



**THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**The Palestinian Issue in the Turkish and Egyptian Foreign Policies
in the Post Arab Spring Era : A Comparative Study**

Master's Thesis

Samah Khader Izzat Karamah

International Relations

September 2023



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Abstract in English

This thesis aims to present a comparative analysis for the roles Egypt and Türkiye pursued towards the Palestinian issue in the post Arab Spring era in order to give a more detailed picture about these two prominent powers' stances towards the issue in terms of both rhetoric and application especially that the post Arab Spring era witnessed several dynamic transformations. These transformations took place in the Arab Spring countries and impacted the other countries in the region. The Palestinian issue was not an exception. The relations between the main Palestinian factions have undergone several changes the Palestinian people embarked on their own uprisings, Jerusalem became the center of several developments and Israel has waged four wars against Gaza and increased the settlements' construction. Moreover, external developments impacted the Palestinian issue including the US policies especially in Trump era in addition to the normalization process between Israel and the Gulf countries. Meanwhile, Egypt and Türkiye had new preoccupations and priorities. However, the Palestinian issue was still significant for both of them. This significance was translated in a set of roles they adopted towards the Palestinian cause including the mediator, developer and defender roles. The core of this thesis revolves around explaining these two states' role conceptions, these roles' performance mechanisms and their material and ideational sources as variables to compare between the two states' attitudes towards the dynamics of the Palestinian issue. The thesis finds out that the two countries had performed almost the same roles with different degrees and various instruments. It also shows that they were neither extremely different nor completely identical in conducting these roles. They had both similar and different aspects of their performance towards the Palestinian issue and the Palestinians in times of war and peace. Moreover, each of them possessed different comparative advantages which made them master some roles.

English Keywords: role conception, performance mechanism, mediator, defender, developer

Türkçe özet

Bu tez, Arap Baharı sonrası dönemde Mısır ve Türkiye'nin Filistin meselesine yönelik izledikleri rollerin karşılaştırmalı bir analizini sunarak, bu iki önemli gücün hem söylem hem de uygulama açısından meseleye yönelik tutumları hakkında daha detaylı bir resim ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır, özellikle de Arap Baharı sonrası dönem birçok dinamik dönüşüme tanıklık etmiştir. Bu dönüşümler Arap Baharı ülkelerinde gerçekleşmiş ve bölgedeki diğer ülkeleri de etkilemiştir. Filistin meselesi de bir istisna değildi. Filistinli ana gruplar arasındaki ilişkiler, Filistin halkının kendi ayaklanmalarını başlatması, Kudüs'ün birçok gelişmenin merkezi haline gelmesi ve İsrail'in Gazze'ye karşı dört savaş yürütmesi ve yerleşim inşaatlarını arttırması gibi birçok değişikliğe uğramıştır. Ayrıca, İsrail ile Körfez ülkeleri arasındaki normalleşme sürecinin yanı sıra özellikle Trump dönemindeki ABD politikaları gibi dış gelişmeler de Filistin meselesini etkilemiştir. Bu arada Mısır ve Türkiye'nin yeni meşguliyetleri ve öncelikleri vardı. Ancak Filistin meselesi her ikisi için de hala önemliydi. Bu önem, Filistin davasına karşı benimsedikleri arabulucu, geliştirici ve savunucu rolleri de dahil olmak üzere bir dizi role dönüştü. Bu tezin özü, iki devletin Filistin meselesinin dinamiklerine yönelik tutumlarını karşılaştırmak için bu iki devletin rol anlayışlarını, bu rollerin performans mekanizmalarını ve bunların maddi ve düşünsel kaynaklarını değişkenler olarak açıklamak etrafında dönmektedir. Tez, iki ülkenin aynı rolleri farklı derecelerde ve çeşitli araçlarla yerine getirdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca bu rollerin ne çok farklı ne de tamamen aynı olduğunu göstermektedir. Savaş ve barış dönemlerinde Filistin'de yönelik performanslarının ve rollerinin yayınlarını hem benzer hem de farklı yönleri vardı. Dahası, her biri farklı karşılaştırmalı avantajlara sahipti ve bu da bazı rollerde ustalaşmalarını sağladı.

Anahtar Kelimeler: rol anlayışı, performans mekanizması, arabulucu, savunucu, geliştirici

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Palestine's unique character of dynamism has been shaped by an accumulating process of enormous changes which made its history and destiny the epicenter of the most enduring mark of colonization, the Israeli occupation. This dynamic character has made the Palestinian issue the most intractable issue in the Middle East. The very beginning of this protracted conflict can be traced back to the 19th century in which Palestine moved from being an option on a long list of potential nations for Jews to the core of the colonial project that was monitored by the colonial powers whose imperial interests intersected with the Zionist interests. Among these powers, the United Kingdom facilitated the immigration of Jews to Palestine and maintained its mandate of Palestine till its termination in 1948.

Following the end of the British mandate, Jews occupied North Palestine and the Western part of Jerusalem and erected the state of Israel. The following years were characterized by hostile wars between Israel and the Arab armies and transformed the Palestinian struggle against the Israeli occupation into an Arab-Israeli struggle. In 1967, Israel occupied the rest of the area of historic Palestine and annexed the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights, which belong to Egypt and Syria respectively. Alongside the Arab-Israeli wars, several bloody events took place and added other dimensions to the Palestinian issue mainly manifested in the Black September in 1970 in which a conflict erupted between the Palestinian fighters and the Jordanian Army. Another dangerous development was the involvement of the Palestinians in the Lebanese civil war in 1975.

The Palestinian issue has witnessed other dilemmas, particularly the dilemma of representation. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which was established in 1964, became the umbrella of the Palestinian political factions. However, the transition of this organization's headquarters from Beirut to Tunisia widened the cleavages between the Palestinian political factions who disagreed over the next strategy of facing the Israeli occupation. Till the 1990s, the mutual antagonism and suspicion between Palestinians and Israelis ruled out the possibility of peace talks and diplomatic channels.

The big change was brought about by the first international framework for peace in Madrid in 1991, in which the Palestinian delegation participated in the negotiations as a part of the Jordanian delegation. Moreover, the clandestine diplomacy between the PLO and Israel

developed later into the Oslo Accords under the auspices of the United States. Since then, Israel took advantage of the delay of the agreement on the final status issues such as the status of Jerusalem, the Jewish settlements, the Palestinian refugees, and the demarcation of the borders to annex more lands in the West Bank and change the geopolitical realities of the city of Jerusalem.

The Palestinian politics also witnessed clashes between the main political factions. In 2007, clashes erupted between Hamas and Fatah supporters. From this moment onwards, Fatah became the ruling party in the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. These two ruling parties have distinct orientations which reinforced the already existent representation dilemma. While the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank considers the diplomatic trajectory, Hamas views the military option as the optimal strategy to liberate the Palestinian land. Israel's attempts to disarm Hamas and isolate Gaza resulted in several Israeli aggressions against the Gaza Strip and was utilized as an excuse by Israel to claim the absence of a peaceful partner. The deadlock in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, the deadly arguments between the Palestinian factions, the continuous clashes between Israel and Hamas and the non-stop encroachment of the Israeli occupation on the Palestinian lands in Jerusalem and the West Bank have had huge negative impacts on the Palestinians' lives. These dynamics were growing intensively till 2011.

The eruption of the Arab Spring has brought several regional and international implications. The impact of the Arab Spring on the Palestinian issue is highly contested. While some argue that the events of the Arab Spring have revolved around internal issues in the Arab countries leading to the retreat of the centrality of the Palestinian issue, others argued that the Arab Uprisings were directed towards the foreign issues as much as they were directed against domestic politics, especially the dictators. The revolutionaries wanted to force these dictators to step down since they were considering them as clients working to secure the interests of the United States and Israel. Additionally, it is seen that the Arab Spring wind propelled the Palestinians to voice their anger and formulate their own demands regarding ending the occupation and achieving a reconciliation between the Palestinian factions. The post-Arab Spring era both maintained some traditional dynamics of the Palestinian issue and introduced new developments. Among these developments were the reconciliation efforts between Fatah and Hamas, the Palestinian Authority's campaign to acquire membership in the United Nations, the reinforcement of the Palestinian non-violent resistance, the centrality of the Jerusalem crises and the dramatic increase of the hostility between Hamas and Israel resulting in four Israeli wars against the Gaza Strip.

The importance of the Palestinian issue lies in the fact that it is the key to an enduring stability in the Middle East. This fact necessitates the need of reaching a solution to this issue and urges several countries in the region and worldwide to follow the developments of the Palestinian issue, set various visions and take on different roles to influence its dynamics.

Geographical proximity, historical and religious ties and ideological affinities have affected the nature of the roles of the countries in the region towards the Palestinian issue. Since the emergence of the issue, the liberation of the Palestinian lands was portrayed as the responsibility of the Arab countries. However, significant changes in the domestic politics and the foreign policy orientations of the countries in the region introduced new players who have developed their own attitudes towards the Palestinian issue, namely Türkiye and Iran.

The regional implications of the Arab Spring have cast shadows on the Palestinian issue since it altered the balance of power in the region, introduced new concerns manifested in the changes in the domestic politics in the countries which witnessed the uprisings and the unconventional threats the neighboring countries suffered from because of the spill over of these uprisings that clearly transcended the borders of the countries of their genesis. These concerns affected the position of the Palestinian issue on the foreign policy agenda of the countries in the region and their roles towards it.

For the Arab regional actors, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) functioned as counter revolution forces and were preoccupied with the perception of the Iranian threat and the idea that Iran is the main player behind the uprisings in Bahrain. This perception led the UAE and Bahrain to consider Israel as a potential ally to contain Iran. The growing relations between these two Gulf countries and Israel materialized in the Abraham Accords and the deal of the century and therefore negatively affected their attitudes towards the Palestinian issue. Qatar on the other side has tried to pursue an independent foreign policy which does not conform with the other Gulf countries' policies. Qatar attempted to play a significant role in the file of the Palestinian reconciliation, economic aid and construction efforts in Gaza.

For the non-Arab regional actors, Iran retained the official attitude of supporting the Palestinian issue and the irreversible refuse of the existence of Israel. However, the post Arab Spring era brought challenges to the Iranian role including the Iranian involvement in Syria, the acute increase in the sanctions imposed on Iran and the internal challenges the Iranian regime faced which led to more impediments on the Iranian role towards the Palestinian issue.

Israel perceived the Arab Spring through the lens of security concerns more than an opportunity for democratic stabilization. Israel feared the fall of the pro status quo Arab regimes especially in Egypt and the possibility of the rise of Political Islam. Moreover, Israel intensified

its efforts to build bridges with the Arab countries especially the Gulf countries on the base of the common Iranian threat. Israel also enhanced its iron fist towards the Palestinians, expanded settlement building, launched several military aggressions against Gaza Strip and expressed its dissatisfaction with the Palestinian reconciliation.

Among regional actors, Egypt and Türkiye are known as prominent players in the Middle Eastern politics. Both countries retain important geopolitical and geostrategic positions and have their regional aspirations. The two countries also possess special positions when it comes to the Palestinian issue. Their comparative advantage lies in their close historical connections with Palestine, their ability to maintain relations with all sides of the issue including Israel, Fatah and Hamas in addition to their distinguished relations with the United States which influence their regional policies and so their policies towards Israel and the Palestinian issue.

Egypt experienced a nationwide uprising which placed the Egyptian Spring as the epicenter of the Arab Spring. The outset of Mubarak's rule inspired other Arab countries to follow suit. Egypt has undergone several domestic changes summarized in the Muslim Brotherhood's rule followed by the military rule. These changes have their reflections on Egypt's perspective towards the Palestinian issue. While Morsi's policy was characterized by a strong pro-Palestinian rhetoric, AlSisi's rule focused more on the Egyptian national security and viewed the Palestinian issue from the lenses of this concern. In both cases, Egyptian diplomacy played an efficient role in ending Israel's aggression against Gaza and facilitating the Palestinian reconciliation process.

Türkiye's policy towards the Palestinian issue during the post-Arab Spring period did not change much in terms of rhetoric in which the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan continued condemning the Israeli aggressive policies against the Palestinians. Türkiye also persisted its diplomatic efforts to mediate between the Palestinian factions, bring the Palestinian issue to the attention of the international community, stress the religious and ideological affinity between Türkiye and Palestine and work on a long-term advancement of the situation of the Palestinians.

1.2. Research Objectives:

The main aim of the research is to compare the roles of Egypt and Türkiye towards the Palestinian issue in the post-Arab Spring era. Research objectives can be stated as the following: Investigating the nature of the role of Egypt and Türkiye towards the Palestinian issue in the post-Arab Spring era, identifying the determinants of the Turkish and Egyptian

policies towards the Palestinian issue, and exploring the impact of Egypt's and Türkiye's roles towards the Palestinian issue on its trajectory.

1.3. Research Question and Argument

The main question is: What are the similarities and differences in the roles of Egypt and Türkiye towards the Palestinian issue in the post-Arab Spring era. Considering their different and even contradictory perspectives towards the Arab Spring, did Türkiye and Egypt played contradictory roles in the Palestinian issue for the last decade? Or did they continue to play similar roles towards the Palestinian cause?

The argument proposed to answer this question is that: While Egypt and Türkiye played the same roles towards the Palestinian issue in the post Arab Spring, Egypt's efforts were tangible in its short-termed mediation steps between the sides of the Israeli Palestinian conflict and Türkiye's efforts were more obvious in its long-term plans aimed to advance the situation of the Palestinians.

1.4. Research Limitations:

The time limitation of this research is from the emergence of the Arab Uprising in 2011 till 2022. The research will compare the roles of Egypt and Türkiye towards the Palestinian issue within this time frame. In other words, the research focuses on the post-Arab Spring era only.

1.5. Methodology:

This research will apply a case by case comparative foreign policy analysis which is about examining foreign policies of different countries to explore the causes of their foreign policy behaviors and their implications. This methodology will help identify the determinants of the Egyptian and Turkish foreign policies towards the Palestinian issue and conduct a comparison between their roles according to the same variables. Data used in this research is gathered from secondary sources mainly books, academic articles, newspapers and journals. It will also benefit from the primary sources like the governmental documents and archives in addition to political discourses and official statements.

1.6. Theoretical Framework:

This research will utilize the role theory to analyze the roles Türkiye and Egypt played towards the Palestinian issue in the post Arab Spring era.

1.6.1 The Incorporation of the Role Theory in International Relations and Its Main Concepts:

Several disciplines arguably play a role in enriching the discipline of IR politics (Kaplan, 1961). From a theoretical perspective, IR borrowed numerous theories which originally have sociological, anthropological and psychological roots. Role theory is an example of a theory that had grown in sociology and psychology before being introduced in IR and foreign policy studies. The bridge between role theory, which was long used to analyze social structures and the positions of individuals within them, and IR was built up through the concept of role in which current research about the theory proposes an interesting analogous possibly beneficial for understanding of the structure of IR (Backman, 1970).

The first endeavor of incorporating the role theory in IR was embarked by Holsti who aimed to extend the role theory to foreign policy analysis through employing the concepts of this theory and modifying them to suit the IR context. Holsti claims that this extension offers a framework for the description of national role conception and role performance and their sources (Holsti, 1970). He emphasizes the interdependence between these two variables. He argues that role performance, which he defines as general foreign policy behaviors, stems from role conception which he articulates as the intellectual setting of foreign policy (Holsti, 1970, 245, 246) in which policy makers formulate their own decisions and commitments.

National role conceptions are informed by both domestic and external sources. Holsti mainly points to some state attributes including location, resources and capabilities in addition to personality traits and public opinion. Yet, he does not deny the importance of external sources (Breuning, 2011, 26) in which he illustrates the influence of the international environment's elements including: system wide values, treaties, principles and commitments.

In addition to highlighting national role conception and role performance, Holsti points to the concept of role prescription which contributes to or buttresses the developing of national role conception. Role prescriptions stem mainly from other states' expectations manifested in the regional and international organizations' chapters, world opinion and different types of treaties (Holsti, 1970, 246). Role prescription constitutes the alter part of the role. In his explanation of the role theory's concepts, Harnish refers to two parts of the role expectations and conceptions. He points to the ego part, which refers to the national role conception in Holsti's study, which implies the actor's perceptions and expectations of his role. Subsequently he mentions the alter part which is about the implicit or explicit demands and perceptions of the others (Harnish, 2011, 8).

The significance of Holsti's study doesn't only lie in his coining of the three above concepts. The other critical dimension of his work is his expansion of the national role conceptions' typology in which he comes up with seventeen roles that transcend the traditional roles ascribed to states through the lens of the cold war. Moreover, he asserts the possibility of states to hold multiple roles and that the national role conceptions should not be thought of as unchangeable elements that would inevitably result in identical types of foreign policy behaviors towards the external environment.

While Holsti's work highlights three concepts of role theory, Thies argues that role theory offers a rich set of concepts that could probably be utilized in foreign policy studies. Thies (2010, 12) classifies other concepts of role theory as independent variables that affect role enactment, role performance in Holsti's work. These variables include role expectations, role location, role demands and audience.

Role expectations, which Harnish explained their ego and alter parts, are viewed as the conceptual bridge between the individual and the social structure (Thies, 2010, 9). The relationship between the ego and alter parts of one role or between incompatible roles is shaped by conflict. Intra role conflict takes place within the same role while inter role conflict happens between roles (Harnish, 2011, 8). These role conflicts constitute an interactionist pattern that shapes foreign policy behavior (Harnish, 2012). Role location's importance is viewed in its link to the selection of the national role conceptions by the leaders in the initial stages which is often enacted through foreign policy (Thies, 2010, 12). Audience too observes and influences the role enactment process.

Role change is another interesting concept in binary role theory. This concept functions as a multi-level construct which indicates changes in role demands, role identities, and role enactments. Role change can be both at structural and agent levels. The structural factors are manifested in national interests and power and the factors at agent level are seen in role identities and enactments (Walker, 2022, 68). Role change can be made through two forms: Adaptation and learning. Role Adaptation pertains strategy, the way the problem is evaluated, in addition to tactics, which is about the amount of, the way of and the order of using instruments of role performance. Role learning is concerned with changes in the role conception's structure and content depending on information and experience (Harnish, 2011, 10-11).

1.6.2. The Significance of the Role Theory:

Whereas the core of the meta international relations theories is that the structure of the international system is the main determinant of the actions of the states, foreign policy gives importance to the belief system of decision makers and their domestic environment. Role theory has the ability to contribute to building a bridge between international relations and foreign policy through taking into consideration the importance of both agent and structure, decision makers' beliefs and cognitions on one hand and the structure and the events of the international system on the other hand.

Role theory emphasizes this interaction through the concept of national role conception in which it serves as a cognitive device to explain foreign policy behavior by bringing together agency and structure (Breuning, 2011, 26) in which national role conception formation stems both from domestic and international sources. These sources are known as ideational sources manifested in the perception of the decision makers about the identity and the cultural heritage of their states and the material sources which pertain the way decision makers perceive the capabilities and the positions of their states within the international system (Breuning, 2011).

Alongside linking agents and structures, role theory has an added value in analyzing the factors that affect foreign policy by combining three levels of analysis in international relations. Generally speaking, world politics can be viewed through three main levels including the individual level of analysis which refers to governmental and non-governmental decision makers, state level which demonstrates the impact of the state's attributes on its actions and the systematic level which was the traditional level in which the structure of the international system shapes states' policies.

The novelty of role theory lies in its ability to cross levels of analysis (Thies, 2010, 13). The concept of national role conception facilitates the employment of role theory at the three levels since investigating the sources of this conception may be conducted through several methods. For instance, speeches coding of key policy makers can both be placed at individual and state levels taking into consideration that these key individuals represent their states (Thies, 2010, 14). In a similar fashion, looking at the historical materials and the attributes of the states as their source of national role conception indicates that the level of analysis is the state and looking at the systematic variables as the main determinant of states' national conceptions indicate that the system is the level of analysis (Thies, 2010).

Role theory also provides a theoretical framework that can help explain the foreign policies of a large number of countries. While meta theories and foreign policy focus on strong

states, role theory allows the researchers to study the foreign policy behaviors and roles of the small states away of the roles attached to them by strong states in the context of the Cold war era. Role theory notions especially the national role conception can be employed to analyze the small countries' foreign policies (Herbut, 2017). Herbut mentions that small states can play important roles to transcend their smallness and enhance their standing in the international politics such as the roles of trade and development hub, buffer state and a transit one (Herbut, 2017, 7). He also selects some roles and strategies from Schroder's and Holsti's classification of the roles that small states can carry out. Among them are the roles of a mediator integrator, developer, supporter of international legal norms, transcender and a bandwagoner.

Another attempt to emphasize the role theory's ability to analyze the foreign policies of different countries can be seen in Sekhri's article in which he pointed to the possibility of studying the foreign policy of the third world countries which frequently attempted to play a range of roles at a regional, sub regional and international level (Sekhri, 2009). He stresses that role theory corresponds to the real foreign policy's course and conduct of the third world countries despite some impediments related to the analysis of these countries' foreign policies such as dependency, political instability and poor capabilities (Sekhri, 2009, 8). It can also be argued that the variety of concepts the role theory is built on and the wide range of the roles articulated by the theory's proponents qualify it to be a possible framework to explain not only the inter state relations but also the response of states to different international events and issues in addition to their relations with non-state actors. Akbaba and Özdamar (2019, 18) employed the role theory to study the four regional powers' response to the Syrian civil war namely Türkiye, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iran. They used the Syrian civil war as a foreign policy case which demonstrates the foreign policy actions of these countries towards the regional transformations (Akbaba and Özdamar, 2019, 18). Additionally, their book demonstrates the applicability of the role theory to study different policy actions as a dependent variable through foreign policy role conceptualizations derived from both material sources including economic, political and security dimensions and ideational sources manifested in identity and religion (Akbaba and Özdamar, 2019, 17).

Another work that reveals the significance of the role theory to analyze the Middle Eastern politics is conducted by Budak in which the writer attempts to analyze the decline in Turkish Israeli relations through role theory (Budak, 2014, 36). This work explains the effect of the roles Türkiye assumed in the AK party era on the Turkish Israeli relations and some of these roles are related to the Palestinian issue. It does not only show the possibility of using the

role theory to understand the relation between two states in the Middle East. It also shows that this theory can be used to analyze a state's response to an international issue, Türkiye's response to the Palestinian issue, and how this response may affect two states' relations, Türkiye and Israel.

The Application of Role Theory to the Topic of the Thesis:

In the light of the aforementioned rich set of the conceptual tools of the role theory which increase its explanatory power, this thesis believes that the employment of role theory will bring a new dimension to the analysis of the position of the Palestinian issue on the foreign policy agenda of Türkiye and Egypt. The main focus of the thesis is the concept of role since it draws the kind of relation between Palestine and the other two countries. The thesis will also benefit from the other components of role theory like the national role conception which will help understand what kind of roles Türkiye and Egypt attach to themselves when it comes to the Palestinian issue and role performance to examine these two countries' actual policies towards this issue.

This study will borrow some roles from Holsti's classification of roles that can be associated with the Palestinian issue. These roles include: mediator, defender and developer. It will also benefit from some of the sources of national role conceptions in Breuning's model. For material sources, the study will use the factors of geography, national security, states' regional and international status, and relations with another actors, in this case Israel. For ideational sources, the study will employ the factors of history, ideology and domestic audience.

1.7. Contribution of the Thesis:

This research aims to present a study about the roles of the most two prominent players in the Middle East towards the most protracted issue in the Middle East. It will attempt to fill the gap in literature in which writings about Egypt's and Türkiye's foreign policies towards the Palestinian issue in the Post Arab Spring did not exceed opinion articles about the rise of the Egyptian role at the expense of the Turkish one and vice versa. Therefore, this study is willing to present an analytical study comparing between the two roles in order to enrich the literature about the Palestinian issue and foresee its trajectory in the light of these two roles.

1.8. Plan of the Thesis:

This thesis consists of five chapters. Following the introduction section, the second chapter will cover the historical background demonstrating the genesis of the Arab Spring, its developments and the regional and international implications of the Arab Uprisings. It will also examine the impact of the Arab Spring on the Palestinian issue taking into consideration both the effects it left on and the internal dynamics of the issue and the external factors manifested in the way the Arab Spring affected the foreign policy behavior of the regional actors and so their perspective of the Palestinian issue. The third chapter will elaborate on the roles Egypt played towards the Palestinian issue in the Post Arab Spring era including the defender, developer and mediator roles. It will also discuss the sources of this role and its reflections on the traits of the Palestinian cause. The fourth chapter will be dedicated to explaining the Turkish role towards the Palestinian issue in the same way. The chapter will discuss the Turkish developer, defender and mediator roles. It will also elaborate on the motives behind these roles and their effect on the Palestinian issue. The fifth chapter will be dedicated to analyzing the similarities and differences between the two countries' roles.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW: THE ARAB SPRING AND THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE

The main focus of the first section of the second chapter is to demonstrate the different aspects of the phenomenon of the Arab Spring including its causes, evolution of developments, its consequences and its implications. The second section of the chapter will be dedicated to identifying the impact of the Arab Spring on the Palestinian issue through examining the internal and external dynamics of this issue. The first will show the domestic developments in the Palestinian politics and the complex of events which took place in different geographical places of the historic Palestinian land in the post Arab Spring era. The next part will explain the external dimensions of the issue manifested in the United States' policies towards the issue and the position of the issue on the agendas of the neighboring countries.

2.1. The Dynamics of the Arab Spring

2.1.1. The Genesis and the Causes of the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring is a widespread and a controversial term which refers to the set of the Arab Uprisings that swept the Arab World in the early 2011. These uprisings have taken the shape of various methods of protests characterized mainly by a mass participation of people from different political and ideological backgrounds voicing their demands and grievances. The other characteristic of these protests is that they announced the end of the old era of the national emancipation from colonialism in which they are mainly directed to the major internal issues in the Arab world (Abdulsalam, 2015). Moreover, the Arab Spring is seen to be distinguished from the other protest movements by its intensity and density in addition to being the peak of a stage of heightened conflict both organized and unorganized across social and political system to challenge authorities (Tarrow, 1998).

Kamal Salih pointed to the way political analysts approached the factors which caused the Arab Uprisings in which they distinguished between structural factors and spontaneous ones (Salih, 2013). Other terms were used for almost the same classification. Iffat Idris divided the factors causing Arab Spring events into structural and proximate ones which fueled nationwide protests throughout the region (Idris, 2016). Generally Speaking, the circumstances which made the environment in many Arab countries ripe for the uprising have been analyzed as a trigger that ignited already existent causes. These causes were also accompanied with other factors functioned as facilitators.

There is a broad consensus that the central trigger of these uprisings is the desperate act of the self-immolation of a Tunisian citizen (Mohamed al-Bouazizi) who didn't realize that he was pushing the first domino piece of a long chain of events that ousted four Arab rulers (Aissa, 2012). The causes that gave rise to this chain including the trigger itself have been long entrenched in the repressive political, economic and social structures which created an unbearable disgruntlement among large segments of the Arab nations.

Political causes have been manifested in the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of the long sitting rulers and their inner circles in addition to the poor performance of incompetent governments who failed to address the structural problems. Marya Sayd signals two intertwined themes in the political sphere of the Arab Spring countries. These themes are legitimacy and authoritarianism in which the domination of the pillars of authoritarianism including ruling parties and the brutal power of security forces caused prevalent legitimacy crisis and the decline of the support base (Syed, 2014).

The combination of political and economic realities generated the sustainability of the uprisings. Economic hardships can be argued to have produced a base for revolt particularly when accompanied with favoritism, humiliation and violence (Ardıç, 2012). Additionally, regimes in the Arab countries have been applying different policies to consolidate their rule and silence their people through forbidding their exercise of the freedom of expression and organization. These policies have included the monopoly of mass media communication, the prevention of opposition and the continuous harassment of human right activists and journalists (Salih, 2013).

From a social standpoint, Spyridon Plakoudas sheds light on the role of the pillars of the social structure including patriarchy, conservatism and tribalism in undermining the capability of education to secure high economic or social status and impeding a satisfactory distribution of wealth (Plakoudas, 2017). The other social and economic significant motive of the Arab Uprisings is the mismatch between education and job opportunities. Chor and Campante explained that the Arab Spring demonstrated that a high level of education and a lack of suitable jobs create an instability formula (Chor and Campante, 2012). This situation caused disillusionment among middle class. According to the World Bank report in 2015, dynamics of the middle class in Arab Spring countries are not identical in terms of size and efficiency. However, it can be noticed from the report that the common feature among them was the growth of unhappiness and frustration (World Bank, 2015). More importantly is that since the middle class was deprived of expressing its political voice, it embarked on political

protests in which its disappointment exceeded economic issues to include political demands mainly the accountability of government (Chor and Campante, 2012).

Social media has been widely seen as an important player and even as a game changer in the evolution of the Arab Uprisings. Howard and Hussein viewed social media as an element that serves as a consistent narrative of the political change and as a contributor to making the difference (Howard and Husseni, 2011). They stated that “Digital media became the tool that allowed social movements to reach once unachievable goals” (Howard and Husseni, 2011). The impact of social media and technology as a broader term on the Arab Spring developments has also been examined by Nurullah Ardiç who sees that new media technology has been influential in supporting the demonstration effect (Ardiç, 2012). He also mentions that the ICT offered the activists an opportunity to garner universal recognition and solidarity in addition to underestimating the legitimacy of the dictatorial regimes and precipitating their fall. However, at the same time he rejects the idea of technology as an independent force and asserts that technological instruments are constructed in social relations.

Online world has been also considered a resort for Arab Youth to manifest their frustration beyond the conventional areas of government’s control and concern (Momani, 2015). This advantage has been stressed by Plakodous who argued that digital media supplied the youth with enormous capabilities to help them circumvent the harsh control imposed by the oppressive regimes on organization and communication (Plakodous, 2017).

Although the analysis of the eruption and the spread of Arab Uprisings has been closely associated with the critical role of social media, the nature of this role has been debated. Adam Smidi and Saif Shahin asked the question of: “Did social media instigate protests or did they merely facilitate them?” (Smidi and Shah, 2017). They explained that there are two approaches regarding this role. The first approach views social media as an enabler and a facilitator of the protests, peoples’ connection, their mobilization and demonstrations’ organization. The other approach contends that the role of social media is limited and secondary. It states that the uprisings were in the making because of the accumulation of historical, political and economic factors in which they would have taken place with or without the existence of social media. Dina Bishara also invokes the point that the term of “Facebook generation” which was the central focus of the international media coverage neglected the role of the other actors in the society (Bishara, 2014).

