142 countries, a decline from the previous year (though this has to do with the nature of the resolutions). By reviewing the voting patterns, it becomes clear that the states opposed to Palestinian rights at the UN during the sessions are: Israel, the US, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Canada, Australia, Czech Republic and Panama. This means that most world powers except the US are more responsive to the aspirations of the Palestinian people, while Israel finds support for its positions primarily in a group of microstates and the US.

In spite of the tepid role of the UN in the Palestinian issue, it represents a mirror of the gradual and progressive evolution in countries' attitudes towards the Palestinian issue. This explains Israel's concerns regarding the shift in the attitudes of the international community and its desire not to internationalize the Palestinian issue.

2. United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

ECOSOC adopted the following resolutions concerning Palestine in 2012 and 2013:⁷⁷

- a. A resolution to open all crossings in GS, in accordance with a UN Security Council resolution in 2009. The resolution called on Israel to abide by the Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization known as the Paris Protocol, which was

signed in Paris in 1994, the cessation of demolition of buildings and opening the way for individuals to move freely, and stopping the exploitation of Palestinian natural resources. The resolution deemed the continuation of the construction of the Separation Wall a violation of international law.

- b. A resolution holding Israel responsible for hindering the development of Palestinian women, urging the international community to assist them, and calling on Israel to abide by international covenants on human rights.

3. Secretariat

The Secretariat of the UN, represented by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, reiterated a number of traditional attitudes about the situation in Palestine during the period 2012–2013:

- a. Emphasizing in a statement on 2/12/2012 the illegality of the settlements in the Palestinian territories.⁷⁸
- b. Sending a message on 11/12/2012 to an international conference held in Baghdad, expressing solidarity with Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons.⁷⁹
- c. Rejecting, in a statement on 30/10/2013, settlement activities in the Palestinian territories occupied after 1967, and considering these acts illegal.⁸⁰

4. United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC)

The HRC reaffirmed its traditional attitudes in resolutions and statements during the period 2012–2013, in particular:⁸¹

- a. Asserting right of self-determination of the Palestinian people.
- b. Highlighting the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem (the WB and GS).
- c. Following-up the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (Goldstone Report).
- d. Re-emphasizing rejection of settlement in the occupied Palestinian territories.
- e. Emphasizing in the statements of 2013 the same issues as before, in addition to issuing a report on the repercussions of settlements on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories.

In March 2012, the HRC, with a majority of 36 votes to 1 (the US), voted to “dispatch an independent international fact-finding mission to investigate the

implications of the Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.”⁸²

The attitudes of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Richard Falk, regarding Israeli practices, were indicative of the growing international criticism of Israeli practices. In a press conference in Amman, Falk said that “Israel remains fully responsible to uphold its legal obligations in Gaza,” and stressed that the suffering of Palestinian refugees is a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Falk said that “self-determination is a fundamental, inalienable human right.” Falk spoke criticizing the Israeli stance on his mission, saying, “It is unfortunate the Government of Israel refuses to cooperate with this mandate from the United Nations Human Rights Council. I did again request Israel’s cooperation with the mission. However, as in the past, Israel did not even bother to respond to my request.” He concluded, “Israel’s occupation, now in its 45th year, must be brought to an end, if Palestinians are ever to attain their basic rights under international law and sustainable security and peace achieved for both peoples.”⁸³

Richard Falk went on to warn that “businesses should not breach international humanitarian law provisions. Nor should they be complicit in any breaches. If they do, they may be subject to criminal or civil liability.” Falk said that positive responses were received from some companies, who suspended their operations or relocated them to the WB.⁸⁴

The HRC had hosted an international debate in Geneva in March 2012, during its 19th session, to discuss Israeli violations of human rights in the occupied territories. The HRC succeeded in obtaining the signatures of some 300 international organizations on a statement condemning Israeli violations of Palestinian rights and calling for lifting restrictions on their movement.⁸⁵

5. Security Council⁸⁶

The activities of the Security Council during the period 2012–2013 focused on briefings by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman on the general situation in the occupied Palestinian territories (settlement activity, Israeli arrests of Palestinians, the demolition of houses and acts of violence between

the two sides, and a cease-fire in the GS, as well as living conditions, particularly in relation to energy and construction in the GS, etc.).

In September 2013, the Security Council held hearings for Robert Serry, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, who stressed the need to resume negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian sides, calling for the two state solution to be given the opportunity to become a reality, and describing the harsh living conditions in both the GS and the WB.

UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Oscar Fernández-Taranco also submitted a report to the Security Council in August 2013, stressing his concern regarding continued settlement activities and arrests of Palestinian citizens, and expressing concern about the security situation in the GS.

6. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

A report issued by UNRWA said the agency needed approximately \$300 million to fulfill its growing needs in 2013.⁸⁷ The agency received its largest contribution from the US in 2012, to the tune of \$233 million. In 2013 it received a total of \$244.5 million.⁸⁸

Seventh: International Public Opinion

Global polls represent an important dimension, although the political implications they imply often do not appear immediately. In previous reports, we pointed out to the decline in international community approval of Israeli policies, which is worthy of attention, especially by Palestinian officials, due to its long term effects.

Global polls show that evaluations of Israel's influence in the world, already largely unfavorable in 2011, worsened in 2012 and 2013, as the following table shows:



Table 3/5: Views of Israel's Influence by Country 2012–2013 (%)⁸⁹

Country	2012		2013	
	Mainly positive	Mainly negative	Mainly positive	Mainly negative
US	50	35	51	32
Canada	25	59	25	57
Chile	21	34	29	41
Mexico	19	44	13	53
Brazil	17	58	15	58
Peru	11	35	16	40
Russia	25	26	23	32
France	20	65	21	63
UK	16	68	14	72
Germany	16	69	8	67
Spain	12	74	4	70
Nigeria	54	29	35	38
Kenya	45	31	42	15
Ghana	19	19	44	32
Egypt	7	85	1	96
China	23	45	32	33
South Korea	20	69	23	56
Australia	18	65	16	69
India	17	29	16	26
Pakistan	9	50	12	65
Indonesia	8	61	12	70
Japan	3	45	3	54
Poland	–	–	15	44
Greece	–	–	15	46
Turkey	–	–	8	81
Global average	21	50	20	52

When comparing evaluations of Israel's influence in the world in 2012 with 2013, it is possible to observe that negative views of Israel's influence rose by 2%, while positive views declined by 1%.

On the other hand, reports by international NGOs were an important source of information on international public opinion about Israeli policies, especially

highly credible organizations like Amnesty International. In its reports for 2012 and 2013, Amnesty International closely tracked Israeli practices, especially in areas such as the humanitarian crisis resulting from the siege of the GS, restrictions on the movements of the residents of the WB, forced evictions, excessive use of force, arrest without a warrant, the conditions endured by detainees, torture, and the situation of refugees. These reports condemn all Israeli practices in all of these areas.⁹⁰

Amnesty International was founded in 1961 and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977; operates in 150 countries, and cooperates with about three million people across these countries. It is therefore important to recognize the importance of its reports.

On 5/7/2012 Oxfam International (an organization focused on poverty and injustice, operating in about 90 countries) held Israel fully responsible for the poor living conditions in the territories occupied in 1967, which prompted the Israeli government to issue sharp criticism against the reports published by Oxfam.⁹¹

In the same vein, in February 2012, the Israeli government clashed with World Vision, a Christian Anglican organization, and one of the wealthiest charitable organizations in the world (\$2.8 billion), after making unproven accusations that a branch of the charity in Australia provided financial support to the PFLP.⁹²

Reports by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for the years 2012 and 2013 also highlight the poor conditions of Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons and the living conditions in the GS and the WB. These reports are usually distributed in 80 countries.⁹³

Conclusion

If we exclude the fact that Palestine obtained a seat as a non-member observer state in the UN and the continuing decline in international support for Israel, 2012 and 2013 were characterized by the decline of the Palestinian issue behind international and regional developments. Most notably the repercussions of the Arab Spring and the Iranian nuclear file, translated into the failure to fulfill international promises regarding the two-state solution or even regular international economic aid to the PA.



This coincided with the failure of the internal Palestinian reconciliation deal, confusion in the policies of the PA (cabinet reshuffles, and the pending resignation of the Palestinian negotiating team), and the continuation of settlements. In addition, there were credible reports about a possible compromise on the Jordan Valley that remained circulated in the media without official clarifications regarding claims about an American project that essentially includes the continuation of Israeli military presence in the Jordan Valley.

Israeli-Palestinian negotiations resumed while there were pledges to reach a solution in mid-2014, a continuation of settlement building, and a bid by the US administration to divert attention towards partial projects (such as the Jordan Valley, the release of some detainees and economic development in the 1967 occupied territories), and these indicate that 2014 will bring very high risks. This is especially in light of the Arab preoccupation with local concerns, regional deals with the major regional powers, and deteriorating relations between Palestinian resistance forces and the powers that traditionally support them.

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This Report

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2012–2013 is the eighth in a series of annual resourceful academic studies. It discusses the developments of the Palestinian issue of this period in an objective and comprehensive manner. The meticulous analytical reading of events tries also to foresee the near future. This Report has become a basic reference on Palestinian studies, it is a must read for all those concerned.

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