Alongside political, economic and social, and media factors, the psychological factor assumed a great role in the eruption and the sustainability of the uprisings. Efser Çoşkun emphasizes the importance of emotion in creating a change by turning the negative emotions

mainly anger, and fear, into positive ones represented by solidarity and hope which inspires action. She states that “the interconnectedness of emotions and common history brings people together sharing and fighting for the same goal” (Coşkun, 2019). She further analyzes the elements of the repertoires of emotions which function as transactional mechanisms including collective action, collective identity, network society, symbolic politics, and information politics.

Hamid Dabashi presented another insightful answer to the question of what brings people together. He coins the term “delayed defiance” as the engine of what he sees as revolutionary uprisings (Dabashi, 2012). He articulates that “Delay defiance results in the gradual appearance of a new imaginative geography of liberation in which ideas of freedom, social justice and human dignity are brought forth to the collective imagination of the revolutionaries”. Rami Khorri also contributed to answering this question. He sees that the impetus of these uprisings in different Arab countries is both the basic material needs and the essential political needs manifested in the language of dignity, respect, and justice. He stresses that the latter is critically important to people even if their essential needs are met (Khorri, 2015).

2.1.2. The Trajectory of the Arab Spring Events

The Arab Spring has been a product of a combination of complex circumstances which shaped similar political, economic, and social climates in the Arab Spring countries. These similar climates include authoritarianism and democracy deficit, economic crisis, and social injustice. In the same time, these countries retained some special features including these countries’ own internal and external political and economic dynamics, institutional and military dynamics, the social fabric and the international dynamics and interests. This combination affected the developments inside these countries and throughout the region.

Generally speaking, there have been different approaches to examining these developments. (Al-Sumadi, Lenze and Hudson, 2015) asserted the need to come up with an informed observation rather than jumping to hasty generalizations. They also highlighted the notion of multiplicity among the affected countries in which each of them has been shaping its path with non-identical speeds and levels of success. (Haas and Lesch, 2013) asserted the same perspective. Their work reinforces the differences between the uprisings in terms of their causes, courses, regimes’ responses, and external actors’ actions.

A new perspective was offered by (Pollak and Byman, 2011) who assured their awareness of the uniqueness of each state but also showed the possibility of coming up with a

set of categories to improve the readers' knowledge about the region. They declared that "The organization we employed was not traditional geographic categories but instead categories based on the experiences of the states during the Arab Spring and the challenges they face". These experiences were divided into states in transition mainly Tunisia and Egypt, states moving down the path of reform mainly Jordan and Saudi Arabia and states engulfed in civil wars namely Syria and Yemen. This approach of classification has been also applied by James Gelvin who sets four categories based on shared characteristics. Tunisia and Egypt were put together and described as the markers of the beginning of the uprisings. Algeria and Syria were put in the same group described as surprises while Yemen and Libya are characterized as the weak countries of the Uprisings and the monarchies were examined as the countries of stability (Gelvin, 2012).

When explaining Arab Spring developments, Tunisia is the starting point of a chain of events within its borders and across the region. Following the self-sacrifice of the Tunisian street vendor, the cascade of popular rebellions rapidly appeared to be more than an isolated episode contained to Tunisia (Farha, 2013).

The advantage Tunisia enjoyed as the bellwether of the uprisings raised the question of why Tunisia was the first station of the Arab Uprising. The answer according to Habib Ayeb lies in that the political system of the country doesn't resemble the systems in the other Arab countries. He portrays it as "an absolute dictatorship with a modernist face" (Ayeb, 2011). He further highlights the backbones of the Tunisian political system exhibited in a well-organized economic mafia with an extremely entrenched corruption, a systematic unfair redistribution of wealth, which caused stark differences between the northern and southern parts of the country in which the power is concentrated in the north while the south is marginalized.

The developments in Tunisia marked a historical precedent of peaceful protests succeeding in deposing an Arab autocrat, the Ben Ali regime (Hamid, 2011). However, ousting Ben Ali was not an effortless task. This satisfactory result was achieved by a remarkable continuity and growth of demands. It was argued that the stoppage of the uprisings would present an opportunity for the regime to reestablish itself in a more repressive way by imposing harsh laws against the Tunisian people (Derradji, 2011). Additionally, the abrupt departure of Ben Ali was not fully predictable due to the regime's known history of quashing the previous unrests. However, the population alienation was increasingly growing especially after the 2010 campaign of the amendment of the constitution to prolong Ben Ali's rule.

The downfall of Ben Ali's regime was accelerated by the hallmarks of the Tunisian Revolution which is well-known for being both spontaneous and leaderless. These two advantages led to the internationalization of the revolution, the demise of the ideological coherence of the regime, the dismantlement of its domination on the news, the quick mobilization of the protestors, and the exposure of the regime to severe international pressure (Burt, 2018). The other critical reason which precipitated the collapse of the regime is the non-interventionist policy of the military which took the side of the demonstrators since it had no special interest in the regime's survival and so no compelling reason to open the fire at the Tunisian citizens. Therefore, the army didn't function as Ben Ali's last resort (Barany, 2011).

Egypt was the second country affected by the contagion of the Arab uprisings. Shinta Puspitsari argued that "Egypt seemed strong and normal. What happened in Tunisia was not a guarantee that Egypt will follow the same path" (Puspitasari, 2017). However, the Egyptian revolution was inspired by the Tunisian revolution and the way to the Tahrir Square was paved by the existing activist groups and social movements who learned from their previous endeavors at bringing change (Khamis and Vaughn, 2012). In other words, in addition to the influence of the swift removal of Ben Ali's regime, Egypt had its own internal dynamics which were propelling the situation in the direction of a revolution. Egypt's 25 January revolution was not constructed in a void. It rather came to the scene of deep resentment towards the political system where different social movements were formed mainly the Kefaya and 6 April movement.

Mass demonstrations in Tahrir Square were not only triggered by the death of Bouazizi in Tunisia. They were also sparked by the bloody death of Khaled Said who became a symbol of police violence against civilians and so influenced the creation of a Facebook page holding his name (Tantawi and Wiestü, 2011). Tahrir Square's enormous protests also have roots in the economic, social and political structures of the country. Noha Bakr elaborated on these circumstances. She showed the contradiction between the indicators of economic and social improvements and their reflections on the Egyptian people in which there were serious signs of dissatisfaction which the government met with an arrogant reaction (Bakr, 2016). She also gives importance to the political mood which was darkened by the human rights violations and the amendment of the constitution to satisfy the purpose of the hereditary rule and veil the one-man rule (Bakr, 2016).

The whole picture was summarized by Ann Lysch who stated that the Egyptians were pushed to the brink by the skyrocketing prices of the basic food prices, the growing

unemployment, the endless list of corrupt actions, the clampdowns on media and universities, the fraud of the parliamentary elections and the concern over the possible running of Mubarak for reelection or handing power to his hated son (Lesch, 2014).

The developments in the Tahrir Square took the shape of huge peaceful gatherings of Egyptians adopting the square as a symbol of the revolution, rejecting the regime and being confronted by the excessive violence of the police which brought a counterproductive effect of igniting other demonstrations in other cities. This process took eighteen days till Mubarak stepped down. Kashif Mumtaz argued that the strategies Mubarak employed as survival strategies like political and economic liberalization failed since these policies can buy some time for autocrats but eventually result in the breakdown of states and societies (Mumtaz, 2011). Moreover, the decisive factor of the resignation of Mubarak was that the military opted to align with the people rather than the regime (Mumtaz, 2011).

Following the fast-paced evolution of events in Tunisia and Egypt, it was Libya's turn to experience the winds of change. In her attempt to answer the question of why the Libyans rebelled, Mary Deed argued that the reason lies in the perception of the young educated of the oppression and corruption of the political elites who deprived them of their share in the country's wealth (Deeb, 2013). She further explains the complexity of the Libyan revolution in which several actors took part including the graduates of high school and universities, young military conscripts, civil servants, high-tech professionals, and the Islamists. The main development of the revolution is the overthrow of the centralized Gaddafi regime, which was accelerated by the NATO intervention. The other critical consequence is the wide distribution of weaponry across the country and the fracture of the security institutions along ideological, personal and tribal lines (Winer, 2019).

Syria also proved to be susceptible to the changes brought by the Arab Spring. James Gelvin explains the reasons why Syria was thought of as a stable country which can resist the wave of revolutions. These reasons include the reputation of Assad as a reformer, the anti-imperialist sense of his leadership, the strong support the Syrian regime received from religious minorities, and the crackdown of the security forces on the initial sporadic demonstrations (Gelvin, 2012). However, this perceived stability did not last for long. The early moves were driven by the power of the demonstration effect in which Syrians had their grievances and identified with the Arab Uprisings (Lynch, 2013). Moreover, the regime's brutal reaction radicalized the opposition and transformed it from a peaceful demand for reform to a radical

demand for regime change (Phillips, 2012). Unlike the Tunisian, Egyptian, and Libyan regimes, the Syrian regime proved to be resilient.

The Arab Uprisings were not confined to the Levant and North Africa. Yemen also witnessed the growth in voices demanding change motivated by the accumulation of the country's problems, the cynical constitutional amendment to permit Ali Saleh to stay in power, the brutal response of the regime to the protests, and the president's monopoly of power in addition to the entrenched corruption and the dismal economic conditions (Al-Tamimi, 2020). Ahmet Gökbel points to the regional dimension that complicated the developments in Yemen, a country that holds a strategic position important to the interests of several regional actors (Gökbel, 2021). He further adds that these actors' intervention in Yemen yielded harmful social, political, economic, and health consequences manifested in the collapse of the country's institutions, the destruction of petroleum facilities, the paralysis of the health system and the emergence of a dire humanitarian crisis.

Republics were not the only states subjected to the Arab Uprising. The uprisings took place in the monarchies as well. Bahrain is a prominent example of a kingdom where the situation had severe regional dimensions. Bahrainis were encouraged by the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt and took to the streets. Their demands did not call for a monarchy's abolishment. They were rather premised on requests for a constitutional monarchy, the prime minister's resignation, elected government, and civil liberties (Zunes, 2013). The growth of the protests was met with a hardline approach by the government. Later developments transcended the people and their government to include an intervention by the US armed Saudi forces and units from the UAE and other Gulf countries to assist the Bahraini king who perceived these forces as significant to restore order and blamed Iran for the turmoil (Zunes, 2013). The consequence was a defiant king and an escalation in the campaign of governmental repression against the citizens.

In a similar manner, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Morocco, and Jordan experienced mild upheavals. As in Bahrain, people in these monarchies aspired for political and economic changes. States of the Gulf cooperation council employed a combination of carrot and stick policies to ease the social resentment and quell the demonstrations when necessary (Barany, 2013). Monarchs in Morocco and Jordan responded with the permission of the peaceful demonstrations observed by the police and presented political concessions and constitutional changes in a way that does not modify the distribution of the political power in their monarchies

(Barany, 2013). These policies resulted in the great resilience of the monarchs and the non-radicalization of the opposition and the demonstrators.

Following the initial developments which led to the regimes' collapse in some countries and the regimes' resilience in others, a great deal of discussion was held about the future of the Arab Spring countries. One of the aspects of this future was these countries' potential for a successful transition to democracy. Eva Bellin argues that the diversity of the outcomes of the Arab uprisings is born out of the diversity of the Arab countries' structural attributes (Bellin, 2012).

Bellin elaborates on this diversity by contending that Tunisia is privileged for an effective transition to democracy given its religious and ethnic homogeneity, social order's pillars manifested in professionalized state institutions, a large middle class, the existence of a proportional representation system, and more importantly a shared commitment among opposition forces to a democratic transition. On the other hand, she explains that Egypt is less well situated for such a transition because of the uncertainty of the commitment of the main actors in Egypt to a democratic system, the exclusive institution-building process, the central role of the military in the Egyptian politics and the absence of a collaboration between opposition forces. For Yemen and Libya, she argues that the lack of nation and state-building makes them the least lucky for a transition. Syria and Bahrain according to her have the bleakest democratic prospects because of the imbalance between the state and the opposition and the intervention of outside powers.

In a similar fashion, (Mustafa, 2014) has recognized the difficulty of predicting the future democratic map of the region given the various variables that complicate the process of a true democratic transformation. Additionally, the author points to the factors that determine the fulfillment of the democratic prospects including the role of the military and the Islamists in Egypt, the coordination between the secularist and Islamist groups in Tunisia and the strengthening of the state institutions in Libya.

Another greatly discussed dimension of the post-Arab Spring political landscape is the extent of change and continuity of the pre-Arab Spring realities in which it has been questioned whether the Arab Spring is heralding a new era of a genuine alteration of the underlying structures or a deepening of their preservation. Momani (2012) demonstrates these two views' justifications. She mentions that the supporters of the doctrine of change have explained the Arab Spring as a break from the traditional perception of Arab exceptionalism in which it is

believed that the region is going through a change on several levels characterized by responsive government acting according to their people's demands. On the other hand, she points to the conviction of the adherents of the doctrine of continuity who interpret the Arab Spring as the maintenance of the same type of domestic and international politics despite the existence of new governments and the overthrow of the old echelons.

The idea of continuity has been echoed in Abdulsattar's work who argued that the toppling of the regimes in Egypt and Tunisia doesn't indicate their total demise since the nature of these regimes remained firmly intact (Abdulsattar, 2015). He summarizes his perspective in the statement "Dictators left but the dictatorship stayed". Etmike Laz also emphasizes this approach by concluding that the Egyptian experience, the outset of Mubarak followed by the election of the Muslim Brotherhood who lost their rule to the military, ended up with the restoration of the old order and the renewal of the security state (Laz,2014). He further describes the elections that Egypt witnessed as a "sham prospectus to secure benevolent despotism" (Laz,2014).

A similar conclusion was drawn by Imad Salamey who argues that no state managed to accomplish an actual, comprehensive transition to democracy (Salamey, 2015). He further sheds light on the obstacles introduced in the post-Arab Spring era including the concerns about the exclusionary discourse of the Islamist movements, the intensification of the fragmentation between different political and religious groups, the religious-secular divide, and the creation of a new of struggle which doesn't target the regimes but rather escalates to sectarian warfare among ethnic groups.

These roller coaster developments pushed some analysts to review their conceptualization of the Arab Spring events. Gelvin (2016) highlights the causes of the incorrectness of the utilization of the term "Arab Spring" including the calendrical inaccuracy, the incompatibility between the actual meaning of spring, which means joy and renewal, and the sour developments of the uprisings in addition to the elusive promise of the Arab Spring and the fact that this term obstructs the point that Arab Spring should not be viewed as an isolated event but as a culmination of a long struggle for human and democratic rights. Ekrem Ok also believes that the incidents in the Arab World post-2011 are better regarded as an uprising not as a revolution since the concept of a revolution indicates radical changes that these incidents did not result in.

Blownlee and Ghiabi (2016) contended that the Arab Spring can be positioned between the paradigms of revolts and revolutions. They argued that a revolution is distinguished from a revolt by their long duration for after tomorrow while revolts are related to the short term which is now and tomorrow. Therefore, they see that the Arab Spring is a moment of revolt. Moreover, they criticized the wide range of concepts which shape the West's scholarship on Arab Uprisings including Arab Awakening, Arab Spring and Arab Winter for their emphasis on the pattern of the unlikability of change and the exceptionality of the Arab world.

2.1.3: The Regional and International Implications of the Arab Spring

At first glance, the theatre of the Arab Spring's chain of events might seem confined to the Levant and North Africa, However, the phenomenon of Arab Spring contains dimensions that transcend the geography of its birth to include the region and beyond. The notion of transformation was not reduced to the Arab states' political structures. It was extended to the region's geopolitics which witnessed deep changes including the birth of new alliances, the emergence of new regional powers, and the process of producing a new security architecture (Malmving, 2012). In addition to the Arab Spring's relevance on local and regional levels, it presented lessons and challenges for international politics (Perthes, 2012).

Several themes were used to examine the regional implications, the first theme is about the impact of involvement of the external players on the fate of Arab Spring countries. Fraihat and Yaseen (2020) argue that regional politics has debilitated the Arab revolutions, vandalized the democratic transitions, reinforced the existent authorities and created conflicts which resulted in insecurity and instability. These conflicts as they exhibit are sparked by the split of the multiple actors among competing camps, their support of different forces, and the formation of proxies. At last, they contend that the attributes of the post Arab Spring political order will herald a new revolution. This idea is reflected in Ataman's view that the Arab Spring's spirit is persistent and will carry on disturbing the perceived immunity of the Arab regimes (Ataman, 2019).

The second theme pertains the intra-Arab relations and the role of Arab regional organizations. Sallokh (2013) concludes that the Arab Uprising exacerbated the already existent geopolitical battles generated by the US invasion of Iraq and worsened the intra-Arab battles. He also mentioned that the big transformation was from a rivalry based on ideology to a merciless sectarianism deployed to achieve geopolitical aims. This perspective was emphasized

by Asif Mohiuddin who sees that the Arab Spring paved the way for a struggle over identity politics and showed the differences between countries' approaches to regional politics and their support for different groups (Mohiuddin, 2016).

For Arab regional organizations, the Arab League was seen incapable of dealing with the uprisings. It was viewed ineffective in fulfilling its responsibility towards the collective Arab security and so these responsibilities were outsourced to the UN and NATO (Sallokh, 2013). Sever (2019) also notes that the Arab league was incompetent in producing Arab solution for the conflicts which followed the uprisings. Instead, the regional power intervention was in a continuous escalation. The Gulf Countries Council was also weakened by the divergences between Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Moreover, new characteristics of regionalization were born like a surge in refugees, non-state armed actors, and trans-border sectarianism.

The third theme was regarding the potential regional order transformations. Hinebusch (2014) contends that the uprisings resulted in the intensification of the regional struggle for power, the alteration of balance and the creation of two categories of regional powers which are mainly the powers which were engaged in a competition to affect the uprisings' outcomes but none of them managed to achieve a decisive benefit and the Arab Spring states which represented the arenas of this rivalry. Similarly, Ayoub (2014) argues that the major Arab powers except Saudi Arabia directed their efforts towards domestic order issues which enabled the non-Arab powers particularly Türkiye and Iran to play key roles in regional politics. Another observation was that the division between pro and anti-western blocs remained but was characterized by sectarian expressions mainly the Sunni and Shia fault lines (Hinnebusch, 2014).

The main way used to examine the international implications of the uprisings was to analyze the role of foreign countries in changing the course of developments. Hass and Lesch (2013) articulated that the outsiders both followed the events closely and made decisions to intervene in different ways and side with various actors whether they are the government or the revolutionaries through the lens of their interests in the Arab Spring countries which should be grasped on a case-by-case basis.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze the positions and the calculations of every single power, but it can be said that most of the literature revolved around the idea of how different international powers viewed their potential risks and opportunities based on their perceptions of the uprisings particularly the United States. The other idea was the impact of the

Arab Spring on the international order. Jones (2011) argued that the Arab Spring coincided with a time characterized by a continuous change in the international system in which the Arab Spring events will reinforce what he calls: “global rebalancing of power and responsibilities”. Ardiç (2012) mentioned other dimensions regarding the impact of international politics on the Arab Spring in which he contends that the future of the Arab Uprisings depends on the balance between the revolutionary groups’ programs and the international community’s pressures and demands.

2.2. The Dynamics of the Palestinian Issue During Post-Arab Spring: Domestic developments

Since Palestine retains a unique position in the Arab world and has been considered for long as a regional core issue, Scholars’ preoccupation with analyzing the new realities in different Arab countries did not prevent them from examining and predicting the possible implications of the Arab Spring on the Palestinian people, Palestinian politics and the centrality of the Palestinian issue. Opinions varied about whether the wind of the Arab Spring reached Palestine. The first approach supports the idea of the absence of Palestine from the Arab Spring scene. Sanosi (2014) notes that Palestine was missing from the Arab Uprisings’ revolutionary discourse in which this discourse aimed to liberate the Arab people from the internal enemy not the external one including the pan Arabist regimes which used to defend the Palestinian issue as a Pan Arabist issue. He further argues that the Arab countries will be more occupied with their internal affairs in what he calls “the problem of demolition and construction” which will weaken the impact of the Arabic circle on the future of the Palestinian issue.

Masoud (2011) points to the concerns over the unintended consequences of a potential Palestinian involvement in the Arab states’ affairs especially endangering the situation of the Palestinian refugees in these countries. He further suggests that the Palestinians should stay away from the surrounding developments and direct their efforts towards their internal situation, prioritize a national unity project and continue resistance against the Israeli occupation.

The second approach sees that Palestine was not totally distant from the Arab Spring momentum. Kayalli (2011) argues that the Arab Spring reinforced the concept of national revolution among Palestinians and expanded the concept of liberation to transcend the land to the values of justice and equality. Alzaro (2012) supports this perspective by arguing that

Palestine might be absent from the uprisings' slogans. However, these uprisings are a precondition for the liberation of Palestine since they are meant to liberate the Arab nations from tyranny and despotism to be able to confront Israel.

This attitude was enriched by Reem Abulfadel's analysis which demonstrates that the Egyptian Uprising was driven by a combination of domestic causes and foreign policy issues. She argues that the Palestinian issue and the Egyptian Israeli relations were among the most significant foreign policy issues which pushed the people to protest against the Mubarak regime in which Egyptian citizens linked their dire socio-economic situation and the decrease of the international standing of Egypt with Mubarak's submissiveness to the United States and Israel (Abulfadel, 2012). She expressed that Palestine has quickly advanced on the agenda of the people's demands to the extent of unleashing calls for rethinking and even abrogating the peace treaty and voicing anti- Zionism and pro-Palestinian stances.

Another distinct view that associated the process and the implications of the Arab Spring with the Palestinians was offered by Assad Ghanem who asserts that the Arab Spring presents an opportunity that the Palestinians can draw lessons from and then transform them into a genuine political work within their context (Ghanem,2013). The author invites the Palestinians to work on an inclusive national project which exceeds the traditional Palestinian political parties and creates a political platform which ensures the engagement of all the Palestinians in this project. Moreover, in his opinion, the Palestinians should take advantage of any democratization step in the Arab countries since it will provide a free space for mobilization and conducting activities that advocate the Palestinian issue.

Khaled Elgindi seems to merge the two approaches in which he contends that the Palestinians did not experience the mass popular mobilization witnessed by the other Arab countries. However, Palestine has undergone the Arab Spring in its way due to its unique political and social circumstances, which the other Arab countries lack, which complicates Palestine's transition to democracy (Elgindi, 2011).

After stating the divergent views regarding the extent of the connection between the Arab Spring and the Palestinians, it would be beneficial to trace the domestic developments in Palestine during and after the Arab Spring. These developments can be explained as the following.

2.2.1. The Sustainable Palestinian Protest Movement

The Palestinian history is characterized by two mass popular uprisings known as intifadas in which the Palestinians expressed their mass will and their realization of the need for a sustainable Palestinian resistance against the Israeli occupation. A similar spirit was manifested in the Palestinians' protests in the West Bank and Gaza on the 15th of March 2011 which revolved around the demands of achieving national unity and ending the long-standing division between the two Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas which worsened the Palestinian lives within the harsh context of the Israeli occupation.

Regarding the origins of these protests, Amour (2018) suggests that the Palestinians' frustration is attributed to the recession of the national project, the unstable political environment and the deteriorating socio-economic conditions under the rule of the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, and the internal rift between these two political rivals. Additionally, the Palestinians' discontent with the incapability of their leadership to overcome the Israeli occupation was amplified by the occurrence of the Arab Spring (Pratt, 2012).

According to the Guardians in 2011, these protests had similar features to the Arab Uprisings in terms of being leaderless, focused on a clear goal, in addition to their utilization of social media sites for mobilization manifested in the electronic 15 March page. It explains that the Palestinians wanted to move from being spectators to being active and emulate the initiatives of the other Arab citizens especially in Egypt even if the Palestinians' goal was slightly different in which they unlike the Egyptians didn't want to bring down the regimes in the West Bank and Gaza but rather wanted their unification.

Alsaqqa (2014) adds another important dimension in his analysis of these protests. He argues that these protests attempted to crystallize a new national speech which overlaps with the local Arab peculiarities which are embodied in the strong presence of the emulation sense of the Arab Uprisings' slogans in the Palestinian protests like: "the nation wants to end the division and the nation wants to terminate Oslo". This emulation was also reflected in the 2012 protests organized by some Palestinian syndicates which took a clear protest demand character against the liberal economic policies of the Palestinian National Authority. He sees that the importance of this emulation lies in the conduct of a comparison between the situation of the Palestinians and their Arab counterparts which led to the weakening of the already feeble position of the Palestinian National Authority as the result of the failure of the economic policies and the national project in addition to the mistrust conflict between the individuals and the Palestinian institutions (Alsaqqa, 2014).

Another notion that the Palestinians adopted is the right to return marches which started for the first time on the fifteenth of May 2011 and were sustained as a significant feature of the Palestinian protest movement in the subsequent years. According to Aljazeera in 2011, the similarities between these marches and the Arab Uprisings are derived from sharing the demand for the same values of dignity, the clarity of slogans in which the Arab citizens in Tunisia and Egypt wanted to topple the regimes and the Palestinians desired to return to Palestine, in addition to the principle of a comprehensive participation in which the demonstrators in the Arab Uprisings were from different ages, parties, and backgrounds and in the same manner Palestinians in the marches were from various political affiliations including Palestinian refugees in Syria and Lebanon.

These marches reached their peak in 2018 on the earth day when Palestinians launched one of the most significant popular uprising waves against the Israeli occupation which started with mass popular formations, setting them apart from the 2011 demonstrations, and then joined by various national factions. Al Jazeera Center for Studies in 2018 points to the special geographical context of the 2018 return marches in which were concentrated in the Gaza Strip where they were called “marches of return and lifting of the blockade” in a clear and intentional connection between the emphasis on the Palestinian refugees’ right of return and sending a reminder of the deteriorating socioeconomic situation and the increase of the political uncertainty in the Gaza Strip.

A Study about march returns issued by the political and moral guidance authority in the Ministry of Interior and national security in Gaza explained the main attributes and the aims of these marches. This study mentions that these marches were characterized by the utilization of peaceful popular means of resistance, sustainability, and a big popular interaction aiming to achieve several strategic aims like reinforcing the centrality of the Palestinian issue, increasing the awareness of the Palestinian nation about one of the main issues of the struggle which is the refugees’ issue, directing the battle against the Israeli occupation and mobilizing the international public opinion. For the tactical objectives, the marches demanded the end of the Israeli blockade of Gaza and the achievement of the Palestinian national unity.

2018 marches of return were also seen as a part of the scene of the Arab Uprisings. Rahma Kudami, the director of the grassroots organization in the US, staid in her interview with Democracy Now channel that the Palestinian issue can not be detached from the other issues in the region and that the struggle of the Palestinians and the Arab people in the region should be thought of as intertwined.

Expressing solidarity with Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails is another significant motivation for Palestinians' protests. Hunger strikes emerged as a method adopted by Palestinian prisoners to demonstrate their refusal to the dehumanizing policies of the Israeli prisons against them. 2012 and 2017 mark the increasing resorting to hunger strikes among Palestinian prisoners which pushed the Palestinians outside the prison to embark on demonstrations, sit-ins, marches towards the Israeli jails, and protests in front of the Red Crescent offices.

2017 Protests as noted by TRT are reported to be the most massive in years in which the Palestinians announced a general strike in the West Bank as an act of support to the Palestinian prisoners' campaign of a phenomenal hunger strike. Solidarity marches were also organized to champion the success of some of the Palestinian prisoners escaping from AL Gilboa prison in 2021. Aljazeera points to the embodiment of the set of popular demonstrations both organized by the Palestinians in the Palestinian-occupied territories and the Palestinian camps in Lebanon in what was called "The Friday of grabbing freedom".

This kind of interaction between prisoners and the protesters was explained by Julie Norman's argument that the prisoners succeeded in extending their resistance beyond the spatial restrictions of the jail, reaching out to communities and political factions outside the prison and creating a status of mobilization and solidarity (Norman,2020). Additionally, the prisoners' issue provided an opportunity for Palestinians to restore their unity due to the particular significance of this issue as a cause immune to criticism and underestimation and so has the ability to attract a widespread attention (Anthonisan, 2019).

2.2.2. The Reconciliation Attempts between the Palestinian Political Factions

Palestinian politics has been characterized by a perpetual struggle between parties which differ in ideologies, interests and policies towards Israel, regional connections and relations with the US. Hamas and Fatah have been the main contending actors in the Palestinian arena. There have been stark differences between the two parties which culminated in an internal fighting in 2007 which ensued into two separate ways of governing and a deep geographical and political division. Several mediations, direct and indirect talks were conducted in an attempt to reconcile these differences, form a national consensus government and agree on the procedures of national legislative and presidential elections. Among the main

attempts were the Macca agreement in 2007 and the Palestinian paper in 2009 whose conditions were not implemented and rather they reached a deadlock.

The Arab Spring and the ensuing regional dynamics created momentum to reactivate the reconciliation talks. Gelvin (2012) explains that these talks were accelerated due to the developments in Egypt and Syria which led to these factions' loss of their patrons, Mubarak in the case of Fateh and Assad in the case of Hamas. Additionally, the Palestinian leaders viewed the reconciliation as a tactic to absorb the growing dissatisfaction of the Palestinians and as a precondition to embark on their bid of seeking the UN recognition of Palestine as a statehood. This reconciliation was also portrayed as a defense mechanism in which Fateh and Hamas feared the intense frustration of the Palestinian street with their rule and they found themselves weak and destabilized due to the regional situation which precipitated their steps toward a rapprochement (Pace, 2013).

2011 carried the seeds of a reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas under the supervision of Egypt. The Palestinian national dialogue in Cairo revolved around the themes of dealing with all of the issues resulting from the constant state of the Palestinian division through formulating committees to achieve the requirements of the reconciliation including elections, the formation of national unity governments, general freedoms, trust building, the reactivation of the Palestinian national council, and the reform of the Palestinian Liberation Organization to include other factions like Hamas. 2012 Doha agreement added the suggestion of establishing a government of national competencies assigned with the task of facilitating the presidential elections and reconstruction efforts of Gaza (Aljazeera, 2017).

These two agreements were followed by direct talks in 2014 and the Cairo agreement in 2017 which assigned the Palestinian national authority to take on the responsibilities of the government in Gaza. Three years later, Fatah and Hamas met in Istanbul and then the two factions arranged another meeting to build on the understandings of Istanbul meeting and accelerate the process of the presidential and legislative elections (Masri, 2020).

It's noteworthy to point to some of the concerns which complicated the materialization of the agreements' conditions. Ezbidy (2011) points to the contrasting perceptions of Hamas and Fatah regarding the issue of elections which was emphasized by most of the agreements between the two parties. He explains that Fatah wanted to re-legitimize the rule of Abbas and his prime minister and take advantage of Hamas's rejection of the conduct of elections while Hamas doubts the idea of holding elections before the completion of the reconciliation process

and sees that the Palestinian Liberation Organization is not qualified or legitimate to make a call for elections given its security coordination with Israel. The conflicting interests and the narrow views of the two parties are detrimental to the Palestinian political environment which could be better off without the grip of these two factions on the Palestinian politics.

The deep traditional disagreements continued to dominate the dynamics of relations between Fatah and Hamas especially those over security cooperation with Israel in addition to the absence of comprehensive strategic plans for the future of the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip and the lack of a consensus on the steps prior the conduct of the elections and merging the two factions' governing institutions (Jaraba, 2014).

The disparities between Fatah and Hamas were severed by an external factor manifested in the influence of the United States and Israel. Munyyer (2011) raises the issues of the link between the security apparatus of the Palestinian Authority and the United States in addition to the objection of the United States and Israel to the idea of the integration of Hamas. This attitude put Fatah in a difficult situation since a reconciliation with Hamas means the jeopardization of Fatah's relations with the United States.

2.2.3. The Palestinian Leadership's Seeking of Membership in the United Nations and Its Agencies

The Palestinian Authority's belief in international diplomacy prompted it to demand the elevation of the status of Palestine from a non-member entity to a member state in 2011. The Palestinian Authority also started to increase its efforts to join the international organizations. These bids to gain membership in the United Nations and its agencies were reinforced by campaigns which included sending letters to the UN members calling on them to vote for the membership request of Palestine. The campaign considered the vote for Palestine as a manifestation of commitment to democracy, human rights declarations and international law whose application should be seen as comprehensive and not selective (Wafa News, 2015).

The justification for this demand lies in the stronger position the status of full membership can grant the Palestinians. Dbouk (2011) explains that this potential membership implies the international recognition of Palestine as a state. This status means that the Palestinian state will be guaranteed the UN charter's protection since this chapter protects the states from threats against their political independence and territorial integrity. Moreover,

joining the international community enables the Palestinians to employ international mechanisms to force Israel to admit the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Palestine.

From the Palestinian Authority's point of view, the admission of Palestine to the United Nations would change the nature of the conflict into an issue between two states in which Israel is the violator of the sovereign rights of Palestine (Elgindy, 2011). Additionally, the Palestinian Authority believes that this change will upgrade the negotiation level to be equitable. The Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas expressed this goal in his statement: "Palestine would be negotiating from a position of one the United Nations members whose territory is militarily occupied by another state and not as vanquished people ready to accept whatever term put in front of them" (Abbas, 2011).

Other internal reasons were added to explain the timing of this bid. Laila Farsakh explains that the Palestinian leadership's request for full membership in the United Nations should not be only read through the lens of the desire of the Palestinian Authority to overcome the stalemate in its negotiations with Israel. She argues that it should be rather seen as an attempt to contain the Palestinian popular uprisings which were inspired by the Arab Uprisings. She points to President Abbas's utilization of harsh terms to describe Israel's policies, terms that conform to the Palestinian people's perceptions about the Israeli occupation, in his speeches at the United Nations in the years 2011 and 2012 (Farsakh, 2012).

The linkage between the Arab Uprisings and the Palestinian protests and the usage of the people's terminology to express Israel's actions was drawn in the statements Abbas kicked off his speech with. He said that: "At a time when the Arab people affirm their quest for democracy in what was known as the Arab Spring, the hour of the Palestinian Spring has also sounded, the hour of independence. Our people will continue their popular, peaceful resistance against the Israeli occupation, the settlement and apartheid policies and the construction of the apartheid wall" (Al-Mahaba radio news, 2011).

The United Nations decided to raise the Palestinian representation from an observer entity to a non-member observer state by a majority of 138 countries. This decision was considered by the Palestinian Authority as a historic vote and a game changer in the political rules (France 24, 2012). However, although Palestine's status was upgraded, the Palestinian leadership's expectations were downgraded since it did not manage to achieve its desired aim of full UN membership mainly because it failed to obtain the nine yes votes of the security council.

Regarding joining the international organizations, Palestine's membership was accepted in UNESCO which was viewed as a political victory for the Palestinians. The Palestinian ambassador to the European headquarter of the United Nations in Geneva in his interview with Swiss info channel illustrated the Palestinians' benefit from the UNESCO membership declaring that: "We will now take advantage of our presence in UNESCO to defend the historical Palestinian sites and solve the big problems in the fields of science and education where Israel is trying to prevent us from obtaining technologies .This membership will also solve the issue of the freedom of movement of the academic staff so that they can have modern facilities compatible with the requirements of educational attainment"(Sharif, 2011).

The UNESCO membership encouraged the Palestinian Authority to examine the possibility of becoming a member in the remaining UN agencies in addition to signing a set of international treaties. Among the significant international organizations that Palestine became a full member in are the International Criminal Court and the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2015 followed by gaining membership in both the International organization of the Supreme Audit Institutions and the international Criminal Police Organization in 2017 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

The aims of these memberships were explained in the context of benefiting from the mechanisms of these organizations to hold Israel accountable for its violations against the Palestinians (Department of human rights and civil society in the PLO, 2017). Despite the perceived advantages of Palestine's status in the United Nations and its membership in some of the UN organizations, there are some concerns impeding the realization of these advantages. The primary source of these concerns is the US's and Israel's responses. Obama administration diagnosed the Palestinian action as a symbolic one to isolate and delegitimize Israel. The United States perceives the Israeli -Palestinian negotiations as the only avenue for Palestinians to obtain a state. Therefore, the Palestinians' bid to seek international recognition for Palestine as a state was viewed by the United States as an underminer of the international peace frameworks and a threat to the interests of the United States and Israel (Schaefer, 2011)

Similarly, the United States hardened its stance by withdrawing its financial contributions to the budget of UNESCO after it accepted Palestine as a full member. This measure comes as an application of the US law in 1990 which stipulates the prevention of delivering funds to UN bodies that welcome the full membership of Palestine (The Guardians, 2011). These laws are meant to perceive the admission of Palestine in these organizations as a

risk that ends the American financial support which will discourage the UN organizations from accepting Palestine's membership (Schaefer, 2011).

The US sanctions were extended to the freezing of 200 million dollars of aid to the Palestinian Authority following its demand for full membership (AlJazeera, 2011). Israel's response was in the same line with the United States. Israel expedited the process of the construction of new housing units in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in addition to ceasing the transfer of the value-added taxes and customs to the Palestinian Authority (Eden, 2013). Moreover, Israeli diplomats were delivering the message of Israel's intention to cancel the Oslo Accords partially or fully as a result of the Palestinian initiative of demanding UN membership (Haaretz, 2012).

The second concern pertains to the feasibility of these memberships and their capacity to bring a genuine change in the Palestinian political reality. The international recognition of Palestine as a state is a symbolic success that does not guarantee the formal recognition of the other attributes of this state including its sovereignty and borders. The recognition of these elements still requires direct negotiations with Israel (McMahon and Masters, 2012). This concern includes Palestine's membership in UNESCO. Although in theory, this international organization offers a platform for the protection of the Palestinian heritage, in practice its effectivity is impeded by the American and Israeli pressures on the Palestinian representatives to give up on efforts of adding some Palestinian sites to the world heritage list for the sake of the resumption of negotiations. Additionally, the Palestinian legislations are fragmented and don't meet international standards which complicates the duty of UNESCO (Azarov and Suleiman, 2013).

Similarly, while Palestine's accession to the International Criminal Court has been seen as an important development, the genuine capability of this organization to hold Israel accountable is questioned. The first obstacle to a real functioning ICC is the US and Israel's attitudes of opposing the ICC's decisions claiming that Palestine cannot be considered a state and that Israel has not joined the Rome Statue (Allen, 2021). More importantly, Israel takes advantage of the complementarity principle, which means that the ICC does not investigate the issues prosecuted by national judicial bodies, to protect itself from the investigation of the ICC by promoting the conformity of the Israeli investigation mechanisms to the international law (Azarof, 2015).

The other obstacle that hampers the feasibility of the ICC is the prosecutor's assessment of the crimes in the Palestinian territory. The prosecutor might assess that these crimes are not within the specialty of the ICC (Qunber, 2016). Additionally, the absence of clear guidelines to determine the gravity of crimes might push the prosecutor to claim that the Palestinian situation is not sufficiently grave or that the investigations into this issue affect the track of the negotiations and diplomatic efforts (BSCO, 2016).

The third concern is related to the absence of a consensus among the Palestinian people and the Palestinian factions over the significance of the Palestinian Authority's steps in the international platforms. The agenda of the Palestinian activists is not identical to the agenda of the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian activists want to reformulate the Palestinian national fight as a fight against the Israeli apartheid system to restore the inalienable rights of the Palestinians and not only establish the state itself (Farsakh, 2012). The already existent division between Fateh and Hamas was apparent regarding the Palestinian Authority's initiative of going to the UN. Although the chief of the political office of Hamas Khaled Mashaal eventually welcomed the move, he stressed his party's view that this step has to be within the framework of a vision and a strategy that preserves the national rights and the factors of the strength of the Palestinian people, foremost of which is the resistance (Wafa News, 2012).

Besides, Hamas's approval came after an initial rejection. Haniye, one of Hamas's representatives, has expressed that the Palestinian Authority's efforts to obtain membership in the United Nations will reach a dead end. He further explained that any move based on the logic of monopolizing the Palestinian political decision and on a partial step that does not come in the context of a national program and recognizes Israel's sovereignty on 78 % of the Land of Palestine would reach a deadlock (Al Jazeera, 2011).

Hamas has also criticized the sequence of Abbas's speeches before the General Assembly as it views them as a reproduction of failure and as speeches that do not reflect the big challenges that the Palestinian issue faces (Al Mayadeen, 2021). Other descriptions were that Abbas's speeches are below the desired level (Anadolu Agency, 2018) and that Abbas in his speeches does not differentiate between legitimate resistance and terrorism (Al Jazeera, 2017).

2.2.4. The sequence of Israel's wars on Gaza

The military confrontations between Israel and Hamas are among the most critical developments that Palestine in general and Gaza in particular have witnessed over the last several years. Israel and Hamas have different interpretations of these confrontations, their triggers, the terms used to describe them, their political and military objectives and who is the owner of the decisive victory and who is the loser. The saga dates back to 2005 when Israel implemented a disengagement plan from Gaza Strip. However, in reality Israel preserved its control over many dimensions of life in the strip which was tightened after Hamas took power in 2007 (Butt, 2016). Israel imposed a suffocating blockade on Gaza which left painful impacts on the Gazan people in the areas of economy, health, access to basic food supplies and safe drinking water. Thus, Israel's aggressive attacks against Gaza caused massive destruction of an already vulnerable densely populated area.

These attacks took the shape of both wars and skirmishes. In the post-Arab Spring era, almost four bloody wars took place in the years 2012, 2014, 2021, and 2022. The starting point of the 2012 war was Israel's assassination campaign against Hamas' leaders. The perception of the necessity of directing military strikes against Hamas received a great and consistent Israeli consensus. However, it was motivated by different political and military objectives (Mustafa, 2013). Israel's military motives for the war, as stated by Israel's minister of defense, revolved around reinforcing the Israeli deterrence power and causing painful blows towards Hamas (Shalhat, 2013) while the political interest of Israel's prime minister "Netanyahu" was increasing his chance of winning the 2013 general elections through achieving an Israeli victory in Gaza and prioritizing the security agenda over the economic and social demands of the Israeli society (Farhana, 2012).

Following eight days of intense exchange of fire between Israel and Hamas, the war ended with an agreement under the auspices of Egypt. However, it was not the last round between the two sides since neither Israel relinquished the assassination policy as a main security tool nor Hamas accepted disarmament (Al Jamal, 2013). Additionally, the cease fire agreement neither led to the normalization of relations between the two sides nor achieved progress on the political side (Berti, 2014).

The fragility of the 2012 cease fire agreement paved the way to the 2014 war, the second post-Arab Spring Israel's war on Gaza which is known to be the bloodiest and the most catastrophic one. The intense exchange of fire between Israel and Hamas in 2014 was triggered by Israel's accusation of Hamas of kidnapping and killing three settlers in the West bank and

the tragic crime a group of settlers committed against the Jerusalemite guy, Mohammad Abu Khdeir, whom they kidnapped and burnt alive.

For political purposes, Israel waged this war on Gaza in an attempt to vandalize the reconciliation agreement between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas since the hostility between the two sides is of a great strategic advantage for Israel (Filiu, 2014). Akkad (2017) places this cycle of violence within the context of tensions in the Israeli Palestinian relations before the war. He explains that this tension was fueled by Israel's refusal to release the forth batch of the Palestinian prisoners according to its agreement with the Palestinian Authority and its punishment measures against the Palestinian Authority after Abbas's initiative to seek UN membership. He also argues that regional and international developments including the eruption of the Arab Uprisings, the preoccupation of the Arab countries with their affairs, the war against Daiish and the tensions between the US and Russia reinforced Israel's impunity from accountability and strengthened its belief in power as the main way to solve problems (Akkad, 2017).

Hamas called this war "Al Asf Alma Kool" while Israel called it "The protective edge". In this war, Israel stepped up its devastating power and targeted countless civilian targets which outweighed the military objectives. Israel's aggressive attacks on Gaza caused incredible destruction to the Gazans' homes, civilian buildings, and schools in order to punish "the social environment incubating the resistance" (Dweiri, 2015). After almost 50 days of acute fighting, the war came to an end by a cease- fire agreement equivalent to the 2012 agreement. It was agreed that Israel would open the crossings and permit humanitarian aid and construction materials to enter Gaza in addition to the extension of the fishing zone. The difficult issues regarding Hamas's political demands for a seaport and an airport and Israel's insistence on Hamas's disarmament were postponed to another round of indirect talks (Guardians, 2014).

In 2019, tensions rose again and developed into a military escalation on the border between Israel and the Palestinian Gaza resistance caused by Israel's assassination of a prominent military leader of the Islamic Jihad, Bahaa' Abu Alatta and the Islamic Jihad's military response (France 24, 2019). 2021 witnessed the outbreak of another war between Israel and Hamas as the culmination of the Palestinian resistance against Israel's ethnic cleansing policies against the Palestinian families in the Sheik Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem and its brutal raids on the worshippers in Al-Aqsa Mosque. The significance of this war lies in the fact that it was sparked by the developments in Jerusalem unlike the previous wars whose focus was on the conditions of Gaza (International Crisis Group, 2021). This orientation was also

clear in Hamas's demands that Israel should withdraw its forces from Al-Aqsa Mosque, halt the expulsion of the Palestinians from Sheik Jarrah and release the Palestinian detainees who have been imprisoned recently (International Crisis Group, 2021).

Hamas called the war "The Jerusalem Sword" whereas Israel gave it the name of "The Guardians of walls". After 11 days, the status quo was restored in Gaza after the two sides reached a "mutual and unconditional" cease-fire agreement leaving massive destruction in the Strip (Al Jazeera, 2021). Rounds of battles between Israel and the Islamic Jihad in the following two years repeated the same scenario of events summarized in Israel's assassination of Islamic Jihad's military leaders and members and the retaliatory strikes from Gaza.

2.2.5. Developments in Jerusalem

Field developments in Jerusalem are the product of the Israeli authorities' continuous oppression and the Palestinians' natural resistance. Israel has been pursuing countless discriminatory policies against the Palestinians in Jerusalem in order to achieve its aim of expanding the borders of the Israeli state, preserving the Jewish character of it and erasing the Palestinian presence. These policies include Israel's prevention of the Muslim and the Christian Palestinians from access to the holy places, the relentless Israeli raids on the worshippers in Al Aqsa mosque, the demolition of the Palestinians' homes, the expulsion of the Palestinians from their neighborhoods and the replacement of them with Zionist settlers.

Palestinian resistance was motivated by Zionist pressure, the closure of the political horizon, and the bloody events of the Arab Uprisings (Jabbari, 2017). Moreover, Arab Spring introduced new patterns of protests reflected in the Palestinian national movement which was obvious in Jerusalem (Jabbari, 2017). This resistance took the shape of demonstrations and massive presence in the holy places especially Al Aqsa mosque, individual operations against the Israeli soldiers and settlers, non-violence resistance means including mobilization efforts through social media sites, art, and the organization of visits and tours to increase the awareness of the young Palestinian population and fight Israel's attempts to distort the Palestinian educational curriculum. It is noteworthy to mention that events in Jerusalem triggered unprecedented unity among Palestinians across the historic Palestine and Palestinians in the diaspora and the refugee camps which can be considered a powerful sign of the insignificance of the artificial geographical divisions created mainly by the Israeli occupation.

One of the starkest examples of this unity is the protests which started in Jerusalem against the incident of kidnapping and burning of the Jerusalemite guy, Mohammad Abu Khdeir. These protests went beyond Jerusalem, the city of the incident, to include the Greenline territories. The Protesters raised the Palestinian flags and burned the Israeli flag (Al Jazeera, 2014). These waves of protests were compared to the second Intifada in 2000 in which both of them were triggered by atrocious Israeli crimes against the Palestinian guys (Al-Quds, 2014). One of the Palestinian editors, “Hasan Abdul Haleem” explained that these protests heralded the explosion of the tinderbox in the Greenline territories where Palestinians suffer from hate, discrimination and the incitement against the Arab citizens (AlQuds, 2014).

The other main trigger of the uprisings in Jerusalem is Israel’s frequent placement of electronic gates in front of Al Aqsa mosque since 2017. While Israel views these gates as a part of security measures, the Palestinians portray them as coercive, illegal and humiliating. Hammuda (2017) explained that the reasons of the Palestinians’ rejections of these gates are summarized in their awareness of Israel’s purposes which are manifested in the maintenance of the occupation, the Judaization of the city, the creation of a new status quo in Jerusalem and the control of the Palestinians’ entering to the mosque through imposing period and location divisions which restrict the Palestinians’ mobility while allowing the settlers to enter it without any kind of restrictions or scrutiny.

These concerns were voiced by the Palestinian Grand Mufti who stressed the Palestinians’ rejection of “the electronic gates and all the measures by the occupation that would change the historical and the religious status in Jerusalem and its sacred sites, foremost the blessed Al Aqsa mosque” (The Guardians, 2017). This rejection pushed the Palestinians to assemble and protest in “Bab Al Asbat”, a protest that was called “Al Asbat Uprising”. This event was likened by some of the inhabitants of the city to the Egyptian Uprising in the Tahrir Square in Cairo (Kawasmi, 2017).

In addition to Jerusalem, the protests took place in the West Bank cities and in several Arab and Islamic cities that eventually resulted in the removal of the electronic gates which became “The symbol of the Palestinian national and religious steadfastness” (France 24, 2017). The researcher in Jerusalem affairs, Ziad Ahbes, portrayed the “Asbat Uprising” as a model that guaranteed victory for Palestinians due to its adoption of specific, tangible demands and the fact that it was characterized by a national resistance and a popular sit-in (Aljazeera, 2018).

The Israeli authorities found themselves forced to open most of the gates in front of the Palestinian prayers except Bab Hutta. This closure made this gate gain special importance since the Palestinians insisted on not entering Al Aqsa mosque as long as it remains closed. Their solid stance exerted pressure on the so called “religious references” to accept the masses’ demands.

Bab Al-Rahmah is another significant gate that witnessed intense protests in what was called “Bab Al Rahma Uprising”. This gate was already sealed by Israel in 2003 and lacked internal and external restorations. However, Israel’s illegal action of placing locks and chains on the gate that leads to the AlRahma chapel area in 2019 sparked a massive presence of Palestinians in the chapel area both to pray and break the locks and the chains (Al Qastal, 2023). The Palestinians’ insistence on keeping all the gates of AL Aqsa mosque open stems from their awareness of the Israeli plans which aim to impose Israel’s sovereignty on the mosque and transform its surrounding into Jewish temples and landmarks.

Along the protests and the gates uprisings, the Palestinians introduced a new method of what has been seen as the “Third Intifada” especially in the years 2015 and 2016 in which the Palestinians started attacking the Israeli soldiers and military leaders. Ibrahim (2017) sees that the dominant characteristic of this intifada is the individual operations committed by the Palestinian guys who were born int the post Oslo era and don’t belong to any of the Palestinian organizations. These operations were sparked by the negative developments in Jerusalem and were adopted by different guys in most of the Palestinian districts and revealed the fragility of the Israeli security system (Ibrahim, 2017).

These operations came in the context of the Israeli occupation army’s continuous protection of the settlers and their storming of Al Aqsa mosque in addition to their gruesome crimes against the Palestinian guys. It is also noteworthy that these operations have been interpreted differently by media according to the policies of channels and newspapers and were largely depicted as terrorist acts, the depiction that serves the Israeli narrative, while in fact, these operations did not take place in void. They were a natural response of the Palestinians to the discriminatory Israeli policies. Israel then started a mass indiscriminate campaign of killing the Palestinians on the spot under the pretext of holding knives or sharp tools and threatening the so-called security of the settlers.

Sheik Jarrah issue has been one of the most crucial contemporary developments in Jerusalem in which 28 families consisting of 500 members were subjected to the potential

implementation of the forcible dispossession decision in the end of 2020. This issue unlike the Israeli narrative should not be viewed as a “property dispute” or as “contested neighborhood”. It should be rather seen as a purely political issue in which Israel pursues deliberate policies of uprooting the Palestinians and denying them the right to possess their homes and stay in them.

The Israeli dispossession policies have been incited by the settlements’ associations, legitimized by the Israeli courts and applied by the Israeli governments. Moreover, the inciters and the applicants of these policies enjoy the ultimate protection of the Israeli army units. These actors’ function as the chief pillars of the apartheid system of the state of Israel and unify their efforts to serve the expansionist ambitions of Zionism at the expense of the Palestinians who are exposed to endless institutionalized injustices.

Settlers’ plans generated several concerns among the Palestinians. Their main concern is the fear of strengthening Israel’s political control over the city which may support Israel’s claim that Jerusalem is the capital of the Jewish state. The upper part of Sheik Jarrah contains consulates, hotels, and United Nation offices which means that the dispossession of Palestinians from Sheik Jarrah enables Israel to take advantage of the political and cultural significance vested in the place. The other contagious fear that occupies the national psychology of the Palestinians is that they believe that any dispossession of the inhabitants of Sheik Jarrah threatens the existence of Palestinians elsewhere and can result in a nonstop domino effect (English, 2021). This effect started to materialize in Israel’s pursuit of a systematic policy of dispossession of the Palestinians and the destruction of their homes in Batn Alhawa and Silwan. This situation triggered the already acute tinderbox and intensified a multifaceted resistance which revived the Palestinian issue and created an unprecedented awareness.

This resistance was characterized by efficient activism that depends purely on the efforts of the Palestinian families and the Palestinian youth instead of the classical leaderships. This resistance also renewed the feminization of the Palestinian resistance representation and deepened the role of the Palestinian migrants and the Palestinians in diaspora. Additionally, it encouraged the innovation of new methods of nonviolent resistance including the employment of art, the organization of protests, demonstrations and general strikes in addition to the reinforcement of unity among the Palestinians across historic Palestine. Assad (2021) sees that the uprising in Jerusalem this time marks the culmination of the victories of the previous uprisings which consolidated the culture of “the rejection of defeat” and demonstrated the daily life of Palestinians in Jerusalem as a “resistance mean” which liberates this concept from being trapped in the dichotomy of “an armed resistance and a popular one” (Assad, 2021).

2.2.6. The Intensification of the Settlement Construction:

The Israeli settlement activity has been an integral part of the Israeli policies to maximize the Israeli encroachment on the Palestinian lands and expand the borders of the so-called “sovereign Israel”. This unabated settlement construction aims to maintain a permanent occupation which hinders the proposed two state solution, derails the negotiation process and damages the confidence- building efforts between the Israelis and the Palestinians (Stockmarr, 2012). These settlements also manifest the paradigm of the Israeli occupation which is the discrimination against the Palestinians while granting countless privileges to the Israeli settlers.

Btselem, an Israeli observer of the human rights violations against the Palestinians in the occupied territories, points to the fact that while the Palestinians in the West Bank are subjected to the Israeli martial law, the settlers enjoy the benefits of the domestic laws that Israel applies to the Israelis in the so called “Greenline Territories”. This situation impedes the mobility of the Palestinians and deprives them of their property rights and decent living standards (Btselem, 2019).

Additionally, the Israeli settlement activity is categorized as an illegal policy under the international law. In their recent report, Ghislaine Piosniler and Eric David concluded that the Israeli settlements in the West Bank, which also includes East Jerusalem, are deemed war crimes due to the presence of the legal, mental and material elements used to define a war crime (Piosniler and David, 2020). They explain that Israel as an occupying power continues supporting and sponsoring the illegal transfer of its civilian population to the occupied territories which alters the status quo and the demographic composition of these territories.

Despite the settlements policy’s grave breach of international law, the international condemnation of it, and its disastrous impact on the lives of the Palestinians, the years post 2011 have witnessed the acceleration of this policy which Israel utilizes as a retaliatory response to the Palestinian leadership’s political initiatives. In 2012, the Israeli government announced the extension of the settlements construction to East Jerusalem which was motivated by Israel’s irritation at the Palestinian National Authority’s UN initiative which Israel views as an act that undermines peace process (The Guardian, 2012). In 2014, Israel similarly threatened to construct new 1500 house units as a response to the configuration of the Palestinian reconciliation government and urged the international community to avoid building ties with this government which Israel claimed it is merely a front of “ Hamas” (Reuters, 2014).

The next period from 2015-2019 was characterized by the intensification of the de facto Israeli annexation of the Palestinian land in the West Bank and the transformation of it into a de jure annexation through a legalization process led by the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament. This process creates a state of an institutionalized injustice against the Palestinians who can't influence the policies of the Israeli Parliament which only represents the interests of the Israeli electorates (Sharif, 2020). Another important body of this process is the settlements council in Yehuda and Samira, the biblical names of the West Bank which started a campaign to expand the annexed territories in 2020 (Sharif, 2020).

Among the laws passed by Knesset to serve the settlement enterprise is the “regulization law” in 2017 which legalizes retroactively the Jewish settlements built on the Palestinian owned land which was viewed by the Israeli opposition as an underminer of Israel’s international status and seen by Palestinian leadership as a hurdle on the way of peace and two state solution (Fisher, 2017). The following year, Knesset passed a law called “Amending the administrative courts Act on land petitions” which transforms the responsibility of the land petitions of the West Bank from the Supreme Court of Justice to the administrative courts which work for the favor of the Israeli settlers since the Supreme court of Justice might impose restrictions on the settlement activity while the administrative courts embolden the settlers to increase their settlement activity (Sharif, 2020).

In addition to the Knesset and the council of the settlements, the Israeli leadership under the prime minister Netanyahu who has been in power since 2009 has contributed heavily to the unprecedented acceleration of the settlement construction. He has been pursuing an aggressive policy of increasing settlements, declaring them as permanent and denying their responsibility for the deterioration of the situation on the Palestinian land (Rudoren and Ashkenas, 2015). Netanyahu further claimed that the reason of the conflict is not the continuity of the building of the settlements but rather the refusal of the Palestinians to recognize the so-called Jewish state (Rudoren and Ashkenaz, 2015).

Netanyahu manifested this persistence on the settlements policy by announcing that Israel is willing to move to the next stages of extending its sovereignty to the occupied territories and that it rejects the removal of any of the previously built settlements which he sees as integral parts of Israel. He expressed this stance in his statement “I don’t distinguish between the settlement blocs and the lone settlements. Every settlement like that is for me Israel” (Shany, 2019).

According to the European Union's report on the Israeli settlements in 2022, the last years witnessed a sharp increase in the settlements' numbers. In 2022, Netanyahu declared his intension to legalize the settlers' outposts and similarly the Israeli ministers made it clear that they will embark on the expansion of the settlements' projects especially the "settler touristic development" which aims to change the character of the Palestinian lands and transform them into touristic venues.

It is noteworthy to mention that the intensification of the settlements numbers was met with the Palestinians' protests who expressed their rejection of the settlements policy in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. This rejection stems out from their realization of the adverse effects of the continuous illegal building of the settlements. Reham Odeh pointed to some of these concerns summarized by the impediment of the creation of a viable Palestinian state on the borders of 1967, the deprivation of the Palestinians of water resources, the obstruction of the agricultural advancement and the endangering of the civil peace and the security of the Palestinians (Odeh, 2023).

2.2.7. The Breakout of the Corona Virus in the Palestinian Territories

The pandemic of Corona had an adverse impact on the economic and social well being of all countries in the world regardless of their level of development, political system or position in the regional and international systems. When it comes to the Palestinian situation, Corona virus has complicated an already complex situation. Unlike sovereign, independent states where governments enjoy full control over their borders and resources which enables them to face disaaters, historic Palestine lacks independence and sovereignty. Instead it has a unique case of being divided into different geographical areas with different authorities and governing systems. This case hindered a unified successful effort to counter the disastrous impacts of global crisis like Corona. Moreover, the Corona epidemic demonstrated the real power dynamics which shape the relation between the occupier and the occupied. It showed that the occupier continued to impose discriminatory policies and the occupied continued to be subjected to institutionalized injustices which motivated the occupied people to rely on their unity and sense of nationalism to fight the pandemic (Kaloti, 2020).

Hassan and Miller (2020) explained the differences between the different authorities in Palestine to handle the epidemic. They argued that the termination of the coordination between Israel and the Palestinian Authority pre the corona crises due to the insistence of the Israeli

governing coalition on the annexation plans of the West Bank put the Palestinian Authority in a vulnerable situation where it is completely dependent on the private sector, the Palestinian diaspora communities and the international donors. Additionally, the internal politics in Israel was fragile and Netanyahu was going through a political dilemma due to his mishandling of the crisis and the weakness of his coalition with Gantz.

Al-Jamal, Cohen and Amour (2022) in a detailed article illustrated that the Palestinian National Authority's lack of sovereignty, the mistrust between the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Israeli pressure on the Palestinian Authority contributed heavily to the failure of the efforts to counter the pandemic in the Palestinian territories. The power of Israel's control was obvious in its imposing of restrictions on the movement of the Palestinians, preventing them from reaching healthcare services, closing hospitals and clinics and controlling the borders of the Palestinian occupied territories and so the entrance of the medical care into the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. To make things worse, Israel conditioned the permission of the medical equipment to enter the Gaza on the release of the Israeli prisoners imprisoned by Hamas. It can be said that the breakout of Corona added another layer of complexity to the Palestinian situation, deepened the Israeli occupation iron fist policies against the Palestinians and revealed the vulnerability of the Palestinian National Authority and its inability to deal with high level crisis.

2.3: The Dynamics of the Palestinian Issue during the Post-Arab Spring: External Developments

Understanding the peculiarities of the Palestinian issue require shedding the light on the external developments which highly influence the internal ones and shape their reality and future. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to identify all the regional and international actors' positions on the Palestinian issue. However, it will highlight the major actors' attitudes and policies towards it. This section will in particular illustrate the US policies and decisions regarding the Palestinian issue as a global actor then it will point to the positions of the regional actors on it especially Iran, Jordan and the Gulf states given the relative stability of these states post Arab Spring. These developments include as follows.

2.3.1. US Policies and Decisions Towards the Palestinian Issue During the Post-Arab Spring:

The Palestinian Israeli conflict has always been one of the pillars of the US Middle East policy. US administrations differed in their strategies and initiatives to approach the issue. However, all of them have retained a close strategic partnership with Israel which entailed a lack if not an absence of exerting a pressure on Israel to alter its policies towards the Palestinians. US administrations neither condemned Israel nor dismissed its actions as illegal. They rather continued to provide Israel with military and financial support and a diplomatic cover.

In the post-Arab Spring era, three administrations came to power and shaped various policies towards the issue including Obama, Trump and Biden administrations. It can be said that the Obama era unlike predictions did not result in a positive change regarding the Palestinian issue. Al Zogami (2016) argues that Obama era was a glimmer of hope that faded quickly in which Obama did not commit to the statements he mentioned in his speech in Cairo in 2009 where he expressed that “The United States will not turn its back to the Palestinians’ desire to have their state”. The United States under Obama administration rather increased its military and financial support to Israel and voted against the Palestinian leadership’s proposal to give Palestine the position of a non-member state in the United Nations in 2012. On his final days in power, Obama passed a resolution condemning the Israeli settlement which was the only critical resolution in his era. Interestingly, Jilani (2016) argues that Obama unlike the previous Republican presidents never used any leverage against Israel nor he was harsh against it.

Trump’s policies marked a transformation from an era of a seemingly balanced approach towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in which the American presidents were taking on the role of a mediator between the Israelis and the Palestinians to an overtly unilateral pro-Israel approach. Erdoğan and Habash (2020) stressed that Trump’s policies manifest a complete conformity to the Israeli interests and Netanyahu’s desire which legitimized the Israeli actions and placed a leverage over the Palestinian Authority. Trump also proposed a peace plan which focuses mainly on the economic dimension in an attempt to empty the issue from its political and national core.

Trump’s most significant decisions revolved around the recognizing Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel, transferring the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, shrinking and then cutting the UNRWA aid, cutting the aid given to the hospitals in Jerusalem, closing the office of the Palestinian Liberation organization and the expelling the Palestinian ambassador from Washington (Abu Aishah, 2018).

The deal of the century plan is known to be Trump's most controversial steps since it was prepared away of the US political decision-making circles and entrenched the imbalance in power between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Dekhakehena (2021) explained that this deal placed big pressures on the Palestinians to "Take it or leave it", aimed to curbing the sovereignty of the potential Palestinian state and insisted that it has to be fully demilitarized. Moreover, it emboldened Israel to announce its sovereignty over parts of the West Bank, the Israeli settlements and the Jordan Valley. Due to its inequality, the deal was rejected by the Palestinian leadership and this rejection was harnessed by Israel to claim that the Palestinians are the ones who turn down good offers (Dekhakehena ,2021).

In his attempt to demonstrate the differences and the intersections between Obama's and Trump's policies, Abu Nijem (2021) illustrated that there are two features of the American foreign policy towards the Palestinian issue. The first feature is maintaining Israel's security and ensures that any settlement with the Palestinians should be in the favour of Israel and according to its conditions. The second feature is about the permanent base of the US's position on the Palestinian issue which is "Conflict management instead of conflict resolution". These contours rendered the differences between Obama's and Trump's policies cosmetic. Despite the fact that Obama refrained from taking the bold measures taken by Trump, both of their policies were driven by the same principles.

When it comes to Biden Administration, two issues were discussed. The first issue is about the position of the Palestinian issue on Biden's agenda especially in the light of his preoccupation with other regional and international issues. The second issue is to what degree Biden's policies towards the Palestinian issue might differ from Trump's policies and if the Palestinians should be more optimistic after he came to power. Ayman Yosuf, an assistant professor of political science and international relations at the Arab American University in Jenin, commented on the first issue saying that Biden is facing a long list of international challenges which in addition to the pressure of the Jewish lobby will make the Palestinian issue's priority retreat and motivate Israel to take advantage of the political status quo (Auf, 2022).

Biden reversed some of Trump's policies. He restored the American financial contribution to the UNRWA, resumed the American aid to the Palestinian authority and lifted the sanctions Trump imposed on the international organizations. However, he neither reopened the American consulate for the Palestinian affairs in Jerusalem nor transferred the American embassy back to Tel Aviv (Harb, 2022). He also continued Trump's policy of increasing the

American aid to Israel and expanding the normalization process and the regional alliances of Israel.

Al-Rantisi and Boyraz (2021) pointed that while evaluating Biden's policy towards the Palestinian issue, one should bear in mind the statement of Biden when he was vice president that "if there was no Israel, we would have been forced to create it to protect the US interests" and Blinken's declaration that the new administration will continue recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in addition to Biden's opposition to the announcement of the International Criminal Court that it would take on its responsibility to investigate the crimes committed in the West Bank and Gaza. Therefore, they conclude that there would not be a radical change in the US position on the Palestinian issue in Biden era and that one should look at this era with cautious optimism.

2.3.2. The Gulf states' Normalization of Relations with Israel

Given their relative stability and abundant resources, The Gulf states have influential stances towards the Palestinian issue. These stances have been both praised and criticized. For Saudi Arabia, on one hand its policy towards the Palestinian issue has been considered as a continuity of its historic role towards the Palestinians and on the other hand there have been growing concerns of the decline of the importance of this issue on the Saudi agenda.

Alsalmi (2019) pointed to some positive Saudi steps including the initiative of the King of Saudi Arabia to call the Arab Summit held in 2018 as the "Jerusalem Summit". He also mentioned the increase in the financial contribution of Saudi Arabia to the budget of the Palestinian National Authority, UNRWA aids and the Islamic Endowments in Jerusalem in addition to sending aid to the Gaza Strip after the Israeli aggression in 2014 and the aid given to Palestinians to face the Corona virus. However, Saudi Arabia has been criticized for its role in passing the deal of the century which was formulated by Trump upon his visit to Saudi Arabia (Al Alam News, 2021). The other concern was related to the possibility of a normalization between Saudi Arabia and Israel despite Saudi Arabia's claim that the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a precondition for any potential normalization.

For Qatar, it has been a more active actor who pursued different efforts to support the Palestinians. Al-Rantisi (2014) explains that this support comes on different levels including politics, economy and media. Qatar's political efforts were manifested in Qatar's diplomatic success to reach a reconciliation agreement between Fateh and Hamas in 2012 in which also

one of the central features of Qatar's policy was the conduct of a balanced policy between the Palestinian sides. On the economic level, Qatar continued its economic aid and reconstruction and development projects. For media, Aljazeera has been well-known for its coverage of the developments on the Palestinian territories in a way that serves the Palestinian issue and spread the narrative of the Palestinians

For the United Arab Emirates, it stressed its continuous economic support for the Palestinians in the fields of health, education and construction in addition to providing aid in war and emergency times. It also emphasized its political support for the issue through clinging to the international resolutions to solve the Palestinian Israeli conflict (Alroyah news, 2023). Signing the Abraham accords raised concerns over the priority of the Palestinian issue for the UAE since it is believed that these accords accelerate the liquidation of the Palestinian issue. However, other opinions explained the possibility of normalizing ties with Israel without harming the Palestinian issue.

Normalization of relations between the Gulf states and Israel with the mediation of Trump in 2020 had its roots in the security cooperation and the exchange of flights between Israel and the UAE and the contacts between Saudi Arabia and Israel since 2017. Masami (2022) explains that the Iran nuclear agreement hastened this normalization and brought the two sides to a common threat perception. The critical point in this normalization is that the Gulf states including the UAE, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia started to ally with the traditional threat, Israel, against another state considered by the two sides as a real threat to their national security. On their parts, Qatar and Kuwait have different foreign policies from the Saudi axis states. Rahman (2020) sees that Qatar is unlikely to formalize the relations it developed with Israel in the mid-nineties. For Kuwait, he sees that the representative character of its politics and the historical ties it has with the Arab and Palestinian national movements prevent it from intensifying its relations with Israel.

It is believed that this normalization process which Israel seeks to expand is a dangerous development since it weakens the position of the Palestinian issue and accelerates the implementation of the deal of the century and the Israeli plans to annex the West Bank and broaden the Israeli settlement (Altanani, 2021). Normalization also transforms Israel from being a colonizer in the perspective of the Arab countries to being a potential friend and an ally which breaks the conventional Arabs' perception of Israel as an enemy. Additionally, it ignores the Palestinian rights and removes the precondition of granting the Palestinians their rights and

resolving the Palestinian Israeli conflict as a precondition for improving relations with Israel (Hussein, 2022).

2.3.3: Jordan's and Iran's Stances toward the Palestinian Issue during the Post-Arab Spring:

Jordan retains an important position for the Palestinian issue because of the geographical proximity and the strong bonds between the Palestinian and Jordanian nations. This position has been maintained on both the governmental and nation levels. The first level is obvious particularly in the historic Hashemite guardianship over the holy places in Jerusalem while the second level can be seen in the continuous protests of the Jordanian people over the Israeli aggressive policies against the Palestinians and the peace and gas deals between the Jordanian government and the Israeli government.

The years post Arab Spring did not witness a big change in Jordan's stance towards the Palestinian issue. In 2013, The king of Jordan signed an agreement with the Palestinian president about the continuity of the king's role in preserving the guardianship over Al-Aqsa mosque (The website of the king Abdullah bn Al Hussein, 2013). Moreover, it can be said that the king of Jordan has applied diplomacy as an approach to the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The king of Jordan has hosted and visited both the Palestinian president, Abbas and the Israeli Prime minister, Netanyahu. These meetings revolved around Jordan's emphasis of its role as a keeper and a defender of the holy places in Jerusalem, Jordan's condemnation of the Israeli policies against the Palestinians, its clinging to the two-state solution and its rejection of the Israeli plans to annex the West Bank. He has also utilized the international diplomacy to assert the importance of applying the two-state solution to the Palestinian issue as a key to regional stability in the Middle East and that the continuity of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict generates hatred and violence in different parts of the world (Aljazeera, 2015).

Jordan also warned against the bad consequences of Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. It also had reservations about the deal of the century since it viewed it as a threat to its security and a violation to its sovereignty (Sawallha ,2020). Jordan attempts to follow a pragmatic policy to keep the diplomatic and economic relations with Israel and the US and at the same time show the support for the Palestinian issue and absorb the anger of its population.

For Iran, Iran's support for the Palestinian issue has grown since the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979. Iran has considered the Palestinians' struggle against Israel and the Palestinian national movements as part of the so called "resistance axis". Iran has maintained strong ties with Hamas through political and military support. Iran viewed Hamas as a representative for the project of resistance which is opposite to the project of the political settlement which Iran rejects.

In the post Arab Spring, Omran (2019) argues that Arab revolutions led to the decline of the Iranian role and the rise of the weight of other actors. Therefore, Iran has attempted to transcend the political leaderships of the Palestinian national movements including Hamas and Al-Jihad Al-Islami since these movements "recorded independent attitudes from the Iranian policies at sensitive junctures" especially the attitude Hamas showed after the eruption of the Syrian revolution in which Hamas supported the Syrian people's revolt against the Syrian regime who used to open offices for Hamas in Syria.

Iran also was not happy with the reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas and viewed it as a reconciliation between the two approaches it was always separating, the projects of resistance and compromise (Tafish, 2012). Other differences between Iran and Hamas lied in their different approaches about the relationship with the new brotherhood regime in Egypt. It can be said that the relation between Hamas and Iran is an important factor that affects the future of Iran's policies towards the Palestinian issue since this relation is Iran's most influential way to show its stance towards the issue through its continuous overt military support to Hamas with sophisticated weapons. Iran also developed a political initiative recently to resolve the Palestinian Israeli conflict. Iran suggested conducting a referendum for the Palestinians in the Palestinian territories and abroad to decide the future political system and guarantee the return of the refugees (Iran press, 2023).

2.3.4 An Introduction to Egypt's and Türkiye's Roles towards the Palestinian Issue during the Post-Arab Spring:

Among regional actors, it can be said that Türkiye and Egypt possess the strongest positions on the Palestinian issue. The influential power of these two states on the dynamics of the Palestinian issue lie in their geographical proximity to the historic Palestine, their historical, religious and cultural connections with the Palestinian people, their relations with different sides in the Palestinian Israeli conflict including Israel, the two most prominent Palestinian

factions, Fateh and Hamas in addition to their distinguished relations with the US, the most significant power to affect the dynamics of the Palestinian issue due to its strategic relationship with Israel and its interests in the Middle East. Türkiye and Egypt also retain strong status in both the regional and international arena which makes them the most sought countries to help solve any crisis erupting between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Additionally, these two countries play various roles towards the Palestinian issue on different levels.

These attributes are hardly seen in the other regional actors who don't have the influence of Türkiye and Egypt because of the lack in their historical and geographical bonds with the Palestinians, their inability to conduct balanced relations with the main three sides in the Palestinian Israeli conflict, their weak position on the region's and world's stage, their limited resources, their focus on certain dimensions and their adoption of certain roles towards the Palestinian issue, their lack of strong leaderships and their preoccupation with other issues rather than the Palestinian issue.

Literature written about the Palestinian issue in the Turkish foreign policy before Arab Spring outweighs what was written post Arab Spring. Most of the literature in this aspect focuses on the historical periods of 1950s, 1990s and the early 2000s in which writers demonstrated the determinants of the Turkish foreign policy towards Palestine including external factors like Türkiye's relations with the West, Israel and the Arabs and internal factors mainly the coming of the Justice and development party to power. Bora Bayraktar for example analyzed the logic behind Türkiye's policy towards Palestine till 2010 and concludes that this policy will continue to be instrumental.

Literature about Türkiye's policy towards the Palestinian issue post the Arab Spring was manifested in some articles and commentaries. For example, in his article in 2012, Ufuk Ulutaş highlights the role Türkiye played in the national reconciliation between the Palestinian factions, its response to Israel's war on Gaza and Türkiye's relations with Hamas. In a similar vein, in his article in 2015 Rahman Dağ analyzes Türkiye's response to Israel's aggressions against Al Aqsa mosque, the settlements policy and Türkiye's relations with Hamas and Israel.

Another important commentary was written by Akif Kireçci in 2017 in which he discusses Türkiye's leadership role in bringing the Jerusalem issue to the attention of the international community after Trump's decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem. Helin Sarı Ertem also demonstrated in her article in 2020 some of Türkiye's stances towards the recent developments of the Palestinian issue in general and Jerusalem in particular.

Regarding the Palestinian issue in the Egyptian foreign policy post Arab Spring. Literature written within about part is mainly about comparative studies between different Egyptian leaders' eras and between Egypt's Palestine Policy prior and post Arab Spring. One of the most recent integrated analysis about Egypt's foreign policy towards the Palestinian issue post Arab Spring is written by Anne Baur who investigated the possibility of an existence of a new trajectory for the Palestinian issue. To answer this question, the writer illustrates three levels of analysis including political, popular and Palestinian popular resistance levels and concludes that there is a continuity of Egypt's prioritization of self-interest pragmatism over than ideological considerations.

In his study, Abdulreza Alishahi finds that the main factor that determine Egypt's policy towards the Palestinian issue post Arab Spring is Egypt's dependence on the United States and the issue of Israel's security. Another factor is added by Khaled Elgindy who stresses the role of the domestic issues and the role of the Egyptian military in controlling the Egyptian foreign and national security policies.

Concerning the existence of a comparative study between the Palestinian issue in the Turkish foreign policy and the Palestinian issue in the Egyptian foreign policy in the post Arab Spring, a news piece was written by Fehim Tastekin in which he questions how far can Türkiye's mediation role go. He also tries to discuss The Palestinians' options in the New Middle East order. He concludes that the Palestinians cannot depend only on one regional axis without bearing the consequences. Regional situation was stressed again in the article written by Adnan Abu Amer who sees that the regional situation is represented by conflicting regional alliances and will create a void that Türkiye might probably fill in the light of the increasing weakness of Egypt. While these articles are insightful in the link they create between the New Middle East order in the post Arab Spring era and its impact on Egypt's and Türkiye's roles towards the Palestinian issue, they don't conduct a specific comparison between the two countries and they discuss mainly the mediation role without examining other possible roles.

The following chapters will attempt to conduct a comparison between these two countries' stances towards the Palestinian issue based on the evaluation of a set of the roles they assumed towards the issue in the post Arab Spring era. This study believes that making a comparison between different countries' stances towards critical issues like the Palestinian issue by illustrating the nature of their roles helps develop an understanding of the current and the future trajectories of the issue since these trajectories are not only influenced by the internal

dynamics of the Palestinian domestic politics but also by the roles the external actors develop towards the issue.



CHAPTER THREE: THE EGYPTIAN ROLE TOWARDS THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE IN THE POST-ARAB SPRING

The first section of this chapter briefly demonstrates the priorities of Egypt in the post the Arab Spring era given the fact that Egypt experienced a revolution which led to the demise of Mubarak's regime and the advent of the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood as the first democratic experience in the contemporary history of the country which was followed by the relatively rapid end of this rule and the reemphasis of the role of the military in the Egyptian politics which restored the scenario of the grip of the military establishment over the country in the guise of the general will. Then the chapter will analyze the place of the Palestinian issue among these priorities through tracing the roles Egypt played towards the Palestinian issue in the post Arab Spring era and their sources.

3.1. Egypt's priorities during the Post-Arab Spring:

In the era of the post Arab Spring, Egypt has faced a complex security environment characterized by the adverse impact of the erupting struggles in Egypt's neighborhood on the Egyptian national security and national interests through impeding the navigation in the Red Sea and the Suez Canal in addition to the grave situation in Libya which resulted in the smuggling of weapons into Sinai after the collapse of the Libyan regime (Al Arabi, 2018). Moreover, since 2011, the rising security concerns in Sinai have been the longstanding headache for Egypt in which Sinai has become the incubating environment for terrorist groups and organizations. These groups pursued different terrorist activities like the explosion of the gas pipelines, the attacks against the Egyptian churches, institutions, companies, banks and touristic places in addition to targeting political figures (AlBoheiri, 2017).

Following the revolution, the nation council in Egypt announced that its priority is to emphasize the principles of the revolution through establishing committees to investigate issues affecting the Egyptian nation especially violence incidents and corruption in addition to proposing policies and strategies to develop the infrastructure, education and security sectors and adjusting some military laws (Nassar, 2017). After he came to power, Morsi declared that the focus of his party is to develop a mechanism to work jointly with all political forces and improving the economic performance and the security situation and achieving a democratic transformation (Nassar, 2017).

The internal situation in Egypt then has been disrupted by the hostility between the military establishment and the Muslim Brotherhood which resulted in the crackdown of the military on this group, the designation of it as a terrorist organization and the imprisonment of Morsi. The military also accused the Muslim Brotherhood of threatening the safety and the stability of the country. This condition was intensified by marginalizing the civil society organizations and curtailing the freedom of expression in addition to the decline in the governmental subsidies of the public services (United States institute of peace, 2019).

The deteriorating security and economic situation made it a priority for the Egyptian leadership to take steps to maintain the national security and the economic wellbeing of the country. In his first speech after he became the new president of Egypt, Al-Sisi explained that his priorities are the eradication of what he called terrorism, the achievement of security, the improvement of economy and the restoration of the strong status of Egypt (AlJazeera,2014).

On the security level, the Egyptian army waged what it called “A comprehensive operation against terrorism in the East and North of Sinai” especially in the years 2015 and 2018 in which the Egyptian army imposed unprecedented security measures in Sinai and Egypt’s western border with Libya. This operation was a product of a coordination between different Egyptian forces both to destroy the centers of these groups’ gatherings and cut off their sources of supplies (Alwatan news, 2018). These operations helped the Egyptian leadership portray itself as the safety valve in front of its people.

On the economic level, Egypt has undergone economic difficulties which resulted in the increasing unemployment, the retreat in the revenues of the tourism sector, the rampant inflation and the decrease in the value of the Egyptian currency. The Egyptian president’s strategy was carrying out mega projects, bringing investments and signing memorandums and loan agreements. While the supporters of the president saw this policy as an achievement and a high commitment to improve the infrastructure of the country, critics expressed that the government should first work on solving the structural problems of the corruption, mismanagement and bureaucracy and study the feasibility of these projects (Almashad, 2016).

3.2 The Position of the Palestinian Issue among Egypt’s priorities: Egypt’s National Role Conceptions and Performances towards the Palestinian issue during the Post-Arab Spring

Egypt has retained a vital position in the Arab World as the regional leader and the major contributor to the regional stability and the collective Arab national security. Given the traditional perception of the Palestinian issue as an Arab issue, Egypt extended its responsibilities toward the Arab states to include the Palestinian issue which became one of its most significant foreign policy issues. Egypt had both military and diplomatic approaches to resolve the Palestinian Israeli conflict. Militarily, Egypt was involved in four wars with Israel. It also supported the Palestinian fighters in Nasser's era. Diplomatically, Egypt supported the creation of the Palestinian Liberation organization, endorsed the recognition of it as the sole representative of the Palestinian people and suggested several initiatives to create an atmosphere that can lead to better negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis in addition to Egypt's emphasis on the establishment of a Palestinian state (Sabaq, 2016).

Following the Arab Spring, it was thought that the Arab countries would be preoccupied with their internal issues and that the Palestinian issue would retreat on their agendas. It can be said that centrality of the Palestinian issue for Arab countries is controversial and fluctuating. For Egypt, the role of a regional leader might not be as influential as it was in Nasser's era. Egypt also might have moved to the role of internal developer in which it cares about its national security and economic interests the most. However, measuring the position of the Palestinian issue on Egyptian agenda requires looking at the national role conceptions, the perceptions Egypt has about its stance towards the Palestinian issue, and the role performances which are the actual foreign policy behaviors of Egypt in different aspects of the Palestinian issue.

3.2.1 The Mediator Role

According to Holsti, the national role conception of the mediator takes place when a government perceives itself capable or responsible for fulfilling or undertaking a special task to reconcile conflicts between states and consistently help adversaries reconcile their differences. In the context of the Palestinian Israeli conflict, Egypt's mediation role is not a novelty. However, it became both intense and frequent in the post Arab Spring era. The fields of this role performance include the mediation between the Palestinian factions, the mediation between Israel and Hamas to complete the prisoners' exchange deals and the mediation between the Israelis and the Palestinians in order to reach cease fire agreements. The following cases show the role performance of Egypt related to this national role conception.

3.2.1.1 Mediating between the Palestinian Factions

Regarding the matter of the reconciliation efforts between Fatah and Hamas, a set of agreements were signed under the auspices of Egypt. In 2011, Egypt started to employ its diplomacy to bring Fatah and Hamas together in what was called “The Cairo Agreement”. The significance of this agreement is that it has been considered the main reference for the relations between the Palestinian factions. This significance stems from the mechanisms it developed to organize the internal situation in the Palestinian territories. It included the names of the figures Fatah and Hamas agreed on for the establishment of the central elections committee in addition to their agreement on establishing social reconciliation committee and holding meetings to study the ways of the work of the legislative council (Wafa news, 2011).

In 2013, Egypt hosted the Palestinian factions, issued a new statement about the provisions of the reconciliation and reached a new agreement with clear timetables and deadlines for the establishment of the committees. The strength points that enriched Egypt’s mediation role in this agreement is that it assigned to itself the responsibility of guaranteeing the implementation of the agreement through shaping a committee under the Egyptian presidency (Abu Hilal, 2013). Moreover, President Morsi who reached this agreement assured the Palestinian leaderships that “The Egyptian presidency stands at an equal distance from the Palestinian factions and will support them in establishing their independent state as they want” (AlQasem, 2020). This statement has been analyzed as a new balanced approach which Morsi perceived to renew Egypt’s mediation role between the Palestinian factions.

Adli Mansour, the former interim president, also managed to convince Fatah and Hamas to reach a reconciliation agreement (State information Service Your gateway to Egypt, 2022). In 2014, Egypt hosted the national dialogue between the two factions in which they agreed on steps needed to commence the process of establishing a new government and removing the obstacles impeding its performance (Maan news, 2014). The importance of this kind of mediation is that it provides a platform for conducting a better communication between the Palestinian factions and motivates them to have their own meetings and understandings.

2017 was another critical year for the Palestinian factions. Egypt hosted a sequence of meetings between Fatah and Hamas in which they agreed on the empowerment of the national government. In 2018, Egypt sent a delegation to Gaza to conduct other meetings to supervise the implementation of the agreement (State information Service A gateway to Egypt, 2017). It

can be said that sending an Egyptian delegation to Gaza is another mechanism that Egypt adopted to enrich its mediation role and converge the views of the two parties.

Al-Sisi also suggested several initiatives to mediate between the two sides and urged them to reconcile their differences. He expressed this call in the United Nations by saying: “I tell the Palestinian people it is important to unite, to overcome their differences and be ready to coexist with the Israelis in safety and security” (Arab News, 2017). It can be said that in this statement, Al-Sisi considers the reconciliation between the Palestinian factions as a precondition for their coexistence with Israel.

On another occasion Al-Sisi stressed that: “You have disagreements so what I can do. We are moving in a way that guarantees there will be no armed struggle in Gaza Strip or the West Bank. We are trying to shape the conviction that a reconciliation is important and inevitable so that there will be only one authority and one leadership, and this one leadership will be able to negotiate with the Israelis” (Ten Tv, 2019). In this statement, Al-Sisi indirectly adds another aspect of Egypt’s mediator role which is reminding the Palestinians of their responsibilities in which the success of the Egyptian mediation efforts depends on the political will of the Palestinians. He also stresses the importance of the step of the reconciliation for the future negotiations with Israel.

3.2.1.2 Mediating the Prisoner Exchange Deals

The second field of Egypt’s mediation role is the prisoner exchange deals between Israel and the Palestinians. The most prominent example of this kind of mediation is “Wafa IlAhrar deal” in 2011 in which Israel and Hamas reached an agreement to release a number of the Palestinian prisoners from the Israeli jails in return for the release of the Israeli soldier “Shalit” (Zaytona center for studies, 2022).

Egypt’s efforts in this deal started pre-2011. However, these efforts paid off in 2011. The chief of the Egyptian military intelligence met Hamas leaders in Cairo and asserted his country’s role to supervise the deal. Egyptian sources also declared that Egypt is ready to push the talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis and that it will invite the Israeli envoy and tell him about the results of the talks between the Egyptians and Hamas military leaders. These talks also happened in the headquarter of the Egyptian military intelligence where the Palestinians and the Israelis were in separate halls and the Egyptian side was moving between them. There were also talks about a visit by the German envoy to Egypt to cooperate with the

Egyptians in order to activate the deal. (AlZaytona Center for Studies,2022). The Egyptian military intelligence was also responsible for checking the lists of the names of the released prisoners and supervising the whole process of the prisoner exchange deal. Moreover, airplanes from Türkiye, Qatar and Syria arrived at the Cairo airport to transfer the prisoners who were sent to exile in these countries (Tantawi, 2011).

In 2017, the Egyptian military intelligence offered Hamas a deal in which Israel hands the bodies of a number of Palestinian martyrs it was detaining in return for Hamas's revealing of the fate of the Israeli prisoners. In 2021, at the margins of the climate summit in Glasgow, the head of the Egyptian military intelligence said "We are working day and night to resolve the prisoners issue. Every deal that includes the release of the Israeli soldiers should at the first stage include the release of the Palestinian prisoners in the Israeli jails" (IR4 news, 2021).

The significant point about these deals is the involvement of the Egyptian military intelligence to guarantee the accuracy and the confidentiality of the implementation of these critical deals which require special procedures. This involvement ensures that Egypt's mediation role is conducted by both the political and the military establishments.

Another important dimension of Egypt's mediation role regarding the Palestinian prisoners is mediating between the Palestinian prisoners and the Israeli authorities in which Egypt transfers the demands of the prisoners to the Israelis and exerts pressure on them to meet the prisoners' demands who observe this process and then decide whether to continue their hunger strikes or suspend them (XINHUA Net, 2019). What's new about this dimension is that the Egyptian channels are being used as a part of a back-door diplomacy to express the griefs of the Palestinian prisoners and gain concessions from Israel.

3.2.1.3. Mediating Cease Fire Agreements between the Israel and Hamas

This type of mediation demonstrates the most critical dimension of Egypt's mediation role since Egypt has been looked at as the most needed power to broker ceasefire agreements between Israel on one side and Hamas and Al-Jihad Al-Islami on the other side in the four wars and military confrontations in the years 2012, 2014, 2019, 2021. Israel's war on Gaza in 2012 was a real test for the new Egyptian president Morsi. Morsi's first response was his insistence on the termination of both the Israeli aggression on Gaza and the Israeli blockade of the Strip since he believed that these actions threaten the regional stability and peace. He said that: "Up till now, there are indicators that there is a possibility for cease fire by both parties soon. Up

until now we did not have exact guarantees but what I would like to point out and to affirm is that in this matter, war, aggression and the blockade that has been imposed upon Gaza, all of this can achieve neither peace nor stability for the peoples of the region” (Fadel, 2012).

Morsi then had meetings with his prime minister, ministers and assistants, called the Secretary General of the Arab League, the Secretary General of the United Nations and the US president. He also sent his prime minister Hisham Qandil within an Egyptian delegation to Gaza to negotiate with Hamas (Qasem and Saad, 2020). The head of the Egyptian military intelligence also had talks with the political leadership of Hamas to negotiate Hamas’s conditions for a cease fire agreement.

Egypt’s mediation effort resulted in the declaration of the Egyptian foreign minister that “The hour of the cease-fire was set at nine o'clock in the evening, Cairo local time, on Wednesday, 21/11/2012” (France 24, 2012). This condition of this agreement included that Israel should stop the aggressive acts against the Strip whether it was through land, sea or air including sweeps and targeting people. It also urged the Palestinian factions in the Strip to stop the aggressive acts from Gaza against Israel whether it was through rockets or attacks against the borders. The agreement also included the opening of the crossings, the facilitation of the movement of the people and goods in addition to avoiding restricting the people’s mobility or targeting them on the borders. The agreement also stressed that the two sides will assure Egypt that they will implement what was agreed on in which Egypt is the first reference for the two sides in case a problem came out.

The striking point about Egypt’s mediation role in this war is that the Egyptian president managed to bring the issue to regional and international attention. He was also able to reach a cease fire agreement and side with the Palestinians at the same time. Additionally, there was a collective Egyptian effort conducted by different political figures from different positions to reach the agreement which made Egypt again the first and the sole side to refer to when disagreements emerge between the two sides.

Egypt’s mediation effort renewed in Israel’s war against Gaza in 2014 in which Egypt suggested a cease fire agreement through a statement issued by the Egyptian foreign ministry that “Egypt calls on both Israel and the Palestinian factions for an immediate cease-fire,” adding that the time has been set at 6:00 (universal time) on July 15 to start implementing the truce understandings between the two parties, provided that the cease-fire takes place within 12 hours of the announcement” (France 24, 2014).

The 2014 cease fire agreement stipulated that Hamas and the other active Palestinian factions in Gaza agree on a ceasefire and that Israel agrees on stopping the military operations whether they were by air or land and agrees on opening the crossings to ensure an easy flow of the humanitarian aid and the reconstruction tools. It also stressed that it is expected from Israel to limit the security buffer zone from 300 metres to 100 metres and to expand the fishing zone opposite Gaza beaches from three miles to six miles if the agreement survives (RT Arabic, 2014). Similarly, the agreement expressed that in another separate bilateral agreement, Egypt will agree on opening the Rafah crossing.

It can be said that the mediation style in this war was different from the 2012 war. Unlike the year 2012 when Morsi took the initiative to reach a cease fire agreement, Al-Sisi in 2014 was slower in reaching it. Al-Sisi's attitude can be explained in the light of Al-Sisi's strained relations with Hamas this year. Egyptian sources pointed that Al-Sisi shared with Netanyahu the conviction that Hamas was not in a right position to negotiate (Aljazeera, 2014). However, the interesting aspect of this agreement is that it was followed by indirect talks between Hamas and Israel under the supervision of Egypt in what was called "the exploratory talks".

Egypt also mediated between the Islamic Jihad and Israel in 2019 in which Egypt alongside the United Nations and the Middle East Peace envoy worked to mediate this truce. Moreover, an Egyptian delegation hurried to Gaza in the light of the escalation of the tension between the Palestinians and Israel (Times of Israel, 2019). Egypt's mediation steps continued in 2021 in which Egypt worked closely with several regional and international actors to reach a cease fire between Israel and Hamas. Moreover, the Egyptian foreign minister met his Israeli counterpart in Cairo where the Egyptian ministry of foreign affairs stressed that this visit came within the framework of Egypt's communication with both sides, the Israelis and the Palestinians, in order to establish a cease fire agreement between Israel and Gaza. Moreover, the Egyptian foreign minister stressed that "it is necessary to build on this agreement through the termination of all the practices that lead to the escalation of the situation in the Palestinian territories" (Arabi Post, 2021).

Egypt's mediation in 2021 unlike 2014 showed a higher level of engagement and commitment. Egypt condemned Israel's violation of Al-Aqsa mosque, summoned the Israeli ambassador and changed the main stream media's coverage of the war in which the Egyptian media started to use terms like occupation and resistance which is different from its coverage of the developments in Gaza in the previous years when it was demonizing the Palestinian

factions especially Hamas (Al Anani, 2021) .What sets the Egyptian mediation effort in this year apart from the previous years especially 2014 is that Egypt managed to mediate between the two sides, condemn the Israeli side for its aggressive acts against the Palestinians and stress that these actions deteriorate the situation. Moreover, Egypt made it clear that it is important to build on the ceasefire agreements and prevent the actions which create tensions in the Palestinian territories.

In the 2022 battle between Israel and the Islamic Jihad, Egypt managed to reach a cease fire agreement which was accepted by both sides. This agreement was accompanied by a visit of the Egyptian delegation to the Gaza Strip to meet officials from Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. Al-Sisi also emphasized in a graduation ceremony of the military college that Egypt is pursuing its positive role to restore peace in Gaza. He said: “We are making our contacts and working around the clock to prevent things from going out of control in Gaza”. (Youm7, 2022). The importance of this mediation in this year is proving that Egypt is the side capable of contacting with both the Israeli side and the Palestinian side whether it was Hamas or the Islamic Jihad in addition to the Egyptian leadership’s interest in assuring its people that Egypt is still continuing its traditional mediator role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

3.2.2 Developer Role

Holsti defines the developer role as a special duty or obligation to assist underdeveloped countries. In the context of the Palestinian issue, the developer role can be applied to mean the countries’ duty or obligation to assist a country under occupation through aids, financial contributions and projects. In the post Arab Spring era, Egypt’s performance of this role was obvious in field of the reconstruction efforts of the Gaza Strip and the policy of opening and closing the crossings between Egypt and Gaza especially the Rafah Crossing.

3.2.2.1. The Reconstruction Efforts of the Gaza Strip

In the post war eras, Gaza Strip was in an urgent need for a reconstruction of its infrastructure and destroyed buildings. Egypt contributed to this process in different ways with different degrees including the allowance of the entrance of the necessary equipment and materials to Gaza, hosting regional and international donors’ conferences, working with allies to secure the needed budget to rebuild the Strip in addition to sending direct economic and medical care to the Strip. Following the 2012 war, Morsi cooperated with Qatar to start the

rehabilitation of the Strip. Qatar dedicated 254 million dollars for the reconstruction of the Strip including the construction of main roads, the erection of residential cities and the establishment of hospitals and agricultural projects. More importantly, Qatar started to supply the Strip with the Qatari fuel to cover its need of gas and electricity.

The Egyptian role was clear in Morsi's policy of opening crossings to allow the entrance of the fuel and the construction materials and equipment for the first time to Gaza (France 24, 2012). This attitude facilitated the work of Qatar and enabled the Palestinians in Gaza to benefit from the Qatari aid. This attitude was confirmed by the Egyptian ambassador in the Palestinian territories who said: "We continue our communication and efforts to ensure the entry of the Qatari fuel into Gaza through the Kerem Shalom commercial crossing. Egypt has begun its movements on the ground to allow the entrance of the remainder of the fuel Qatar wants to send to Gaza. There are instructions from the political pyramid to start this move quickly" (Al Risalah, 2013).

The significance of Egypt's developer role following the 2012 war lies in the fact that despite the economic difficulties Egypt was going through in the post Arab Spring era and its weak economic capabilities compared to countries like Qatar, it realized that it has the key to pave the way for the economic aid from other countries through opening the crossings which shows the importance of the political will of the Egyptian leadership in the future of the development of the situation of the Palestinians in Gaza . It also shows that Egypt employed its alliances to contribute to improving the life standards of the Palestinians.

In the aftermath of the devastating war in 2014, Egypt declared its intention to host the donors' conference which was going to be held in Norway before it was held in Cairo through the coordination between the Egyptian and Norwegian foreign ministers. The Egyptian foreign minister stressed that: "Within the framework of the continued support for the Palestinian cause, the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Government of Norway decided with the support of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to host a conference in Cairo for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip" (Skynews, 2014). This conference was attended by several countries including Arab countries, representatives of political and humanitarian organizations, the United States and the UN general secretary in which every country and organization demonstrated its strategy and the budget it is willing to dedicate in order to contribute to the reconstruction efforts of Gaza (Al Youm, 2014).

This step of hosting an international donors' conference showed Egypt's commitment to pursue its developer role towards the Palestinians through the employment of its diplomacy and strong relations with other countries to provide a platform to gather the international community members and urge them to take practical steps to develop the situation of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

It can be argued that the 2021 war witnessed the most instant and intense response from Egypt. The Egyptian Presidency stated that: "Egypt will dedicate 500 million dollars for the reconstruction efforts in Gaza" (Aljazeera, 2021). This intention was reflected in the statement of Bassam Radi, the spokesperson of the Egyptian presidency who said: "Within the framework of the implementation of the directives of President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi to support the Palestinian brothers in the Gaza Strip, Egypt provided the largest aid convoy to the Strip consisting of 130 trucks loaded with 2,500 tons of foodstuffs, medicines, baby formula, clothes, furniture, electrical appliances, and other miscellaneous items provided through the Tahya Egypt fund" (Youm7, 2021).

In addition to sending large aid convoys to Gaza carrying the statement of "from the Egyptian nation to the Palestinian nation", the Egyptian Health Ministry sent medical necessities to support the Strip and prepared 11 field hospitals to welcome the casualties. It stated that: "According to the directives of President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, 65 tons of medicine and medical supplies were sent to Palestine to support the injured in the Gaza Strip, in conjunction with developments in the current situation there" (Aljazeera, 2021).

The developer role of Egypt in this year was much more obvious and direct in which the Egyptian ministries sent instant economic and medical aids to Gaza. This attitude reflects the political will of the Egyptian leadership which resembles the one in 2012. The caption on the Egyptian convoys also indicates the Egyptian president's interest in asserting the centrality of the Palestinian issue for both the Egyptian government and the Egyptian people.

3.2.2.2. Egypt's Policy of the Opening and Closing the Crossings between Egypt and Gaza

The issue of the crossings between Egypt and Gaza has always been controversial especially after the Arab Spring given the fact that Egypt has faced security threats in Sinai which was continuously changing Egypt's relation with Hamas. Despite the critical importance of these crossings for the Palestinians in Gaza since they are considered as their gate way to the world especially Rafah crossing, Egypt's policy was not only informed by the Palestinians'

grievances, it was rather affected by Egypt's threat perceptions and national security considerations.

Post 25 January revolution, Egypt's policy on the crossings changed from a total blockade and limited allowance for the movement of the Palestinians in Mubarak's era to a partial opening of the Rafah crossing which entailed the increase in the number of the Palestinians travelling through the Egyptian airport and the relaxation of the harsh restrictions imposed on them (Sputnik international, 2012). This change reached its peak with the winning of Morsi in the elections which had positive reflections on the situation of the crossing and ended the crisis of the accumulation of the Palestinian travelers who were in an urgent need to travel, a change that people in Gaza viewed with a great optimism (Aljazeera, 2012).

Morsi emphasized this dramatic change in his statement in his speech in the fourth conference of the AK party in Türkiye in 2012 "The crossings between us and Gaza are open to provide what the people of Gaza need in terms of food, medicine, education and communication between families. The borders and crossings are open, so that we can do our part and our duty towards our brothers in Gaza" (Felasteen Alyoum, 2012).

Morsi's stance reflects Egypt's strong enactment of the developer role since his policy to keep the crossings open facilitated the movement of both the Gazan people who could travel in big numbers through the Egyptian airport and the goods and materials necessary for upgrading the life conditions of the Palestinians in the Strip. This big change also points to the positive impact of Morsi on the crossings policy which is usually a file managed by the Egyptian intelligence.

After a year of his rule, Morsi was no longer in power and the military establishment returned to power. This change had its implication on Egypt's policies on the crossings especially that it was accompanied by the increase in the security incidents on the Egyptian borders. Egypt then started an inconsistent policy of opening the crossing in times of war and closing it later under different security and administrative excuses in addition to the demolition of the tunnels between Gaza and Egypt and the intensification of the security measures.

In an attempt to clarify the logic behind these policies, the Egyptian ambassador in the Palestinian territories ,Yasir Othman, stated that: "These procedures are exceptional and not directed against the Palestinian people. They are rather motivated by the need to protect the Egyptian national security in exceptional circumstances" (Aldannan, 2016). In a similar vein, Al-Sisi expressed that: "Closing the crossing is for securing our eastern borders with the

Palestinian National Authority without harming the Gaza Strip. This closure is for the protection of the Egyptian and the Palestinian national security” (Aldannan, 2016).

Despite the explanations from the Egyptian officials that the closure of the crossing is not meant to harm the Palestinians, critics expressed that this closure hurts thousands of emergency cases and serves the Israeli interests through tightening the control over the Strip and demonizing Hamas (Mohammed, 2015). Akram Atallah, a Palestinian analyst, saw that: “The Egyptian system is fighting Hamas to the extent of punishing the Gazan people. Life in Gaza is paralyzed, the humanitarian situation is deteriorating, the economic crisis is exacerbating in the light of Egypt’s demolition of the tunnels, which are considered as the lifeline of the Gazan people, because of the absence of harmony between the Egyptian and Hamas’s political systems” (Bray, 2014).

These critics demonstrate that Egypt’s policy of the random opening and closure of the Rafah crossing since 2013 negatively affects Egypt’s performance of the developer role and creates an intra role conflict. Intra role conflict happens when there is a contradiction between the ego and alter parts’ expectations regarding a certain role. This concept is clear in the contradiction between Egypt’s perception of its role and the Palestinians’ expectations from this role and the way its performance impacted their lives. While the Egyptian authorities stress that the taken national security considerations are not meant to harm the Palestinians, the Palestinians in Gaza, Hamas and some Palestinian analysts don’t see that it is the case.

3.2.2.3 Economic Relations between Egypt and the Palestinians

Another aspect of Egypt’s developer role towards the Palestinians is establishing economic relations with them. These relations entail signing economic agreements and memorandums of understanding between Egypt and the Palestinian National Authority in different fields. These relations strengthen the Palestinian economy, open the way for the Palestinian Arab economic relations which can replace the economic relations between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel and help free the Palestinian economy from its dependence on the Israeli economy. The level and the intensity of this role was fluctuating. Up until 2015, there was a continuous rise in the Egypt’s exports to Palestine and a weakness in the Palestinian exports to Egypt. This situation is caused by the Israeli blockade of Gaza, Israel’s control of the crossings, the lack of a good promotion of the Palestinian products in Egypt and the absence of a free Arab trade zone (Altabbaa, 2016).

Some suggestions came from the Palestinian side that it is vital to activate the economic agreements between Egypt and the Palestinians, conduct frequent meetings to discuss economic matters, establish galleries in Egypt to promote the Palestinian products and reinforce the role of the Palestinian embassy to reach this aim in addition to facilitating the movement of the Egyptian and Palestinian businessmen. In addition to its political role, Palestinians viewed the importance of Egypt's economic role in deepening the Egyptian Palestinian economic relations and mitigating the negative impact of the tragic circumstances of the people in Gaza and serving the Egyptian economy through injecting it with hard currency (Alhadath, 2016). Strengthening these economic relations between the two sides requires the development of mechanisms to increase the Palestinian exports to Egypt including a partial exemption of the Palestinian products from taxes in addition to creating a free trade zone between Egypt and Gaza which will both improve the Egyptian economy and the life standards of the Palestinians in Gaza as well (Al Romane, 2019).

In 2019, a Palestinian delegation reached Cairo at the invitation of the Egyptian president and Prime minister in order to stress the political, economic and executive cooperation between the two sides. The meeting resulted in signing different protocols in different areas of cooperation (Wafa news, 2019). This step stems from the strategy the Palestinian Authority has pursued to break its dependence on the Israeli economy through empowering the Palestinian Arab economic ties starting with Egypt. Following this meeting, the spokespersons of the Palestinian and the Egyptian governments expressed the success of this visit and the willingness of Egypt to increase its import of the Palestinian products, relax the travel restrictions on the Palestinian businessmen, conduct a balanced trade between Egypt and the Palestinian National Authority and develop a mechanism between the two countries to define their borders and start oil and gas explorations (Kuttab, 2019).

The significance of the economic aspect in the Egyptian Palestinian relations was much more obvious in the following years. In 2020, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority signed an agreement which aims to develop Palestine's capability of managing its water resources. The Egyptian minister of water stressed the importance of signing agreements which boost the cooperation and partnership between the countries which face water scarcity and expressed that "Egypt is ready to transfer the Egyptian experience to the Palestinians and that it welcomes the cooperation with the Palestinians in different fields in order to achieve stability and sustainability to the Palestinian nation" (State of Palestine Water Authority, 2020).

In 2021, there were discussions between the Egyptian and Palestinian sides about the cooperation in energy fields at the margins of the Eastern Mediterranean Gaz conference in Cairo. The Egyptian Minister of Petroleum and Mineral resources expressed that “Egypt does not hesitate to provide all aspects of support to contribute to the development of the Palestinian economy taking into consideration the importance of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum in facilitating the exploitation of the natural gas resources of the member states” (Al Arabiya, 2021). 2022 and 2023 also witnessed a rise in Egypt’s import of the Palestinian products and the signed memorandums of understanding in order to increase the cooperation between the Egyptian and the Palestinian private sectors and improve mechanisms to overcome obstacles that impede the economic opportunities for both sides (Egypt today, 2022).

It can be said that the developer role of Egypt in terms of economic relations with the Palestinian leaderships in the Palestinian territories started to become stronger compared to the immediate years following the Egyptian Spring when Egypt was preoccupied with its own economic and security problems. Egypt is trying to strengthen this role through the high coordination between the Egyptian and the Palestinian ministries and the employment of diplomatic relations to achieve economic gains for both sides. The extent of Egypt’s interest and capability to build on the sequence of economic agreements signed with the Palestinian authority to meet the expectations of the Palestinians regarding Egypt’s developer role in terms of economic relations remains to be seen.

3.2.2.4 Egypt’s Medical Aid to the Palestinians in Gaza

Egypt has continued its policy of sending medical aid to the Gaza Strip which was obvious in the time of wars and Corona Pandemic through the Egyptian Health ministry, the Egyptian army and the Egyptian Red crescent in coordination with the Palestinian Red Crescent and the Palestinian Health ministry. In 2014, the Egyptian army sent medical aid to support the hospitals in Gaza with approximately five lorries of 7.5 tons of medical necessities (Maeen, 2014). In 2021, Egypt sent large convoys including 65 tons of medical aid to cure the Palestinian casualties. The Egyptian health minister announced that: “This aid includes surgical supplies, operating requirements for internal and emergency departments, x-ray supplies, surgical machines for major and minor operations, in addition to two oxygen masks, artificial respirators, and anesthesia devices” (MCD, 2021).

In 2020, within its efforts to face the Corona virus pandemic, Egypt sent medical and humanitarian aid to Gaza. The Executive Director of the Egyptian Red Crescent expressed that: “We sent medical shipments of support to our brothers in the State of Palestine within the framework of the role we are playing in facing the emerging Corona virus pandemic. The aid that was sent includes a set of medical tools and supplies, including 24 tons of detergents, sterilization and disinfection liquids, as well as 3,500 personal protection uniforms, and 150,000 face masks” (Akbar Al Yom, 2020).

In addition to sending medical aid to the Palestinians, Egypt coordinated with other actors to facilitate the Palestinians’ access to their medical needs. In 2014, the Egyptian authorities allowed the entrance of a medical aid convoy sent by the Arab doctors Union whose chief in Gaza stressed that: “The convoy consists of three trucks of medical solutions and consumables, and preparations are being made to receive Egyptian doctors with rare specialties who volunteered to help the people of Gaza, and they will arrive in the Strip within the next two days” (Al Jazeera, 2014).

In 2021, the Egyptian Red Crescent cooperated with the International Migration Organization to prepare and send medical aid convoys to Gaza. The Egyptian minister of social solidarity stated that: “The aid convoy included 60 tons of medical and living supplies, devices, foodstuffs, and tools to prevent corona virus, as part of the efforts made by the Egyptian Red Crescent in coordination with the Palestinian side through the Palestinian Red Crescent, and the local and international partners to deliver aid to the affected people and help reduce the impact of the damage on the Palestinian society. The launch of the convoy comes within the framework of President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi's directives to unify efforts to respond to the current crisis in the Middle East, to which the eyes of the whole world are drawn, and which has affected the Gaza Strip” (Al Sharq Al-Awsat, 2021).

In 2022, the Kuwaiti Red Crescent expressed its coordination with the Egyptian Red Crescent to send medical aid to the hospitals of Gaza which face shortages in the medical equipment because of the continuous Israeli aggressions on the Strip (Kuna, 2022). It can be said that Egypt demonstrated an effective developer role in the file of medical assistance. This role is characterized by intensity in the times of crisis the Palestinians in Gaza face, the variety of actors in this aspect including the Egyptian Red Crescent, the Egyptian Health Ministry and the Egyptian Army. Moreover, this role was implemented in both ways whether by sending direct aid or facilitating the arrival of aid sent by other actors through opening Rafah crossing and coordinating with regional and international organizations.

3.2.3 Defender of Faith Role

Holsti defines this role as defending the value system from attack. In the Palestinian context, it can be applied to defending the rights of the Palestinians and their ambition to have a state in addition to condemning the Israeli aggressions and violations of the international law. Egypt has pursued this role in different platforms. The following titles show Egypt's performance of the defender role.

3.2.3.1 Morsi's Approach to the Defender Role

When Morsi came to power in 2012, there were many expectations that he will pursue a totally different foreign policy from his predecessor especially that he comes from a Muslim Brotherhood Background and that he was well known for his pro-Palestinian stance, anti-Israel rhetoric and his dissatisfaction with the Israeli Palestinian process since he viewed it as a process directed by the interests of the United States and Israel (Bauer, 2022). Despite the slight degree of continuity with Mubarak's policy regarding the maintenance of the Camp David Accords, Morsi's views did not change fundamentally. Morsi voiced his clear support for the Palestinians and defended their rights in his political discourse in different platforms.

In his speech in front of the organization of the Islamic cooperation, Morsi stressed three points which are the link between the Egyptian revolution and the Palestinian issue in which he argued that the revolution focused on the values of democracy and freedom which he sees as an indication that the post revolution Egypt is committed to support the Palestinians to gain their free independent state. Morsi also endorsed the Palestinian step to obtain the non-member state status in the United Nations and emphasized the centrality of the Palestinian issue to the stability of the world and its extreme importance on the agenda of the Islamic countries (Middle East Monitor, 2014).

Similarly, in his speech before UN General Assembly, Morsi argued that the UN resolutions have been incapable of meeting the hopes of the Palestinians despite their long history of adopting all legitimate means of resistance and their adherence to the UN resolutions. He further urged the international community to take serious steps to end the Israeli occupation and the settlements enterprise (Boghani, 2012).

Regarding his approach to the Palestinian Israeli peace process, Morsi invoked a usually ignored point which is the Palestinians rights. The two-state solution, which suggests the erection of two states living side by side without mentioning details about their borders or the rights of the Palestinians, is portrayed as the magic wand to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. However, Morsi stressed that there will be no real peace in the Middle East without granting the Palestinians their full rights (Messieh, 2012). Morsi further illustrated in one of his speeches that the Zionists do not have any piece in Palestine and that he does not believe in the two-state solution because he believes it is a product of the Zionists' cunning. Moreover, he asserted that resistance is the only way to restore what he called the one Palestine (Aljazeera live, 2020).

When addressing the Palestinian people, Morsi sent powerful messages which indicate a genuine solidarity with them away of formality, neutrality or lecturing. He considered the Israeli aggression against Gaza a blatant aggression against humanity. He further said: "Egypt will not leave Gaza alone. I am telling the Palestinian people on the behalf of the Egyptian people that today's Egypt is different from yesterday's Egypt". The Egyptian foreign minister also explained that: "Egypt is working with international partners to end the Israeli aggression and save the Palestinian blood. Egypt's relations with Israel will not be a constraint on Egypt's support for the Palestinians" (Al Riyad, 2020).

Jerusalem was also existent in the political discourse of Morsi. In one of his speeches, he mentioned that: "Our hearts yearn for Jerusalem and I say to the aggressor take lessons from history. Stop this farce and bloodshed. Otherwise, you will never be able to stand before our anger, the anger of people and leadership" (Political Street, 2022). Morsi also endorsed the idea of one Palestinian state and its capital Jerusalem. He did not use the usual terms which divide Jerusalem into West Jerusalem and East Jerusalem. Moreover, he did not use the term of 1967 borders since he believed in the indivisibility of Palestine and its capital. Morsi also welcomed the head of the board of directors of the Al-Quds International Foundation and expressed his support for the Palestinian issue and his rejection of the Judaization plans (AlMasry AlYoun,2013).

Anti-Zionism was also a part of Morsi's approach towards the defender role. He was avoiding mentioning the term of Israel in his speeches and was rather using ideological terms to conceptualize the Israeli presence on the Palestinian land like Zionists or terms which indicate the immorality of Israel like the aggressors and the criminals. It can be said that Morsi's defender role is characterized by religious and ideological patterns which address the

sentiments of the Arabs, Muslims and the Palestinians, cling to obvious pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli stances and reflect his conviction of the absence of justice and the incapability of the current resolutions to uphold the Palestinian rights.

3.2.3.2 Al-Sisi's Approach to the Defender Role

Unlike Morsi, Al-Sisi comes from a military background which had its impact on his political discourse which lacks religious and ideological indications. He instead depends extensively on the elements of security, national interests and the historical military sacrifices. He also supports the current Palestinian Israeli peace process and when addressing the Palestinian people, his messages urge the Palestinian factions to unite and describe the Palestinian nation as brothers whose rights should be restored and security should be maintained next to the Israelis.

These elements were obvious in his words during the Israeli aggression on Gaza in 2014 in which he said on the commemoration of the Egyptian July revolution: "We will remain beside our Palestinian brothers without any doubt. This is a moral and patriotic responsibility without outbidding and with all sincerity. Egypt provided 100,000 martyrs and twice as many injured over the 60 years of the history of the Palestinian cause. There is no forum in which we do not defend the Palestinian cause, and it is difficult for anyone to outbid our position on Palestine and Egypt's role towards the brothers in Palestine" (Alerada net, 2014).

In his speech in front of the United Nations in 2014, Al-Sisi asserted three points including the significance of the Palestinian issue for Egypt, the rights of the Palestinians to form their independent state on the borders of the 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital based on principles that can not be compromised, and the link between the absence of values like justice and humanity and the collapse of the comprehensive peace in the region. He also stressed that not granting the Palestinians their rights paves the way for some actors to take advantage of the Palestinian issue to achieve their purposes (El Watan news, 2021).

In his speech in the United Nations in 2016, he stated his call upon the Israeli nation and its leadership to find a solution for the Palestinian issue (Almasry Alyoum, 2017). In the following year, he sent two messages to the Palestinian and the Israeli nations. For the Palestinian nation, he said: "I invite the Palestinian people to stand behind their political leadership, not to disagree or waste a chance and to be ready for a peace with the Israelis". For the Israelis, he said: "In Egypt, we have a great peace experience with you for 40 years and we

can repeat it. The security of the Israeli citizen can be achieved beside the security of the Palestinian citizen” (Almasry Alyoum, 2017).

The Egyptian president also defended the Palestinians’ right to establish their state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. In his meeting with the Palestinian president in 2018, he emphasized that Egypt is consistent in its support for the Palestinian action to restore the rights of the Palestinians and achieve a settlement to the issue based on just solutions with the coordination with the Palestinian brothers (Al-Arabiya, 2018). He demonstrated this view on several occasions locally in the conferences held in the Egyptian Universities and the youth summits, regionally in the summits of the Arab league and internationally in the United Nations and his meetings with his international counterparts. In one of his press conferences with his Romanian counterpart, he stated that: “There is no way to sustain security and stability in the Middle East without solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through a just settlement that guarantees the Palestinian people their legitimate rights, and achieves the establishment of their independent state on the 1967 borders” (Sabq 24, 2019).

Regarding Jerusalem, the Egyptian delegation attended the emergency Jerusalem Summit in 2016 where the Egyptian foreign minister, on the behalf of the Egyptian President, delivered a speech which considered four points including asserting the rightfulness of the Palestinian people to gain their legitimate rights, warning about the danger of the continuity of the Israeli aggressions against the Palestinian land, the demolition of the Palestinians’ homes and the forcible expulsion of them and stressing the importance of supporting the Palestinians in Jerusalem since they are the first defense line against Israel’s Judaization attempts of the city (Maaen news, 2016).

In 2023, Al-Sisi participated in the Jerusalem conference in the Arab league where he affirmed Egypt’s support for the steadfastness of Jerusalem. He also stressed the position of Jerusalem’s status in the international law and the pivotal UN resolutions which make it clear that Israel’s actions are illegal since Israel is an occupying power. Moreover, he mentioned the necessity of coexistence and peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians (Al Masry Al Youm, 2023). The Egyptian officials in Al-Sisi era contacted the Israeli officials to inform them about the importance of reducing tensions and keeping the status quo of Jerusalem. The Egyptian foregin minister, Sameh Shokry, stressed that “Reviving the peace process requires the cessation of unilateral measures that would complicate the situation and the necessity of preserving the legal and historical status quo in Jerusalem as this has a direct impact on easing tension” (Anadolu Agency, 2023).

It can be said that while Egypt continued defending the rights of the Palestinians both in the eras of Morsi and Al-Sisi, the performance of this role was different between the two presidents. While Morsi's way was demonstrating an absolute pro-Palestinian stance and the belief in the all-out liberation of Palestine from the Zionist entity to enable the Palestinians to erect their state on all the historic Palestinian land, Al-Sisi showed a formal attitude in which he defended the Palestinians' rights within the framework of the international law and the UN resolutions in addition to upholding the idea of two state solution. However, it is noteworthy that Al-Sisi's invitation for the Israeli and the Palestinians to coexist which implies an equality between the two sides might contradict with defending the Palestinians against the aggressions of the Israelis, both as settlers and a military establishment. This situation might create an inter role conflict between the Al-Sisi's role as a bridge, a conveyer of messages or information between two communities which are in this case the Palestinians and the Israelis, and his role as a defender of the Palestinians.

3.3. The Sources of the Egyptian National Role Conceptions towards the Palestinian Issue during the Post-Arab Spring

After explaining the Egyptian national role conceptions and performances towards the Palestinian issue post 2011, it would be useful to explain the sources of these roles depending on Breuning's division of these sources into material and ideational sources.

3.3.1 Material Sources

Material sources in general are related to the attributes of the state including its economic capabilities, geographical location, national security considerations and relations with other countries. For the Egyptian role towards the Palestinian issue post 2011, the following material sources can be explained as the following.

3.3.1.1 Geographical Location and Security Concerns

Geography has always retained an important position in shaping the Egyptian foreign policy. When it comes to the Palestinian issue, it is important to consider Egypt's geographical proximity with the Gaza Strip. While Egypt sees Gaza as the first defense line in the north eastern part, the Palestinians in Gaza view Egypt as their only gate way to the outside world.

Moreover, the relationship between the two sides has continuously changed according to the circumstances of the Strip, the internal changes in Egypt and the relation between the regime in Egypt and the political system in Gaza.

This geographical factor intensified the responsibilities of Egypt towards Gaza in which Egypt should save and help the Palestinians in Gaza in times of crisis (Jamal, 2020). This factor can be considered as a source of both the mediator and developer roles. For the first role, Egypt's geographical closeness with the Strip enabled Egypt to send delegations quickly to the Strip to talk to the leaders of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad and negotiate a cease fire in times of the Israeli aggressions against Gaza. This step qualifies Egypt to be a successful mediator between the political leaders in Gaza and those in Israel. This situation was seen in the 2012 war when Morsi sent Hisham Qandil, the chief of the council of ministers, to Gaza immediately to denounce the Israeli action, express solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza and check their needs and end Israel's aggression. The same step was made in the 2014 and 2021 war. The geographical factor eased the implementation of the mechanism Egypt used to reach quick cease fire agreements which is sending delegations to Gaza and sometimes even to the Palestinian territories. This factor also made it inevitable that Egypt hosts the national dialogue rounds between the Palestinian factions in which most of the agreements between the two sides were reached in Cairo, a city where both Hamas leaders and the Palestinian Authority's leaders are welcomed.

For the latter, this factor made Egypt responsible for the reconstruction of Gaza in which Egypt is the closest country to Gaza and the one who is supposed to send the first convoys of aid immediately to Gaza. Its control over the Rafah crossing qualifies it to be a facilitator of the arrival of aid from other countries which can't reach Gaza without the coordination with the Egyptian authorities. Moreover, taking into consideration that Egypt is the only gate for the Palestinians in Gaza to travel abroad, Egypt's control of the crossing becomes significant for the movement of the Palestinians of Gaza.

The security dilemma in Sinai is related to the complexity of Egypt's relations with the other actors involved in the borders' security matters especially with the increasing incidents of the armed attacks against the Egyptian border guard forces in Sinai and the borders tensions because of weapons smuggling through the tunnels between Egypt and Gaza (Nassr, 2017). This factor had its implications on the relations between Egypt and Hamas and so on Egypt's role towards the Palestinian issue. After ousting Morsi, Hamas was subjected to a sequence of accusations claiming that Hamas has a direct relation with the violent incidents in Egypt and

that Hamas interferes in the Egyptian domestic affairs which reached its climax in the years 2014 and 2015. These accusations were reinforced by the Egyptian military regime's perception of Hamas as the offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood (Altanani, 2020). This situation led to the destruction of hundreds of the tunnels between Egypt and Gaza. These tunnels were both considered as the supply chains of Hamas and the lifeline of the Palestinian people in Gaza to obtain the basic needs of food and medicine. Egypt's destruction of these tunnels tightened the already imposed blockade on the Strip.

In the years 2016 and 2017, the hostility between Egypt and Hamas started to turn into a tactical security cooperation. Egypt found out that it needs to cooperate with Hamas to defeat the Islamic state in Sinai. On its part, Hamas tried to maintain this cooperation and ended its association with the Muslim Brotherhood. This cooperation and Hamas's promise to accept the elections' results and contribute to the creation of a better atmosphere for the negotiations between the Palestinian parties propelled Egypt to open the crossing in 2021 (Mandour, 2021).

The relation between Hamas and Egypt was changing according to Egypt's threat perceptions and its actions to protect its national security. This unstable situation can be considered as a source of the fluctuation of the developer role of Egypt between sustainability and weakness since this role is related to the crossings policy which is informed by Egypt's security concerns. These concerns necessarily affect Egypt's relations with Hamas and so Egypt's policies towards the Hamas-ruled Strip and its people.

3.3.1.3 The Egyptian-Israeli Relations

The Egyptian-Israeli relations are regarded as one of the most strategic relations in the Middle East after signing the Camp David Accords. Watching the Arab Spring developments, Israel expressed its concern over losing its strategic treasure, Mubarak, and the potential winning of Morsi in the elections. These concerns stem from Israel's perception that Morsi's ties with the Muslim Brotherhood would push him to withdraw from the peace treaty with Israel and strengthen Egypt's relations with Hamas (Chabin, 2013).

In his election campaign, Morsi pointed to his rejection of the Camp David Accords but he expressed his readiness to accept the treaties as long as the other side respects them. He stated that "Peace is not in words, peace is an act on the ground". He also stated that agreements with Israel should include the Palestinians' rights of self-determination and the establishment of their state (Al Dannan, 2016). Morsi also clarified that Israel does not commit to the accords.

In one of his interviews with the Qatari TV, he questioned the extent of the applicability of the main principle of the accords, just and comprehensive peace, to the Palestinians.

Despite the fact that Morsi didn't jeopardize the Camp David Accords, he didn't develop warm ties with Israel and there was no genuine change in the way Morsi perceived Israel or the way he pointed to it in his speeches. Moreover, Morsi era witnessed an absence of the direct communication channels between the two sides in which this file was withdrawn from the presidency and transferred to the ministry of foreign affairs. There was also a reduction in the level of the security cooperation between the two sides from high security and intelligence levels to the field levels and border issues (Al Naami, 2017). This situation made some of the Israeli researchers and commentators claim that the relation between Egypt and Israel in Morsi era is fragile and that this fragility increased by the crisis in Gaza. Moreover, they claimed that Egypt is closer to Hamas than Israel (Al Dannan, 2016).

The 2012 Israeli aggression on Gaza was a real test for the relations between Morsi and Israel. Morsi summoned the Israeli ambassador in Egypt and withdrew the Egyptian ambassador from Israel then he followed the policy of opening the crossing indefinitely in front of the people in Gaza, and enhanced the relation with Hamas to the political level after it was a file controlled by the security apparatus. These policies were totally against Israel's interests. Morsi's strained relations with Israel can be regarded as a source of a strong developer and defender roles in the favor of the Palestinians. This strength manifested in his blaming of Israel for the war in Gaza and the Judaization of Jerusalem in addition to expressing that the matter of granting the Palestinians their rights is precondition for any genuine peace or commitment to any agreement with Israel.

Since Al-Sisi came to power, the Egyptian Israeli relations have undergone an obvious improvement especially in the security dimension. Some Israeli security experts articulated that these relations are living their best era because of the mutual security interests between Israel and Egypt which makes Al-Sisi the most significant ally to Israel in the region (Altanani, 2020). Egypt coordinated its efforts with Israel to fight the armed Takfiri groups in Sinai. Additionally, this relation started to have a strong diplomatic dimension after it was focused on the security and intelligence aspects in the pre-Sisi era (Soliman, 2016). The level of the security relations was also intensified to include military intelligence which together with exchanging diplomatic visits deepened the belief in the strategic benefit of this relation for Egypt (Altanani, 2020).

Israel and Egypt under Al-Sisi era were partners in facing Hamas within the framework of the so called “war on terrorism” through weakening Hamas’s maneuvering ability, arresting Hamas members, exchanging military intelligence information and demonizing the image of Hamas in the media (Al Naami, 2017). More importantly, the Israeli officials hailed Egypt’s efforts to destroy the tunnels between Gaza and Sinai which was an action that serves the Israeli national interests since it gets rid of the lifeline of the military wing of Hamas. One of the Israeli officials stated that: “Israel throughout its occupation of Gaza did not manage to destroy the tunnels Hamas uses to smuggle weapons to Gaza until Al-Sisi came and destroyed them” (Al Naami, 2017). Similarly, the previous Israeli ambassador in Egypt confirmed that Al-Sisi made efforts to improve the image of Israel in front of the Egyptian audience in which he changed the schools’ curriculum which describes Israel as a criminal state. Al-Sisi stated that “We will not allow the usage of Sinai as a base to threaten our neighbors or as a background to attack Israel” (Al Quds AL Arabi, 2020).

The strong Egyptian Israeli relations caused another controversial step in 2016 when Egypt asked the delay of voting on a draft resolution which Egypt itself proposed to the United Nations which demanded Israel to immediately and completely stop its settlement construction activities in the Palestinian occupied territories including East Jerusalem (Eldorar, 2016), a step which was seen as a result of the Israeli pressures on Egypt. In the same year the Egyptian foreign minister refused to describe Israel’s aggressive acts against the Palestinians as terrorism and stated that: “It cannot be described as such without an international and legal consensus on a specific definition of terrorism” (Aljazeera, 2016). The same political figure urged his Israeli counterpart to reduce the tensions with the Palestinians in the following years.

Egypt’s relations with Israel also contributed to strengthening the relations between Egypt and the United States to guarantee the flow of weapons to Egypt especially after the coup d’état and the resulting abstaining of the U.S. from sending weapons to Egypt. The growing diplomatic relations between Egypt and Israel together with Egypt’s exportation of gas to Israel undermines Egypt traditional mediation role since it confirms that the Egyptian foreign policy objectives will be motivated by Egypt’s political survival attempts which will harm the Palestinians’ situation (Mandour, 2018).

Al-Sisi’s robust relations with Israel and the two sides’ mutual interests can be considered as a source of weakening the Egyptian developer and defender roles. Since Al-Sisi’s policies are characterized by placating Israel, it is unexpected that he will adopt a firm pro-Palestinian stance or condemning Israel’s actions overtly. Moreover, the crossing policy will

be influenced by Israel's interests not the Palestinians' interests especially in times when Egypt and Israel face mutual security crisis.

3.3.1.4 Egypt's Interest in Increasing Its Regional and International Status

Egypt's roles towards the Palestinian issue partially stem from Egypt's desire to upgrade its regional and international positions as a regional leader and as an indispensable international actor given the importance of the Palestinian issue on different levels in different circles and the Egyptian regimes' need to promote themselves, gain recognition and improve their relations with the US and the international community. This desire can be regarded as a source of the mediator role and the defender role.

Regionally, Egypt's intense participation in the sequence of the Arab summits in Al-Sisi era where the Palestinian issue was one of the main discussed issues can be understood within the framework of Egypt's desire to restore its regional weight. One of the last efforts of Egypt in this context was hosting Al Aleimen tripartite summit with Jordan and the president of the Palestinian Authority in which the three presidents discussed the revival of the peace process and the establishment of the future Palestinian state (Almasry Alyoum, 2023).

Internationally, the first step was when Morsi mediated between Israel and Hamas in 2012 in which Morsi's efforts to reach a cease fire agreement removed some of the concerns the West had about the coming of the Political Islam forces to power. This step made Egypt emerge as an important political player which restored its legacy as a cornerstone in the regional peace and stability (Fadel, 2012). Morsi was appreciated for three points including his personal involvement in the matter unlike Mubarak who was depending on the head of the intelligence in resolving Gaza issues, his ability to condemn Israel and simultaneously bringing the two sides to an agreement and his employment of various diplomatic channels to resolve the issue like Egypt's traditional ties with Israel, his personal ties with Hamas and his communication with several states including the United States (Fadel, 2012).

The Egyptian president was also portrayed by Israel and the United States as a reliable partner for his successful mediation. Hillary Clinton, the US secretary of state in this time, expressed her gratitude for the leadership of Morsi for its prevention of the escalation of the situation and helping end the violence (CBS news, 2012). This statement was different from the previous statements which were concerned over the consequences of the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood. In 2014, Egypt also managed to increase its diplomatic credentials and its image

internationally. The western countries in particular stated their support for the Egyptian initiative, asserted Egypt's big role in the Arab region and confirmed that this initiative is the most serious one among others. Egypt's role also gained importance in the light of the international blame for Hamas's initial refusal of the Egypt's proposal (Atlantic council, 2014). International actors also delivered their gratitude to Egypt in the conference held in Cairo for the reconstruction of Gaza.

In 2021, the normalization process between Israel and the Arab countries warned Egypt that it has to show its comparative advantage, that it is an irreplaceable actor and that it is the only one who has the mediation capabilities in order to increase its regional position and gain international endorsement in the Ethiopian Dam issue (Al Anani, 2021). Moreover, Egypt wanted this mediation to pave the way for the revival of Egypt's relations with the United States which were strained due to the American administration's cut of the military supply to Egypt due to accusations of human right violations. This was clear in Biden's phone call with Al-Sisi to thank his efforts for helping accomplish the ceasefire (Ir24 news, 2021).

Similarly, in 2022 Egypt's mediation role received Arab and international praises which were manifested in the comments of the president of the Arab Parliament, the UN coordinator of the peace process in the Middle East, the UN general secretary, the Arab league general secretary and a number of western countries who appreciated the efforts of Egypt in general and Al-Sisi in particular for his ability to contain the situation and maintain the stability and safety in the region (Elweten, 2022).

In a nutshell, Egypt's ambition to regain its traditional regional and international significance propels it to mediate between the sides of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and defend the Palestinians in both regional and international platforms.

3.3.2 Ideational Sources

Ideational sources of the role include the elements of identity, history, religion, cultural heritage, ideology and leadership styles For the Egyptian role towards the Palestinian issue post 2011, the following material sources are highlighted.

3.3.2.1 History and ideology

Egypt's current role towards the Palestinian issue in the post Arab Spring era stems from Egypt's desire to continue and add to its historical role towards the Palestinian issue to demonstrate its continuous influence in the region and illustrate its commitment to support the Palestinians regardless of its internal circumstances.

For ideology, the Egyptian presidents differed in their ideological views of the Palestinian issue. Historically, Jamal Abd Al-Nasser viewed Palestine from the lens of the Arab nationalism and the Arabs' responsibilities towards the Palestinian issue as an Arab issue. This ideology then was absent in Al-Sadat' and Mubarak's policies. In the post revolution era, Morsi had an ideological commitment towards the Palestinian issue which he considered an Egyptian issue in addition to his links with Hamas. For Al-Sisi, he viewed Hamas as part of the Muslim Brotherhood which he is against (Yaghi, 2014).

History and ideology can be considered as sources of the mediator and defender roles in both Morsi and Al-Sisi eras. Regarding Morsi, his ideological and historical views shaped his political life before and after presidency. He viewed the Palestinian issue as the mother of the Arab and Islamic issues and that it is a pivotal point in the civilizational struggle with the Zionist entity. He further stated "that the Palestinian issue is in the heart and the mind of every Egyptian and that it is not only a history and a faith, it is rather a part of the Egyptians' formation". (Palinfo, 2019).

After he came to power, his Islamic ideological belief in the resistance and his antagonist view towards Israel propelled him to strengthen his ties with the leaders of Hamas and conduct direct talks with them, a step that was seen as unprecedented in the history of Egypt's relations with Hamas. The ideology factor was a source of Morsi's successful mediator role since his ideological relations with Hamas enabled him to convince Hamas leaders to consider reconciliation with Fatah and agree on the cease fire agreements with Israel. Ideology was also a source of his defender and developer role in which it motivated him to openly condemn Israel's action, defend the Palestinians in Gaza and order the indefinite opening of the crossing.

For Al-Sisi, Hamas is a part of the Muslim Brotherhood. His ideological differences with Hamas motivated him to follow an iron fist policy against it including the destruction of the tunnels Hamas was using in addition to the heavy Egyptian media campaign against Hamas and Egypt's designation of Hamas as a terrorist organization which had its implications on the defender and developer roles of Egypt towards the Palestinians in Gaza in particular. Al-Sisi

rather adopted an ideology of the Arab nationalism and stressed the importance of the historical factor. In most of his speeches, Al-Sisi has stressed Egypt's historical sacrifices for Palestine, Egypt's steady and historical attitude towards the Palestinian issue and the strong Egyptian role in the Palestinian and the Arab affairs. Egypt's medical aid to Gaza was also linked to the historical role of Egypt in helping the Palestinians.

In short, Al-Sisi's desire to show the continuity of Egypt's roles towards the Palestinians motivated him to employ the historical factor and express in several occasions that Egypt's performance today in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict derives from its historical legacy and the Arab nationalism ideology in which Egypt is continuing defending the Palestinian issue in the Arab league summits, hosting summits with the Palestinian and the Jordanian presidents and documenting every step Egypt is doing towards the Palestinians within the framework of its historical and firm role and responsibilities towards them.

3.3.2.2 Domestic Audience

Following the Egyptian revolution, many questions emerged regarding the future influence of the Egyptian people on the Egyptian foreign policy. One of the answers explained that although the Egyptian nation managed to alter the political leadership, there are limitations for its impact on Egypt's foreign policies since the state will have several challenges which it thinks it should face depending on its own vision away of the public reactions since are ignorant of a lot of details in the trajectory of the relationship between Egypt and the other countries (Abdulhadi,2013). Therefore, the Egyptian leadership's response to the public opinion will depend on the extent of the conformation between the public demands and the national interests of Egypt and in case this conformation was not high according to the Egyptian decision makers, the foreign policy decision will be in accordance to these interests and in the same time will placate the public opinion without making a real change (Abdulhadi,2013).

When it comes to the Palestinian issue, Egypt's relations with Israel has been antagonistic before the signature of the Camp David Accords. Egyptians on the leadership and nation levels shared the support for the Palestinians and the hostility towards Israel as entrenching elements in the Egyptian political culture and the Egyptian political consciousness. This culture has been reinforced by Egypt's sacrifices in its four years with Israel (Elgindi, 2012). Following the Egyptian revolution, a group of parliamentarians issued a declaration which states: "Egypt's revolution will never be a friend or a partner or an ally with the Zionist

entity” (Elgindi, 2012). The Egyptian youth too launched Facebook pages to mobilize support for the Palestinian People and create what can be called an “alternative media”, a step that was reinforced by the policy of opening the crossing which was taken by the post revolution government (Albayan, 2011).

The domestic audience can be regarded as a source of Egypt’s developer and defender roles. In 2012, several protests and demonstrations took place in Egypt demanding the withdrawal of the Egyptian ambassador from Israel, summoning the Israeli ambassador in Egypt in addition to the demonstrators’ denouncement of the Israeli aggression on Gaza. These public protests empowered Morsi to take steps that conformed to the public demands which also sustained his legitimacy since he pursued policies that reflected the public will. The formal and public attitudes resulted in the increase of the flow of the food supplies to Gaza, the opening of the Rafah crossing in front of aid and travelers in addition to the facilitation of the visits of the regional and international delegations to Gaza and the rise of the international solidarity with the Palestinians (Abu Jahel, 2020).

In 2014, there was an absence in the public protests compared to 2012. The opinions of the Egyptians were rather polarized. This polarization stems from the media effect which mobilized the Egyptians against Hamas and Gaza and reinforced the idea that Hamas is the responsible one for the deterioration of the situation in Gaza and that it trades with the Palestinian blood. Some of the Egyptian citizens expressed that they don’t sympathize with Hamas and that if Al-Sisi sympathizes with it, they will revolt against him. Other Egyptians saw that the media is fighting a core issue for the Egyptians and eradicating including the sympathizing feeling (DW, 2014).

Some of the analysts stated that the roots of these conflicting reactions lie in the media’s focus on the point that Hamas is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, the bloody events that Egypt went through which normalized the scene of blood and violence, the absence of differentiation between Hamas and the Palestinians, the deep concern that the internal problems of the other countries might move to Egypt in addition to the Egyptian’s preoccupation with their internal problems (DW, 2014).

This situation gave rise to Egypt’s random opening and closing of Rafah crossing in AlSisi era especially in 2014 which affected the Palestinians there. It can be said that the domestic audience in this year saw that the role of the Egyptian regime should be protecting the national security of Egypt against terrorism rather than defending or developing the

situation of the Palestinians. It was important for the Egyptian presidents in the first years following the revolution to sustain their legitimacy which created the conformity between the domestic audience and Egypt's role performance towards the Palestinians. However, in the following years, this conformity has diminished.

The Egyptian members of the parliament also demonstrated their stances towards the Palestinian issue. In 2017, they described Trump's move as irresponsible and wore scarves carrying the symbol of "Jerusalem is Arab" in an unprecedented and relatively quick reaction in the Egyptian parliament to the developments in Palestine (AlJazeera,2017). Similarly, in 2021 the Egyptians demonstrated a big support to the Palestinians in Jerusalem against the Israeli aggressions against AlAqsa mosque and deplored the inaction of the governments via writing several posts and tweets (AlJazeera,2021)

While the Egyptian people's capability to influence the Egyptian decision-making process towards the Palestinian issue was high in first years post the Egyptian revolution especially in 2012, it declined later. Despite the huge support the Palestinian issue receives among the Egyptians, this support was reduced to the social media platforms and did not translate in a real effort on the ground (Saleem,2023).

In 2021, Egypt's policies created a contradiction between dealing with the people inside and the image Egypt tried to spread outside. While Egypt claimed it is working to find a solution for the developments in Palestine that year, it also arrested some of the Egyptians who tried to show their support for the Palestinians which rose the questions about the real Egyptian attitude (Aljazeera, 2021). Some activists even questioned Al-Sisi's ability to send 500 million dollars as he promised to the Gaza Strip. They further argued that this step might transform Egypt to being a donor state rather than a significant actor in the Palestinian issue. In 2022, Egypt opened an Israeli diplomatic mission in Cairo, a step that did not have the people's support who still object Egypt's normalization with Israel (Abu Sharar, 2022).

It remains to be seen to what extent the domestic audience in Egypt in the future will influence the Egyptian roles towards Palestine and how the Egyptian regime will benefit from its role performance towards Palestine to sustain its legitimacy.

3.4. Conclusion

This chapter attempted to analyze the roles Egypt assumed towards the Palestinian issue in the post Arab Spring era using the concepts of the role theory. The chapter clarified that the

security issues on its borders were the main concerns of Egypt post-2011. The Egyptian regimes were also extremely busy with the internal political, security and economic situation. Egypt also underwent a difficult era of power struggles between the Muslim Brotherhood and the military establishment. However, Egypt's preoccupation with domestic politics did not lead it to ignore foreign policy issues especially the Palestinian issue which was still among the significant priorities for Egypt.

This chapter found that Egypt played three significant national role conceptions and role performances regarding Palestine. These roles are the mediator role manifested in Egypt's mediation steps between the Palestinian factions, the Palestinian prisoners and Israel and between Israel and Hamas in times of Israel's aggressions on Gaza. The latter was the most successful field of Egypt's mediation. Developer role was also a critical one in which Egypt participated in the reconstruction efforts of Gaza directly through sending immediate aid and indirectly through opening the Rafah crossing in times of wars in front of the medical convoys from other countries. Egypt also pursued this role through signing economic agreements with the Palestinian National Authority in different fields. Defender role was another role that Egypt adopted in which it defended the Palestinians' rights especially their right to have a free independent state in several platforms including the UN, the Arab league and the Islamist countries organization.

The chapter also analyzed some of the material and ideational sources of these roles. It illustrated the importance of geography and national security factors in strengthening or weakening the mediator and developer roles' performances. Egyptian Israeli relationship was also viewed a vital element in shaping the Egyptian policies towards the Palestinians. Additionally, Egypt instrumentalized the Palestinian issue at critical junctures to increase its regional and international positions and improve its relations with the United States. The chapter also gave importance to the history and ideology factors and demonstrated the differences between Morsi's and Al-Sisi's approaches in performing the same national role conceptions towards the Palestinian issue. Then the chapter concluded with considering the attitude of the Egyptian public opinion towards the Palestinian issue and their contribution to influencing the role performances of their presidents towards Palestine.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE TURKISH ROLE TOWARDS THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE

The first section of this chapter will mention the issues which constituted a priority for Türkiye's agenda during the post-Arab Spring era mainly because of the geographical proximity of Türkiye to the Arab Spring countries especially Syria which Türkiye shares its longest borders with which created several challenges for the Turkish decision makers. Then the chapter will analyze the position of the Palestinian issue on the Turkish agenda through looking at the roles Türkiye played towards the Palestinian issue post-2011 and their sources.

4.1. Türkiye's agenda post the Arab Spring

In the post-Arab Spring era, Türkiye faced a new regional environment which necessitated reshaping the Turkish foreign policy. In the pre-Arab Spring era, Türkiye pursued a zero-problem policy since the Turkish policy makers expected the continuity of the authoritarian rule in the Arab World. This policy was premised on strengthening Türkiye's economic relations with the neighboring countries, respecting these countries' sovereignty and clinging to the principle of non-interference in these countries' domestic affairs. However, post 2011 era imposed new realities, opportunities and concerns.

One of the dilemmas the new environment created for Türkiye is the "ethics self interest dilemma". This dilemma makes it hard to choose between a norm-based policy and an interest based one which means that Türkiye was initially confused between supporting the democratic uprisings in the Arab World and encouraging the Arab regimes which Türkiye had good economic ties with to make reforms (Öniş, 2012). It can be said that resolving this dilemma taking into consideration Türkiye's interests and relations with these countries was the main preoccupation of the Turkish foreign policy during the post-2011.

Another important issue was the security challenges which emerged from the civil war in Syria which developed into a proxy war. These challenges manifested in the growing military capability of PYD and PYG, the offshoots of the PKK, which propelled Türkiye to transform its policy from soft power and humanitarian based to a hard power based which was obvious in Türkiye's response to these challenges in the shape of military operations against these terrorist groups to clear its borders from them and protect its national security (Ataman and Özdemir, 2018). Domestically, the failed coup d'état in 2016 was a milestone since it showed the long plan of Fetö to control the state and shape its foreign policy due to their role in the

intelligence services and their activities in another countries. Therefore, the main priority for Türkiye became to eliminate FETÖ members and networks, consolidate the power of the state and its institutions and shape a more autonomous foreign policy (Gümüş, 2022).

4.2. The Position of the Palestinian Issue on Türkiye's Agenda: Türkiye's National Role Conceptions and Performances towards the Palestinian Issue during the Post-Arab Spring

Türkiye's stance towards the Palestinian issue was not clearly shaped in the initial years of the emergence of the issue. Moreover, this stance was not driven by the dynamics of the Palestinian issue itself. It was rather modified within the context of Türkiye's fluctuating relations with the West, Arabs and Israel. This formula was a zero-sum game in which an alignment with the West meant a strong relation with Israel and a weak one with the Arabs entailed less attention to the Arab issues including the Palestinian issue.

In the 2000s, Türkiye moved from viewing this issue through the lens of Türkiye's foreign relations to the lens of a redefinition of the Palestinian issue from being merely an Arab issue to being the central concern of the Muslim world in which Türkiye stressed its historical ties with Palestine especially Jerusalem. Türkiye also started to evaluate the transition in the developments in Palestine between peace and violence and pursued a balanced policy between Israel and the Palestinians when a room of negotiation was present. In the circumstances of violence, Türkiye did not hesitate to criticize Israel's aggressions against Gaza. Simultaneously it was cautious not to take the side of any Palestinian faction before it began a different policy towards Hamas. Türkiye saw the possibility of integrating Hamas instead of isolating it.

During the post-Arab Spring, Türkiye directed its efforts towards fighting terrorism in northern Syria, protecting its borders, carrying out mega projects at home and developing solutions for the internal economic problems. However, Türkiye did not relinquish its role as a protectee of the oppressed in the world including the Palestinians. Identifying the Turkish role towards the Palestinians post-2011 requires looking at the national role conceptions of Türkiye regarding the Palestinian issue, the perceptions Türkiye has about its stances towards the issue, and the role performance which means the actual foreign policy behavior of Türkiye towards it.

4.3 Mediator Role

4.3.1 Mediating between the Palestinian Factions

During the pre-Arab Spring, Türkiye suggested mediating between Fatah and Hamas in 2008 and 2010. However, Türkiye's offer was not approved by the Palestinian factions. President Abbas for example, refused it under the claim that he preferred the continuity of Egypt's efforts (Dünya Bulteni, 2008). In 2011, the Turkish foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu participated in a meeting in Cairo with the Egyptian foreign minister and the chief of the independent Palestinian figures assembly where the three sides discussed the reconciliation matter and the dangerous impact of the division on the future of the Palestinian national project. In this meeting, Davutoğlu suggested the possibility of a coordination with the Egyptian and the Palestinian sides in the reconciliation file (Youn 7, 2011).

In 2012, Erdoğan announced that he will visit Gaza in order to start the reconciliation efforts between the Palestinian leaderships who were at odds for years (Besant, 2012). In 2017, The Turkish president Erdoğan hosted the Palestinian president to discuss an initiative Türkiye was supposed to propose to end the deterioration in the relations between Fatah and Hamas and reach a formula to resolve the crisis in Gaza (Fayek, 2017).

2020 marked a turning point in Türkiye's mediation role in which it succeeded in hosting the talks between the two factions who asserted that these discussions in Istanbul revolved around the implementation of the outcomes of the previous agreements and the establishment of a "Joint leadership for popular resistance" (Daily Sabah, 2020). They also pledged to work jointly to defend the interests of the Palestinian people and put a national program to counter the challenges which face the Palestinian issue and hold the national elections (Al Jazeera, 2020).

2023 meeting was also a milestone since Türkiye managed to bring the two leaders, Abbas and Haniye, together. In this meeting, Erdoğan stressed the importance of achieving unity and compatibility among Palestinians at this stage and the readiness of Türkiye to help the Palestinians with all means possible in this aspect (Göktürk, 2023). Moreover, the Palestinian leaders in this meeting agreed on establishing a committee to accelerate talks between them (Görsel Haber, 2023).

Türkiye's mediator role between Fatah and Hamas is evolving. While it is true that Türkiye did not play this role in the past, it always had an intention to reconcile the differences between the two sides and therefore started to emerge as an important mediator between the Palestinian factions in the past three years. This involvement stems from Türkiye's current

efficient leadership diplomacy, its recent success in mediating several conflicts and the Palestinian leadership's changing perceptions about the efficiency of Türkiye as a mediator. While Abbas refused the Turkish mediation in 2008, he was the one who asked Erdoğan to host the 2020 talks in Istanbul.

3.2.1.2. Mediating between the Palestinian Factions and Israel

During the pre-Arab Spring era, there was an increase in Türkiye's ambition to play the role of the mediator in the Middle East especially after the Turkish Israeli rapprochement in 2006 in which Türkiye offered to mediate between Israel and Syria. Erdoğan also visited Ramallah and met the Palestinian President to discuss the peace process in the Middle East. He also urged Israel to coordinate the withdrawal plan from Gaza with the Palestinians taking advantage of Türkiye's good relations with all sides.

In 2011, Erdoğan made effort to complete the prisoner exchange deal between Hamas and Israel. His efforts aimed to avoid sending the Palestinian prisoners outside the borders of Gaza and the West Bank in which he expressed Türkiye's readiness to welcome the Palestinian prisoners after Hamas refused their exile in other countries (Maeen News, 2011). In 2012, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu visited Egypt and participated in the negotiation of cease fire Türkiye and supported the Egyptian ceasefire initiative (MFA, 2012) while in 2014 Erdoğan criticized the Egyptian initiative and accused Cairo of excluding Hamas from the potential truce (Elwatan news, 2014).

In 2016, Erdoğan declared his readiness to mediate between Hamas and Israel in another prisoner exchange deal. He stated that Israel has to release the Palestinian prisoners within the framework of this deal (I24News, 2016). It is noteworthy to mention that it was Israel who requested Türkiye to play this role, a request that renewed in 2021. The Israeli newspaper (Israel today) expressed that the Middle Eastern country which has the capability to exert pressure on Hamas is Türkiye (Arabi 21, 2021). In 2017, The Turkish president expressed in the press conference held at the end of Islamist States organization summit in Istanbul that he calls for consultation regarding a new mediator for peace talks since the United States lost its qualification and became biased (Sputnik, 2017).

Following Türkiye's recent mediation between Fatah and Hamas, questions rose about the possibility of expanding Türkiye's mediator role and restarting the peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians under the auspices of Türkiye. One answer was that Türkiye can

coordinate with Egypt and Jordan in this aspect but the international circumstances might impede a restart of peace talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis (Gezer,2023).

Türkiye's mediation role enjoys several characteristics including an access to all sides in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in addition to Israel's and the Palestinians' positive view of Türkiye as a successful mediator. Moreover, Türkiye has developed its own evaluation of the other actors' mediator roles including Egypt and the United States which indicates Türkiye's belief in the necessity of the existence of another mediator who applies the genuine mediator role's conditions especially

3.2.2 Developer Role

3.2.2.1 Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction Efforts of Gaza

2012 marked the continuity and even the intensification of the previous efforts conducted by the Turkish institutions in which Tika, affiliated to the Prime minister's office, continued to be the main initiator to provide medical and financial support to Gaza to offset the shortage in the medical necessities (Abu Nahel and Akhras, 2016). Moreover, World Wide Türkiye included Gaza in the projects it carries out under the symbol of "Health for everyone in Gaza". This organization also embarked on collaborating with the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza and the Turkish non-governmental organizations to send medical teams to Gaza (Relief web, 2012). Afad, The Emergency Management Presidency, also intensified its cooperation with other Turkish institutions to help upgrade the infrastructure in Gaza (Daily Sabah, 2012).

In 2014, Erdoğan initiated a massive aid campaign to help the Palestinians in Gaza. Moreover, the coordinator of Tika confirmed that Türkiye sent 32 Trucks of food and other needed goods to Gaza in two phases which he said will continue (Anadolu Ajansı 2014). Erdoğan also declared his readiness to welcome the Palestinian casualties from Gaza. He said: "We are ready to treat all the wounded Palestinians whether they need surgical or psychological treatment. We are capable of accommodating all of them as numbers don't matter to us" (Ennahar, 2014). Türkiye also participated in the reconstruction conference in Cairo where it pledged to donate 200 million dollars from 2015 till 2017 (Elwatan today, 2015). The Turkish organizations also continued their efforts in which AFAD resumed sending food and medical aid to Gaza and the Turkish Red Crescent launched an aid campaign to secure food and water needs for people in Gaza under the motto of "For Gaza not to lose hope" (Elwatan today, 2015).

TİKA also continued working on the construction of the Turkish Palestinian Friendship hospital which is considered as one of the biggest Turkish projects supporting the needs of the Palestinian nation. TİKA Middle East and Africa Department Head, Bülent Korkmaz, expressed that in the 2014 war hundreds left Gaza to receive medical aid abroad but there will be no need for these transfers after opening the hospital (TİKA, 2016).

In 2016, Türkiye sent ships of supplies to Gaza. The Presidential spokesperson ambassador, Ibrahim Kalın, stated that Türkiye in Eid Al Adha would send aid ships full of bags, shoes and gifts dedicated to children in Gaza which will be distributed through the Turkish institutions in Gaza (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2016). He also declared on other occasions that Türkiye would send a Turkish technical team to provide aid and work on founding electrical and water infrastructure for the Palestinians in the Strip (Youm7, 2016). Besides, Türkiye donated 5 million dollars to finance the fuel supplies and the placing of solar panels in Gaza to mitigate the negative impacts of the electricity crisis on the Strip (MFA, 2017).

In 2018, The Turkish government contributed with 1 million dollars to the World Health Organization dedicated to providing the necessary drugs and medicine for the trauma and non-trauma cases in Gaza. Charge d'affaires ad interim of the Republic of Türkiye in Jerusalem, Erman Topcu, declared that this step indicates Türkiye's determination to facilitate the instant support to the medical staff in Gaza to guarantee the arrival of emergency assistance to the casualties in the overwhelmed hospitals in the Strip (Emro, 2018). Within the framework of its effort to fight the Corona virus, Türkiye sent medical aid to Gaza through the Palestinian Health Ministry in Ramallah. This aid included test kits, masks, protective suits, gloves and sterilization materials (Daily Sabah, 2020). Türkiye also dedicated the efforts of the Turkish Palestinian friendship hospital to facing the pandemic.

In 2021, The Humanitarian Relief Foundation gave aid to tens of Gazan families affected by the Israeli aggression on the Strip. This aid included electric devices and gas cylinders (Anadolu Agency, 2021). Türkiye's worldwide doctors also distributed food supplies for patients and poor people. In 2022 and 2023, Türkiye continued its humanitarian aid to support the poor families in Gaza on different occasions like Ramadan.

Türkiye's developer role towards Gaza is characterized by its rapidity, variety and commitment in times of wars, crisis and relative peace in which Türkiye dedicated a vast amount of financial and medical support to help improve the deteriorating situation in the Strip.

Moreover, Türkiye pursued this role through several implementers and institutions using different channels including sending aid directly to Gaza, via the Palestinian Health Ministry in Ramallah, shipments via ports in the southern part of Palestine and via the international organizations.

3.2.2.2 Economic Relations between Türkiye and the Palestinian National Authority

Türkiye managed to strengthen its relations with both Hamas and the Palestinian National Authority. Regarding its relations with the Palestinian National Authority, the Turkish government support the economic projects and construct economic and relief associations in the Palestinian territories. In 2013, the Palestinian and the Turkish governments signed a set of agreements regarding the establishment of a cooperation council, mutual assistance in customs affairs and twining agreements (Amer, 2018). In 2015, the Palestinian and the Turkish foreign ministries agreed on forming a joint ministerial committee in order to reinforce the cooperation between the two states (Wafa news, 2015). In the following year, a Turkish economic delegation paid a visit to the Palestinian territories and signed a cooperation agreement with the Palestinian side to transfer the Turkish experience in the management of the industrial zones to the Palestinians (Turk Press, 2016).

2018 marks a turning point in the Palestinian Turkish economic relations in which the Palestinian and the Turkish trade ministers held the first joint economic cooperation to reinforce the bilateral relations between the two sides. The Turkish trade minister, Ruhsar Pekcan, stressed that this meeting helps fill the gap in the Turkish Palestinian economic relations, increase the Turkish investors' interests in Palestine, expand the free trade agreement and found a legal ground for an economic development (Haber Turk, 2018). The Palestinian trade minister, Abeer Odeh, also emphasized the importance of upgrading the legal and investment environment and granting agencies to the companies to develop bilateral relations (Embassy of Palestine, 2018).

Türkiye demonstrated its commitment to support Palestine when it asserted its readiness to assist the Palestinian National Authority financially following Trump's decision to cut off the American support to the Palestinians. The Turkish foreign minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu stated that: "If the United States cuts off support to Palestine, we exist in these circumstances" (Ayyash, 2018). Türkiye granted the Palestinian Authority with 10 million dollars and Erdoğan

declared that the Palestinians will be included in the electronic visa to ease their travel to Türkiye (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2017).

Türkiye directed its efforts to upgrade the infrastructure in the Palestinian territories and ensure the access of the palestinians to their basic needs including water. Upon the visit of the Palestinian chief of water authority to Türkiye, the Turkish side declared its intention to participate in the donors' conference in Brussels and that Türkiye will contribute to the implementation of a strategic project to upgrade the water situation in Palestine (wafa news, 2018). TİKA also went on with its projects in the Palestinian territories. In 2021, the head of TİKA office in Palestine and the head of Hebron municipality held a meeting where the Turkish officer expressed his readiness to cooperate with the Palestinian side to carry on developmental projects to improve the Palestinians' life standards (Anadolu Agency, 2021).

The past two years witnessed an acceleration in the implementation of the economic and trade agreements between the two sides especially the one regarding the economic council. In 2021, the Palestinian national economy minister and the Turkish trade minister agreed on encouraging investments, increasing the trade size between the two sides, providing technical support in the field of intellectual property and more importantly facilitating the entrance of the Palestinian products into the Turkish markets with a full exemption of taxes (Al hadath, 2021).

In 2022, the Turkish minister of foreign affairs visited the Palestinian territories and signed economic agreements to support the Palestinian economy, construct industrial zones in Palestine and increase the trade size to reach two billion dollars annually (Almamlakah, 2022). In 2023, the head of the municipality of Konya visited Hebron and expressed his will to provide the city with technical support in the fields of local administration, geographical information system, smart traffic application and firefighting training. Moreover, he signed a protocol with the Palestinian side to rebuild a Palestinian home destroyed by the Israeli forces (Anadolu Agency, 2023).

The Turkish Palestinian economic relations exhibited a strong developer role of Türkiye distinguished by its consistency and comprehensiveness in which Türkiye committed to the agreements it signed with the Palestinians, paid attention to different aspects in the Palestinian infrastructure, and paid several visits to Palestine to discuss economic issues and trade. Moreover, Türkiye implemented its role through the ministries of economy and trade, TİKA and the Turkish local municipalities which enriched its role and helped transfer the Turkish experience in development to the palestinians.

3.2.2.3 Developmental Projects in Jerusalem

Türkiye paid special attention to Jerusalem and launched several initiatives and developmental projects to help improve the situation of the city, its holy places and its people through many channels and institutions. Since 2013, the Turkish cultural center of Yunus Emre has organized several cultural activities in Jerusalem including symposiums, galleries and Turkish courses in addition to helping the Palestinians organize their own cultural events (Ertem, 2021). The head of the cultural center of Yunus Emre expressed that culture is the only thing that keeps the Palestinians alive (Ertem, 2021). Yunus Emre also has arranged cultural exchange programs festivals and documentary days.

In 2014, The Turkish association (Our Heritage) declared that it will launch projects for the sake of Al Aqsa mosque and that there will be projects under the name of Istanbul and others under the name of Ankara in Jerusalem in which the Turkish people can contribute to the development of Jerusalem (Mirasimiz, 2014). The same association provided scholarships to the Jerusalemite students to study in the Palestinian universities. On this occasion in a celebration held by the Jerusalem institute for sustainability, the Turkish ambassador in Jerusalem stated that “Türkiye is willing to cooperate with this institution in all activities which contribute to the reinforcement of the steadfastness of the palestinians and their upliftment of them on social and developmental levels (Almasar, 2014). In 2016, the association restored several houses in Jerusalem. The officer of the association expressed that: “The association restored 45 mosques and more than 70 houses in Jerusalem and the Palestinian territories” (Akhbar elbalad, 2016).

The number of the Turkish people who visit Jerusalem also increased. Since 2015, Al Aqsa mosque was placed on the program of the Turkish pilgrimages which allow them to visit Jerusalem for three days before they go to Mecca or Medina. The head of the religious affairs in Türkiye, Ali Erbaş, following the Pandemic era said: “Walk my brother, let Jerusalem give you strength” (TRT, 2022). In 2017, this statement was translated in the visit of a delegation from Konya to Jerusalem to carry on the project of “On the steps of Abdelhamid”. The main idea of this project is expanding the Turkish people’s knowledge about the Ottoman archeological sites in Jerusalem (Melhem, 2017).

TİKA’s projects were also present in Jerusalem. In 2018, TİKA signed a technical cooperation agreement with the University of Jerusalem which stipulated providing

accommodations for the Palestinian female students in the University of Jerusalem and teaching Arabic to the Turkish students (Yeni Akit, 2018). In 2021, The General Turkish consulate and the Head of TİKA office in Palestine visited this dormitory where they hailed the plans of the University of Jerusalem and emphasized both sides' interest to develop their bilateral ties (alquds.edu, 2021). In 2020, the scholar's forum in Türkiye demanded the civil society associations in Türkiye to form a committee for Jerusalem in their institutions to reinforce the awareness of the Palestinian issue, launch study center and research units and provide academic and financial support for the Palestinians (Safa News, 2020).

Another beneficial program was started by the Turkish endowment, erected in 2021, which saw the importance of protecting the Jerusalemite students from dropping out from school. The project's name is "Men before their time". It aims to support the students' needs, provide tuition fees, improve the infrastructure of schools, secure scholarships and develop projects to upgrade the students' and teachers' skills (Aljazeera, 2022). In 2023, The Fund and Endowment of Jerusalem signed many agreements with a number of Turkish institutions to implement developmental and cultural projects to increase the Palestinian Turkish joint work in Jerusalem (Qudsuna, 2023).

Türkiye's developer role towards Jerusalem and the Palestinians living there is vital and continuous. It also comes in various ways including preserving the holy places and the Ottoman landmarks in Jerusalem and meeting the basic needs of the Jerusalemites especially in the field of education, culture and housing. Türkiye's role has been implemented through the Turkish government and the Turkish associations which managed to create bonds with the universities and committees in Jerusalem in order to serve the city and its people.

3.2.2.4 Educational Initiatives and Projects for the Palestinians

Türkiye has concentrated on the aspect of education as the main element in its sustainability projects in Palestine. This concentration was translated into granting the Palestinian students with scholarships, constructing academic institutions, arranging academic activities and sending delegations to universities and schools. In 2012, a delegation from the Turkish ministry of education visited the Islamic University in Gaza. The deputy of the ministry clarified that this visit indicates the depth of the interest of the ministry in the education in Palestine. He also transferred the recommendations of Erdoğan which express Türkiye's interest in consolidating the cooperative relations between Türkiye and the high education

institutions in the Islamic countries (Iugaza, 2012). Additionally, the Turkish president sponsored a project called “Will Project” in the Islamic University of Gaza to provide trainings and employment opportunities for the Palestinians injured in the Israeli aggression on Gaza (Plsnew, 2013).

Al-Quds University is another university that gained the Turkish support. In 2018, the university held a big conference for social sciences which was attended by several Turkish academic figures and universities representatives (alquds.edu, 2018). In this event, the Turkish ambassador stated that Al-Quds University is the cornerstone of the Palestinian education and that Türkiye supports the Palestinians in all fields especially in the light of the Judaization of the city (alquds.edu, 2018).

Regarding schools, Türkiye opened in 2014 a new school in Ramallah where Erdoğan asserted the sustainable support of Türkiye for the Palestinian nation which is a guarantee for its steadfastness (wafa, 2015). The Turkish Parliament member Murat Yıldırım clarified two dimensions of the significance of this opening including the consolidation of the relations between the Turkish and the Palestinian nations and the importance of education in achieving the liberation of the Palestinian people (wafa, 2015). In 2015, TİKA opened an old Ottoman school in Nablus after a great restoration effort. On this occasion, the Turkish ambassador, Mustafa Sanyaş, said that these projects aim mainly to restore the communication between Türkiye and Palestine and enrich it with developmental and political dimensions (Aljazeera, 2015).

The Turkish support for the palestinians in the field of education was not reduced to universities. In 2019, Afad launched a campaign to gather aid for the Palestinian students under the symbol of “Education is the biggest need for nations after bread” (Daily Sabah, 2019). Academic facilities were also renewed by Tika like the Nablus Municipality Library which was constructed in the Ottoman era. Türkiye’s educational projects were not reduced to the Palestinian territories. In 2019, Al-Quds schools were opened in Istanbul. The Head of the private education in Türkiye stated that the Turkish state stands beside the palestinians and facilitates the recognition of the Palestinian private schools and reduces the bureaucracy in the international institutions (tr agency, 2019).

Türkiye also provided scholarships for the Palestinian students through different channels mainly YTB which is one of the most organized Turkish programs for scholarships since the governmental institution YTB provides full scholarships for the Palestinian students

from different Palestinian cities on different academic levels. The Turkish effort in this context include the Turkish delegations' visits to Palestine to interview the applicants, registering the Palestinian students in the Turkish universities and providing platforms for them to hold activities which demonstrate their national identity and the political and cultural realities of the Palestinian nation.

Türkiye's developer role towards the Palestinians in the field of education is encompassing and covers several aspects including supporting the Palestinian schools and universities, opening schools in Türkiye for the Palestinians, encouraging the research and academic production of the Palestinian individuals and universities and granting scholarships to the Palestinians inside and outside Palestine. This role was implemented through several mechanisms like the frequent visits of Turkish delegations to the Palestinian universities and schools, the dedication of financial and technical support to improving the Palestinian institutions and creating projects for the poor and disabled students through the Turkish government, TİKA, YTB and Turkish universities.

3.2.3 Defender of Faith Role

3.2.3.1. Defending the Palestinians' Rights and Acting Against Israel

Türkiye has adopted a pro-Palestinian stance in several occasions where Türkiye defended the Palestinians' basic rights and the right of having free independent state. Moreover, Türkiye did not hesitate to condemn Israel's aggressive actions and mobilize the international community to take serious steps to recognize the Palestinians' rights and end the Israeli discriminatory policies against the Palestinians. Türkiye voiced its support for the Palestinians and criticized Israel's wars against Gaza. In 2012, Erdoğan declared that he will not be silent in front of what is happening in Gaza and he criticized the West's defense of Israel whom he described as a terrorist state (Saleh, 2016). Moreover, the Turkish foreign minister visited Gaza with a delegation of Arab foreign ministers and checked upon the injured Palestinians there. He addressed the Palestinian nation saying: "Your pain is our pain and your future is our future" (Al Abedi, 2019). In 2014, Erdoğan accused Israel's military campaign against Gaza of being more barbaric than Hitler's campaigns (Al Jazeera, 2014). Moreover, he stated that Türkiye will strive for trying Israel in front of an international court (Al Jazeera, 2014).

This attitude was reinforced by the head of the Turkish Parliament Cemil Çiçek who stated that Israel killed 2000 Palestinian children and women in Gaza during his participation

in the event of Holocaust Memorial (Saleh, 2016). Similarly, in 2015 the Turkish minister of foreign affairs withdrew from Munich security conference because of the participation of the Israeli delegation. The minister announced that his country was going to take part in the conference before the Israeli delegation was added to the attendees (Panorama, 2015). In 2018 in his response to Israel's attacks against the Palestinian participants in the Nakba protests, Türkiye hosted a gathering of a group of Muslim countries where Erdoğan described Israel's crimes as atrocity and thuggery (Aljazeera, 2018). He also urged these countries to take actions against Israel's massacres against the Palestinians to show the world that humanity is still alive.

In 2021, Erdoğan confirmed his anti-Israel stance and recurred describing it as a terrorist state and urged every state and institution regardless of its faith or origin to work quickly against Israel's attacks (Reuters, 2021). Additionally, the deputy of the President Fouad Aktay urged the Islamic states to adopt a clear attitude against Israel's actions in Gaza and said that those who lack this stance are participants in this disaster (Al-Quds Alarabi, 2021).

Türkiye's support of the Palestinians is not reduced to times of wars. Türkiye defended the Palestinian leadership's right to be a member state in the United Nations agencies including UNESCO (MFA, 2022). In his visit to Cairo in 2011, the President of the Turkish Parliament's Political committee Zeki Douser asserted the need of a collective effort to achieve a success of the Palestinian bid to be a member in the United Nations in addition to the urgent need of the Palestinian unity and the termination of the Israeli settlements to remove the impediments on the road of this success (wafa, 2015).

Türkiye also expressed its denouncement of the Israeli laws including the one passed by the Israeli parliament which stipulates that Israel is a Jewish nation state. The Turkish ministry of foreign affairs urged the international community to adopt a firm position against the law since it violates the international law, neglects the Palestinian rights and obstructs the two-state solution (wafa, 2018). Furthermore, Erdoğan hosted the Palestinian members in the Israeli Parliament where he encouraged them to work jointly against the law and continue representing the Palestinian will in the Israeli legislative bodies (Imemc, 2019). Following Netanyahu's election promise to include the valley of Jordan under the sovereignty of Israel, Türkiye asserted its eternal defense of the Palestinians. The Turkish minister of foreign affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu stated in the summit of the organization of the Islamic States that the countries who were dissatisfied with the Turkish stance support the Israeli state's terrorism (Yeni Şafak, 2019).

Türkiye is also known for its firm pro Palestine stances in the United Nations. In his speech in front of the General Assembly in 2014, Erdoğan used the motto of the world is bigger than five and highlighted the need to reform the United Nation's system to improve the organization's capability to resolve the pending issues in the world including the Israeli Palestinian conflict since he sees that the current representative system of the United Nations is the reason behind the failure of the United Nations to resolve several issues including those of Palestine and Syria (Aral, 2019).

Similarly, in 2019 Erdoğan raised a critical question about the real borders of Israel. He stressed the point that Israel does not have clear borders since it is planning to continue its encroachment on the Palestinian lands (TRT World, 2019). He used a map to show the continuous expansion of the Israeli state and the erosion of the Palestinian one and pointed to the fact that the UN resolutions regarding the Israeli Palestinian conflict have not been implemented. Regarding Türkiye's approach towards the peace process, Türkiye defended the Palestinians' right to establish their state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital considering it as the key to peace in the Middle East. This approach was highlighted in the Turkish president's speeches in the United Nations and his meetings with the Palestinian leaderships.

Türkiye's defender role towards the Palestinians takes both rhetoric and practical dimensions in different platforms including the United Nations and the organization of the Islamic states which demonstrate Türkiye's active and consistent role not only in defending the Palestinians but also in criticizing the Israeli occupation, the international system that emboldens it and the countries who show inaction and indifference to the Israeli aggressive acts against the Palestinians. This role was conducted by the Turkish leadership and several officers in the Turkish presidency and ministry of foreign affairs.

3.2.3.2. Defending the Historic and Legal Status quo of Jerusalem

In addition to Türkiye's developmental efforts in Jerusalem, Türkiye defended the status quo of Jerusalem, strove to preserve it, managed to bring it to the focus of the international community and strongly rejected the decisions which aimed to alter the historic and the legal realities of the city. In 2014, Türkiye hosted the international conference of Jerusalem which was attended by the Turkish ministry of foreign affairs, the United Nations representative, the Palestinian President and other political characters. This conference focused on the themes of

the United Nations resolutions on Jerusalem, the social and the economic realities of Jerusalem and the international approaches to resolve the matter of Jerusalem (wafa, 2015).

Türkiye's efforts to maintain the status quo of the city peaked in 2017 in Erdogan's response to the American decision of recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. He strengthened his rhetoric against Trump's decision, accused the United States of throwing a bomb in the Middle East and pointed that if Muslims lose Jerusalem, they will lose Medina and if they lose Medina they will lose Mecca (palinfo,2017). He also clarified the mechanisms Türkiye will utilize to overcome the American decision including going to both the security council and the general assembly.

Türkiye employed its diplomatic efforts to unify the voices of the Arab and Muslim countries in order to put aside their differences and focus their efforts on countering Trump's move (Kireçci,2017). Türkiye succeeded in convening an extraordinary summit for the organization of Islamic countries and came up with the idea of providing a fund from the Islamic development Bank to the city (Kireçci, 2017). The Turkish president stated that the aim of this summit was to keep the holiness and the historical status of the city and declared that the Jerusalem will remain the capital of Palestine (Anadolu agency,2017). Türkiye further declared its intention to open a Turkish embassy in East Jerusalem. (Alghad, 2017). The Turkish prime minister Binali Yıldırım also announced that the ambassador of Türkiye in Jerusalem is an ambassador in Palestine and that the Turkish consulate in Jerusalem serves as an embassy (Alray, 2017).

Similarly, Türkiye expressed its absolute rejection of the deal of the century and considered it as an occupation project . Erdoğan viewed the purpose of this deal to be neglecting the rights of the Palestinians, imposing a new reality on them and legitimizing the Israeli occupation (Anadolu Ajansi, 2020). Türkiye was also aware of the harm inflicted by the Israeli settlements on the status of Jerusalem and its people and so continued denouncing the settlements construction. In 2017, Türkiye condemned Israel's decision to build illegal housing units in Jerusalem and clarified that these units violate the peace solutions and the rights of the Palestinians (Ajuz, 2017). In the same year, Türkiye considered the settlements enterprise an absolute ignorance of the international community (Alaraby, 2017). In 2019, Türkiye denounced the illegitimate policy of Israel's settlement construction, described it as indifferent and confirmed its pro Palestine stance (Daily Sabah, 2019). This denouncement took a stronger form in 2020 when Türkiye clarified that with the Israeli settlements in Jerusalem, Israel aims to prevent the establishment of a viable Palestinian state that enjoys a geographical unity and

independence and described these actions as illegal since the Palestinian land is the property of the Palestinians (Alalm, 2020).

Türkiye also played a decisive role in Sheik Jarrah issue. Türkiye has demonstrated its pro Palestine stance through its denouncement of Israel's policies against the Palestinians. The Turkish parliament also showed its rejection of Israel's dispossession policy against the Palestinian residents in the Sheik Jarrah neighborhood and considered it to be a stark violation of the international law (Avundukloğlu, 2022). Moreover, Türkiye facilitated the Palestinian lawyers' work to carry out a detailed search for documents which are a crucial evidence of the Palestinians' rights. Türkiye has handed the documents related to the issue to the Palestinian National Authority to help the Palestinians overcome the propagandist claims of the Zionist settlers.

As a part of its initiatives in Jerusalem, Türkiye in 2021 suggested the formation of a committee from the three religions to administrate Jerusalem as the most optimal solution for the circumstances there (Daily Sabah, 2021). Erdoğan further likened Türkiye's support to Jerusalem with its support to Azerbaijan in which Türkiye will help the Palestinians liberate their land just like how it helped Azerbaijan restore its land (Shafaq, 2021).

One of the most important features of Türkiye's defense policies on Jerusalem is Türkiye's continuous defense of the Palestinians' right of the freedom of worship in AlAqsa mosque and its continuous denouncement of Israel's flagrant violations of this right. This was obvious in 2015 when Türkiye demanded Israel to respect its obligations in East Jerusalem and respect the worship freedom of the Palestinians. In 2017, Erdoğan demanded Israel to commit to the humanitarian values and explained that Israel's aggressive acts against AlAqsa mosque cannot be acceptable since they violate all the international treaties (Ajuz2017). He also expressed that he wonders what the response of Netanyahu would be if the Jews were subjected to the same treatment the Palestinians are subjected to in Jerusalem (Ajuz,2017). In the following years, Türkiye has strengthened its condemnations based on a group of demands including ending the provocative actions against the Palestinians and warning that these actions undermine the prospects of peace. Additionally, Türkiye urged the international community to step in and hold Israel accountable for its policies.

Türkiye's defender role towards Jerusalem reflects its staunch and consistent commitment translated in activism and unabated support for Jerusalem's issues. Türkiye has adopted several initiatives and suggestions to help find a solution for the situation in Jerusalem.

It also strove for the internationalization of the matters of Jerusalem and has pursued its efforts to mobilize the Muslim countries and other states to defy the unjust decisions which worsen conditions in Jerusalem. Türkiye's defender and developer roles in Jerusalem indicate that the city is a top priority on the Turkish agenda in which Türkiye harnesses its economic capabilities and diplomatic power for the sake of Jerusalem and its people.

3.3. The Sources of the Turkish National Conceptions towards the Palestinian Issue during the Post-Arab Spring

Türkiye's roles towards the Palestinian issue stem from a number of sources including material and ideational ones. These sources will be explained below.

3.3.1 Material Sources of the Turkish National Conceptions towards the Palestinian Issue during the Post-Arab Spring

3.3.1.1 Geographical Location and National Security Concerns

Türkiye's geostrategic location has always been an important determinant of the Turkish foreign policy especially in the Middle East . When it comes to the Palestinian issue, this factor created a strong bond between Türkiye and Palestine taking into consideration the fact that Palestine was a part of the Ottoman Empire. This factor's impact on the relation between Palestine and Türkiye did not change much and continued to be a source of Türkiye's role towards the Palestinian issue.

The Arab Spring highlighted the significance of the geographical location of Türkiye which found itself surrounded by a new, dangerous security environment which increased the state of uncertainty and unpredictability. Therefore, Türkiye has employed its diplomatic power to mediate in the regional and the international conflicts including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since they have their spillover effect on Türkiye. This situation motivated Türkiye to strengthen its mediator role whether it was between the two Palestinian factions or between Israel and the Palestinians. The purpose of this mediation is to help create an atmosphere for peace and prevent a potential war that might endanger Türkiye which already started to have new security concerns in the Post Arab Spring era. This location also qualified Türkiye to have relations with all sides in the conflict. These sides' realization of the significance of Türkiye's strategic position and its diplomatic capability encouraged them to ask for its mediation post

2011. This factor also empowered Türkiye's defender role since Türkiye's interest in living in a stable and peaceful pushes it to adopt the two-state solution and defend the Palestinians' right of founding their state.

The geographical proximity between Türkiye and Palestine has also enabled Türkiye to sign a security cooperation with the Palestinian Authority in 2018 which was interpreted as a prelude to the demarcation of the borders between the two sides and so signing a gas deal similar to the deal between Türkiye and Libya. (Newkhaliji news, 2021). This potential demarcation was supported by both Fatah and Hamas. Hamas expressed that it is possible to sign a demarcation agreement with Türkiye (Farhood, 2021). The Palestinian ambassador also stated that Palestine is open to the idea of deepening its relations with Türkiye which include a deal regarding the pure economic zones in which Palestine has shares of oil and gas in the Eastern Mediterranean and it is ready to cooperate with Türkiye and sign an agreement (Ir24 news, 2020).

This agreement empowered Türkiye's defender and developer roles towards the Palestinian issue. Regarding the developer role, this agreement includes trainings, logistic support and cooperation in the issues of maritime security and naval campaigns which contribute to developing the experience of the Palestinian Authority and transferring the Turkish experience to Palestine in addition to enabling the Palestinian Authority to attract international investments, resolve its financial shortage and decrease its dependence on foreign aid. For the defender role, one of the retired Turkish officers, Cihat Yayıcı, clarified that Türkiye's role in the demarcation of the maritime borders of Palestine would guarantee the rights of Palestine, accelerate the process of recognizing it as a state and provide a stronger political support for it (Farhood, 2021).

3.3.1.2 The Turkish-Israeli Relations

Historically speaking, there were some salient stations in the Turkish-Israeli relationship which can be classified as the enthusiastic recognition of Israel in 1949, the constrained relations in the Cold war era, the free intense relations in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War and the Middle East peace process and the fragile, volatile relations in the twenty first century especially in the diplomatic aspect.

The Palestinian issue has always been an area of contention between the two sides. In the 2000s, Türkiye has voiced its rejection of the Israeli policies against the Palestinians and

never hesitated to cut off the diplomatic relations with Israel whenever the later committed wars or violations against the Palestinians. The Mavi Marmara incident is marked as a dangerous juncture in the Turkish Israeli relations. Türkiye demanded Israel to apologize, compensate the victims' families, and break the blockade of Gaza. The last condition is a sign that Türkiye linked its interests and the Palestinians' interests and pursued a clear anti-Israel and Pro Palestine stances regardless of the continuous economic relations between Türkiye and Israel.

In the early years post the Arab Spring, the hostility between the two sides continued which strengthened Türkiye's defender role towards the Palestinians. In 2011, Türkiye questioned the report of the United nations which pointed that the blockade in Gaza is legal and expressed that it does not recognize the legality of the blockade (Reuters, 2011). Moreover, Türkiye linked the Marmara incident with the Israel's war on Gaza, described the later as another example of Israel's aggressive policy and accused the United Nations of failing in countering a terror state that kills the innocent children (Allaithi, 2022). In 2013, Erdoğan also described Zionism as a crime against humanity (Allaithi, 2022) and in 2014, he again connected the Marmara incident with 2014 war in which he stated that Israel neither committed to the Turkish conditions nor lifted the blockade of Gaza and instead it waged a military campaign against Gaza.

In 2016, the two sides reached an agreement to normalize relations and reestablish the mutual diplomatic ties. However, this normalization did not have a negative impact on the Türkiye's roles towards the Palestinians. Additionally, this agreement was welcomed by Hamas which expressed its gratitude for Türkiye's efforts to alleviate the hardships of Gaza since the agreement contained the allowance of the entrance of aid to Gaza in addition to facilitating the investment in the drinking water projects, residency buildings and energy stations (BBC, 2016).

In the same year, Türkiye managed to mediate a prisoner exchange deal between Israel and Hamas and sent aid to Gaza via the Ashdod port which is controlled by Israel. Ibrahim Kalın stated that it is the first examination to check if Israel is willing to facilitate the arrival of this aid (The New Arab, 2016). In 2017, Erdoğan continued his strong rhetoric against Israel and designated it as a terrorist state that Jerusalem should not be abandoned to (Arabic CNN, 2017). Similarly in 2018, Türkiye expelled the Israeli ambassador because of Israel's killing of the Palestinian demonstrators on Gaza borders. The same attitude was taken by Erdoğan in 2019 when he strongly condemned Israel's bombardment of the Anadolu agency offices in Gaza and emphasized that the agency would continue showing the world the truth and

delivering the reality of Israel's terrorism and injustices in Gaza and all the Palestinian places (Aljazeera, 2019).

In 2022, Türkiye and Israel started a new rapprochement motivated mainly by energy cooperation and economic reasons. Türkiye assured the Palestinians that this rapprochement will not hinder Türkiye's defense of the Palestinians and that it will enable Türkiye to lobby for the interests of the Palestinians and utilize dialogue mechanisms to defend them without making concessions (The Guardian, 2022). Following the rapprochement, Erdoğan hosted the Palestinian president who thanked Türkiye for its permanent standing on the Palestinians' side. The Palestinian foreign minister also stated that this rapprochement would be useful for the Palestinian issue especially Jerusalem and that Türkiye which managed to bring the Russians and Ukrainians together might be able to bring the Palestinians and the Israelis together (RT, 2022).

Hamas responded to the recent rapprochement between Türkiye and Israel with a condemnation, but it did not condemn Türkiye or the Turkish president directly which was interpreted as Hamas's desire to safeguard its relations with Türkiye (France24, 2022). However, some voices from Gaza showed concern over the possible destiny of Hamas -Türkiye relations. Interestingly, some Israeli voices began promoting the idea that Türkiye is planning to take everything and give nothing and that Türkiye will use the profits of a potential gas pipeline to fund terrorism.

It can be said that so far this rapprochement did not have adverse impacts on Türkiye's roles towards the Palestinian issue. Türkiye continued its mediator role which was seen in hosting Fateh and Hamas leaders in the following year. It also continued defending the Palestinians rights albeit with a less critical rhetoric. Furthermore, the Turkish institutions went on with their developmental projects in different Palestinian cities.

4.3.1.3 Türkiye's Regional and International Status

In the post Arab Spring era Türkiye has aimed to enhance its regional and international positions and pursue its quest of the regional leadership. For Palestine, Türkiye has both benefited from its roles towards the issue to achieve these aims and capitalized on its already existent regional and international influence to enhance the effectivity of its roles towards the issue. These points were embodied in Türkiye's defender role. In 2015, Erdoğan said that Al Aqsa Mosque is not only for Palestinians but it is the first destination for all Muslims in the

world and he invited the Muslim countries to adopt the alliances diplomacy (AlKhalij.online, 2015). In 2017, Türkiye employed its leadership of the regional bloc of the organization of Islamic countries to hold two extraordinary summits to defend the status of Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. At the same time, this step increased the diplomatic credentials of Türkiye which were recognized by the other Muslim countries especially the Arab countries. Lebanon expressed that Türkiye made a good initiative, Qatar stated that it hopes for a clear work plan to persuade the United States to give up on its decision and commit to the international resolutions and Jordan stressed its desire to work jointly with Türkiye to counter the American decision (Daily Sabah, 2017).

On the regional level, Türkiye's defender role towards Jerusalem and Gaza improved Türkiye's status in the region and upgraded its relations with the Arab countries. In 2012, The Turkish foreign minister visited Gaza with an Arab delegation and in the following year he participated in the Arab League summit where he stressed that despite the future course of the Turkish Israeli relations, Türkiye will continue supporting the regional and universal efforts to find a solution for the Palestinian issue (MFA, 2013). In 2017 in a press conference held in Ankara, Türkiye hosted the King of Jordan and stressed that Türkiye shares with Jordan the same feelings regarding the importance of Jerusalem and that Türkiye respects Jordan's role as a protector of the holy places in Jerusalem (AlJazeera,2017). Moreover, the emerging Turkish weight and Türkiye's international alliances pushed the Arab countries to start looking up to the Turkish role especially in the time of the Israeli aggressions (Jibreel, 2023). In 2023, the Jordanian foregin minister visited Türkiye and the two sides agreed on a mutual stance towards the situation of Jerusalem (Jibreel, 2023).

Internationally, Türkiye employed its significant international weight and diplomatic efforts to pursue its defender role of the Palestinian issue, in 2017, Türkiye worked on placing the Egyptian proposal which entails the illegality of Trump's move on the agenda of the security council (Alnajah, 2017). In the following year, the security council responded to Türkiye's request to generalize and publish a letter related to the Palestinian issue and consider it as one of the official documents of the council (Daily Sabah, 2018). This letter entails that the prevention of any country in any security council meeting from expressing its attitude towards a significant issue in its region conflicts with the UN charter (Daily Sabah, 2018). It is noteworthy to mention that in 2014, the Turkish foreign minister asserted that Türkiye wanted to acquire the membership in the security council for the sake of Palestine (Alaraby Aljadeed, 2014).

The international significance of Türkiye also had its impact on generating opposition voices against Israel in the political and media circles in the United States in which the efforts of Erdoğan helped increase the awareness of the violence the Palestinians are subjected to (Alci, 2021). Additionally, the strong international position of Türkiye created an increasing appreciation of the potential mediator role of Türkiye in the Israeli Palestinian especially after its successful mediation between the Russians and the Ukrainians. The Palestinian foreign minister, Riad Almalki expressed that he thinks Türkiye is capable of employing its leadership diplomacy to mediate between Israel and the Palestinians (Daily Sabah, 2022).

It is clear that Türkiye harnessed its regional and international positions to strengthen its defender role and serve the Palestinian issue in which it helped advance the issue on the agenda of the regional blocs and the UN bodies and support the neighboring countries' attempts to serve and internationalize the issue and respecting their historical roles. Besides, Türkiye's continuous support of the Palestinian issue increased its credibility and status as a regional protector and as the sought country to mobilize and urge the other regional and international actors to take serious steps for the sake of the Palestinians.

4.3.2. The Ideational Sources of Türkiye's Roles towards the Palestinian Issue during the Post-Arab Spring

4.3.2.1. History and Ideology

Türkiye's roles towards the Palestinian issue in the era of the development and Justice party have been inspired by the Islamic roots of the leaders of the party, the historic and the civilizational depth of their perception of the Palestinian issue and the interaction with the Arab and Islamic worlds since the party saw that the Palestinian issue is not isolated from its Arab and Islamic circles. These factors continued to inform Türkiye's roles towards the issue post 2011 in which history and ideology are counted among the most significant sources of these roles.

History as a source of the Turkish role towards Palestine was clear in Erdoğan's speeches frequently. In one of his speeches in front of the Turkish Parliament, Erdoğan stated that Jerusalem for Türkiye is not only a geopolitical issue in which the old city, which is the heart of Jerusalem, was built in the era of Suleiman the Magnificent which indicates that the Ottomans gave a special attention to this city throughout the years (Arabic CNN, 2020). He then added that the occupation of the Palestinian lands obliges Türkiye to pay attention to this

issue and attract the attention of the world to the rights of the Palestinians in all platforms (Arabic CNN, 2020). This speech links the Ottoman history to the defender role of Türkiye towards Jerusalem. This link was reinforced on other occasions when Erdoğan said that Jerusalem is not only the issue of Muslims in Palestine but it is the issue of all Muslims and that defending Jerusalem means defending humanity, justice, peace and freedom (Tccb gov, 2018). He further said that Israel will not be able to erase the spiritual status of Jerusalem or the landmarks of the Islamic history (Tccb gov, 2018).

Additionally, from a historical perspective, Türkiye's relation with Palestine is based on a group of principles embodied in Türkiye's belief that the Palestinian issue is a fair issue in which a strange occupation occupied the Palestinian lands, expelled the Palestinian people and stole their wealth (Aljondy, 2015). These beliefs propelled Türkiye to mediate in the prisoners' exchange deal and then welcome the Palestinian prisoners and give them the Turkish nationality (Aljondy, 2015).

The history factor has been also clear in TİKA's projects which aim to renew the archeological Ottoman sites in Palestine which shows the history as a source of the developer role. TİKA has continued working on opening old Ottoman schools, renewing the holy places and launching campaigns to clean them. Moreover, the Turkish associations called the projects they were implementing in Palestine with the names of the Ottoman figures. One of the recent projects built in 2021 in Gaza by the Turkish association (The stone of charity) was called (Sultan Abdul Hamid a new landmark) (Hayel, 2021).

Regarding the ideological factor, it has been the main reason behind Türkiye's relations with Hamas in which the two sides view each other as a part of the Muslim Brotherhood movement. This relation has intensified since the victory of Hamas in the Palestinian elections in 2006 in which Türkiye started to call for the integration of Hamas instead of alienating it. After 2011, this relation remained firm and was reinforced by the wedges between Hamas and the Syrian regime.

Türkiye continued welcoming the leaders of Hamas. In 2012, Haniyeh paid an inspection visit to the ferry "Mavi Marmara". In the following year, the leader of Hamas Khaled Mashaal visited Türkiye and in 2014, he took part in the fifth conference in Konya where he stressed that a strong Türkiye is a power for Jerusalem and Palestine and the democracy, prosperity and stability is a power for all Muslims (Aljazeera, 2014). In 2016, Mashaal met Erdoğan in Istanbul where Türkiye expressed its desire to tell Hamas about its reconstruction

efforts and the new rapprochement between Türkiye and Israel (Alaraby AlJadded, 2016). In 2019, Haniye visited Türkiye and discussed with Erdoğan the developments regarding the Palestinian elections, Jerusalem issue and the reconciliation file (Anadolu Agency, 2019).

In 2022, genuine concerns emerged regarding this relation since Türkiye started its rapprochement with Israel in which Hamas expressed its worry about the destination of its relationship with Türkiye. Other observers raised the point that Türkiye put its relations with Hamas on one side and its relations with Israel on the other side and that Türkiye will prioritize its economic relations with Israel because Türkiye will not risk its economic relations with Israel to satisfy Hamas (Abdulkader, 2022). Türkiye however announced that it has not responded to the Israel who demanded it to expel the leaders of Hamas from the Turkish soil because Türkiye does not recognize Hamas as a terrorist organization (Arabi21, 2022). Hamas also stated that there is no change in the relationship between Hamas and Türkiye and that the news about the expulsion of Hamas members from Türkiye are only Israeli rumors (Alawsat, 2023).

It seems so far that ideology still directs Türkiye's relations with Hamas regardless of Türkiye's strong economic relations with Israel and the new rapprochement between them. This ideological bond between Hamas and Türkiye affected Türkiye's mediation role in two ways. On one side, it strengthened this role because this bond enables Türkiye to listen to the demands of Hamas and transfer them to the other sides in addition to utilizing this bond sometimes to exert pressure on Hamas which makes Türkiye a reliable mediator. On the other side, this bond might be seen by the other actors as a bias to one side at the expense of other sides.

Historical and ideological connections between Türkiye and Palestine can be considered among the most significant and permanent sources of Türkiye's roles towards the Palestinian issue especially the defender role.

4.3.2.2. Domestic Audience

Despite the fact that the Turkish Arab relations and the Turkish Israeli relations have undergone several critical junctures, the Palestinian issue has been away from the controversial issues in the Turkish society in which solidarity was the common reaction to the Palestinian issue among the Turkish people (Alaraby AlJadeed, 2021). The Turkish people's support for the Palestinians was present particularly in the times of the negative developments in the Palestinian territories. In 2012, Turkish citizens demonstrated support for the Palestinians in

Gaza who were under Israel's bombardment. In 2014, a group of activists in Türkiye launched a campaign which aimed to withdraw the Turkish nationality from the Turkish Jews who participated in Gaza war (Mabrook, 2014). Istanbul also witnessed massive demonstrations protesting the Israeli aggression against Gaza (Aljazeera, 2014). Moreover, a set of Turkish civil society associations organized marches calling for the liberation of the occupied Jerusalem (Arab48, 2014). In 2017, thousands of Turkish citizens protested to support Al Aqsa mosque and denounce the Israeli plans to divide it. The demonstrators carried Turkish and Palestinian flags and signs of "freedom starts from Jerusalem", "Jerusalem is for Muslims" and "Jerusalem and Istanbul are hand in hand" (AlJazeera, 2017) and in 2022, Turkish citizens protested the visit of the Israeli president to Türkiye (New Arab, 2022).

The interest groups also influenced the decision-making process in Türkiye. The Prime minister adviser Yasin Aktay confirmed in 2013 that the business men in Türkiye support the policy of the government of the Justice and development party towards the Palestinian issue through adopting the conferences held for the sake of the palestinians (AlAshi,2015).

The Palestinian issue was also on the agenda of the Turkish political parties. According to Gökan Bozbaş, understanding the Turkish parties' attitude towards the Palestinian issue requires an evaluation of their perceptions of the issue. While the leftist parties considered the issue as a struggle between the oppressed nations and the colonial powers, the Islamic parties looked at it as an Islamic issue and as a part of the Islamic consciousness of the Turkish people (Turk press, 2017). It can be said that the Turkish People's strong advocacy of the Palestinian issue empowered Türkiye's defender role in which it pushed the Turkish political parties and the Turkish parliament to consider the Palestinian issue as an important element in domestic politics. All the Turkish political parties don't take on the responsibility of mending relations with Israel because they want to adopt hostility with Israel as an instrument to attract the attention of the electorates (Bozbaş, 2022).

The Palestinian issue has been part of the election campaigns of the Turkish candidates. In 2014 within the framework of his campaign, Erdoğan addressed the Turkish people saying that the objectives Israel wants to achieve in Gaza are similar to those of Hitler and that the Israelis would sink in a bloodshed (Aljazeera, 2014). In 2018, the Turkish elections coincided with Trump's decision to move the American embassy to Jerusalem and the Israeli aggressions against the marches of the right of return in Gaza. The Turkish attitude was on a high level in which Türkiye withdrew the Turkish ambassador from Israel and announced the Israeli ambassador to be a person non grata (Alhaj,2023). Moreover, the Justice and development party

organized wide public meetings in different Turkish cities to support Jerusalem. Similarly, the opposition party organized protests in front of the Israeli consulate in Istanbul (Alhaj,2023).

In 2020 in a speech in front of the Turkish parliament, he mentioned that Jerusalem is a red line for Türkiye and he blamed the Gulf countries for their inaction and silence (TRT, 2020). Similarly, in 2021, the Turkish Parliament convened a meeting to discuss the Israeli crimes against the Palestinian people in which all the parties agreed on standing on the side of the Palestinians (Al-Quds, 2021). In this meeting, the Turkish foreign minister said: “With the power of our parliament, the power of Erdoğan and the Turkish nation, we will not give up on defending the Palestinian issue” (Alquds, 2021). Moreover, the opposition leader Kılıçdaroğlu in his speech in front of his party in the parliament said: “We are saddened by the division of the Islamic World and the silence of the world and the United Nations in front of these massacres” (Anadolu Agency, 2021).

It can be argued that the Palestinian issue is present in the Turkish domestic politics. This presence has been reinforced by the pro Palestine stance among large segments of the Turkish people in which some political parties want to polish their image in front of their audience and other parties want to shape the political consciousness of the people in a way that prioritizes the Islamic affiliation which entails the prioritization of the Palestinian issue as an Islamic one. This situation results in highlighting the defender role of Türkiye towards the Palestinians and defending them domestically and internationally.

4.3.3 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to analyze the roles Türkiye assumed towards the Palestinian issue in the post Arab Spring era using the concepts of the role theory. The chapter clarified that Türkiye had several issues on its agenda. However, its preoccupation with them did not lead it to ignore the Palestinian issue. The chapter found that Türkiye had three significant role conceptions and role performances regarding Palestine. Among these roles is the mediator role manifested in Türkiye’s mediation steps between Israel and Hamas and between the Palestinian factions. Developer role was also present in which Türkiye took part heavily in the reconstruction efforts of Gaza, humanitarian aid, educational projects and special developmental projects in Jerusalem. Türkiye also signed many economic agreements with the Palestinian National Authority in various fields. Defender role was another role that Türkiye adopted to defend the Palestinians’ rights, consistently condemn the Israeli actions, and defend

the historical and legal status of Jerusalem in regional and international platforms including the organization of Islamic countries and the United Nations.

The chapter also analyzed some of the material and ideational sources of these roles. It illustrated the importance of geography and national security factors in strengthening the mediator and defender roles' performances. Turkish Israeli relation was also viewed a vital element in shaping the Turkish policies towards the Palestinians. Additionally, Türkiye employed its regional and international positions to serve the Palestinian issue and at the same time it benefited from its courageous stance towards the issue to upgrade its regional influence and regional relations especially with the Arab countries like Jordan. This chapter also gave importance to the history and ideology factors which can be considered as firm elements in Türkiye's developer and defender roles towards Palestine. Then the chapter concluded with describing the importance of the Turkish people's attitude towards the Palestinian issue in shaping the state's roles towards the Palestinians.

CHAPTER FIVE: The Similarities And DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE EGYPTIAN AND TURKISH ROLES TOWARDS THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE POST THE ARAB SPRING

Following the explanation of the Turkish and Egyptian roles towards the Palestinian issue post-2011, this chapter will attempt to answer the main question of the research. The first section of this chapter will demonstrate the similarities between these two states' roles towards the issue and the second section will show the differences between these roles.

5.1 The Similarities between the Turkish and Egyptian Roles towards the Palestinian Issue during the Post-Arab Spring

5.1.1 The Same National Role Conceptions and Similar Performance Mechanisms

The main similarity between the two countries' roles lie in the fact that both of them continued to influence the dynamics of the Palestinian issue post-2011 even though they were preoccupied with their internal issues especially the security ones in which Egypt has faced national security threats on its borders with Libya and in Sinai while Türkiye has dealt with the security concerns emerging from the terrorist groups who took haven in northern Syria. Moreover, they have assigned to themselves the same national role conceptions which are the mediator, the defender and the developer in which both of them have developed some similar mechanisms to perform the same roles. They also have approached the same aspects of these roles.

Regarding the mediator role, they both participated in reaching ceasefire agreements between Hamas and Israel in Gaza war in 2012 and facilitated the release of the Palestinian prisoners in the deals they mediated between Israel and Hamas. Egypt's mediation efforts in this aspect were clear in 2011 while Türkiye facilitated another deal in 2016. Moreover, both of them have handled the reconciliation file and hosted talks between Fateh and Hamas.

For the developer role, they both dedicated their diplomatic and economic capabilities to improving the situation in the Palestinian territories especially in Gaza and the West Bank in times of crisis like the Israeli aggressions against Gaza and the time of the pandemic. This similarity was clear in the similar mechanisms they followed to pursue this role including

sending convoys of medical aid and basic needs to Gaza and taking part in the reconstruction efforts conferences.

For the defender role, both countries defended the same rights of the Palestinians especially the right of establishing an independent free state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. On the leadership level, Erdoğan and Morsi have the same defending style in which both of them were addressing the Palestinian nation especially the Palestinians in Gaza and Jerusalem directly using terms indicating brotherhood and a high commitment to defending and protecting the Palestinians against the Israeli occupation. Both leaders also did not hesitate to condemn the Israeli actions and call upon the international community to step in and take punitive measures against Israel despite Morsi's commitment to Camp David and Erdoğan's rapprochement with Israel. Türkiye and Egypt also took on the responsibility of defending the Palestinians in the regional and international platforms especially the organization of the Islamic countries and the United Nations. The two leaders also voiced their criticism for the incapability of the United Nation's system to protect the Palestinians and hold Israel accountable.

The other aspect that shows similarity between the two states' role performance is the variety of the actors who perform these roles and the abundance of channels they used to perform them. For Egypt, the Egyptian presidents, foreign ministers, the Egyptian army and the Egyptian Red Crescent took part in different aspects of the aforementioned roles. The Egyptian presidents and foreign ministers dedicated their diplomatic efforts to assume the mediator and defender roles in reaching cease fire agreements, reconciling between the two Palestinian factions, sending delegations to negotiate with Israel and the Palestinian factions and defending the Palestinians in regional and universal platforms. They also played a strong developer role through signing economic agreements with the Palestinian National Authority especially in 2018 and 2019. The Egyptian army played a role in the practical aspect of the mediation task to release the Palestinian prisoners while the Egyptian Red Crescent's efforts were needed in the developer role to organize the process of sending the medical convoys to Gaza. It is noteworthy to mention that the developer role was implemented by the political will of the political echelon in Egypt.

For Türkiye, the Turkish president, the Turkish ministers and foreign ministers, the Turkish Red Crescent and the Turkish institutions participated in different aspects of the three roles. The Turkish president, his ministers and foreign ministers played the mediation and defender roles through mediating directly between Israel and Hamas and between the

Palestinian factions and defending the Palestinians in the Turkish parliament, and in the other regional and international settings. They also contributed to the developer role by strengthening their economic relations with the Palestinian National Authority especially in 2020. The Turkish institutions including Tika and Yunus Emre also worked within the framework of the political will and orders of the Turkish political leadership.

5.1.2. Similarities in the Material and Ideational Sources of the Roles

The Turkish and the Egyptian roles have both been informed by the geographical factor in which both of them have employed their geographical proximity with Palestine to pursue their defender and developer roles. In the case of Egypt, its geographical closeness to Gaza made it the one who controls the Rafah crossing which is critical to Egypt's developer role since it is the only gate for Egypt and the other countries to send aid convoys and fuel to Gaza in addition to defending the Palestinian issue as an Arab issue since it is within the geography of the Arab World. For Türkiye, its geographical closeness to Palestine qualifies it to demarcate the maritime borders with Palestine and so helping Palestine to gain recognition as an independent state in addition to getting the Turkish experience in terms of the agreements signed between Türkiye and the Palestinian National Authority regarding this matter in addition to defending Palestine as a part of the Islamic geography.

History and Ideology are also common sources of the two countries' defender roles. For Ideology, ALSisi considers Palestine as a responsibility of the Arabs which stems from the Arab nationalistic ideas and Morsi regards Palestine as the responsibility of Arabs and Muslims. Türkiye similarly views Palestine as the core part of the Muslim World especially Jerusalem. For history, Egypt defends Palestine since Egypt has been historically involved in four wars against Israel for the sake of the Palestinians while Türkiye still defends Palestine because it has a rich Ottoman history. Moreover, this history motivates Türkiye to play a developer role through Tika's efforts to renew the Ottoman archeological landmarks in Jerusalem.

5.2 Differences between the Türkiye's and Egypt's Roles towards the Palestinian Issue during the Post-Arab Spring

5.2.1 Differences in the Performances of the Same Roles

Although Türkiye and Egypt pursued the same roles towards the Palestinian issue post 2011, they had some differences in the role performance mechanisms and the extent of this performance. These differences have been seen obviously in their focus in their efforts on different Palestinian cities. While Egypt's developer role was mainly directed towards Gaza through medical aid and reconstruction efforts, Türkiye has directed its efforts to Gaza and more obviously towards Jerusalem, a city where the Egyptian developer role was absent. Türkiye managed to put a more comprehensive plan to guarantee that the Turkish developmental projects cover different Palestinian cities including Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Türkiye's comparative advantages here are its economic capabilities and the institutional elements of its foreign policy in which Türkiye empowered its developer role in Palestine through these institutions, unlike Egypt who which lack the economic capabilities and strong institutions. Moreover, while Egypt's developer role was tangible in the times of conflicts, wars and illnesses, The Turkish developer role was consistent in times of peace, wars and the pandemic which gives a glance of the broad vision Türkiye has when it comes to developing the situation of the Palestinians across Palestine.

For the mediation role, Egypt has the comparative advantage to intervene and stop the fight or the crisis between Israel and Hamas. This comparative advantage lies in the long history of Egypt's mediation role in the Israeli Arab conflict, its reputation as the traditional country to be sought whenever there is an evolving matter regarding Palestine in addition to the long strong ties and experience of the Egyptian military intelligence. Türkiye's mediation role on the other side is still relatively new and supportive to the Egyptian initiatives like what happened in Gaza War in 2012. However, Türkiye is gaining a good international reputation for its mediation effort in the international crisis and the reflection of this reputation on the Israeli Palestinian conflict remains to be seen.

For the defender role, while Erdoğan's and Morsi's defending styles are similar, Erdoğan's and Al-Sisi's defending methods are quite different. Erdoğan's Türkiye's stance has been characterized by launching initiatives to defend the Palestinian issue especially Jerusalem while Al-Sisi's Egypt has depended on traditional methods which lack the initiative sense. This difference was clear in the two countries' response to Trump's move in 2017.

5.2.2 Differences in the Material and Ideational Sources of the Roles

Although the two countries had a lot of similar material and ideational sources of their roles, they had slight differences in the impact of these sources. For example, the national security factor was clear in Egypt's roles given the fact that it has borders with Gaza, the city ruled by Hamas which is the faction that the Egyptian military views as a security threat. This perception affected Egypt's policy on the Rafah crossing and contributed to weakening its developer role in the times it had hostility with Hamas and strengthening this role when it had tactical cooperation with Hamas.

On the other side, Türkiye does not have national security issues with Palestine and Gaza does not constitute a security burden for Türkiye. On the contrary, Türkiye's national security issues emerge from other places rather than Palestine which strengthens its role as a defender and a developer since it is interested in not having another security threat in its surrounding and helping find a solution for the Palestinian issue, the most protracted issue in the Middle East.

Regarding the two states' relations with Israel, The Egyptian Israeli relations impacted the Palestinian issue in a different way from the Turkish Israeli relations. Egypt's relation with Israel is based on the Camp David Accords which entails the security cooperation between the two states which negatively impacted Egypt's developer role on several occasions especially when it cooperated with Israel to destroy the tunnels between Egypt and Gaza which are the life line of the Gazan people. On the other side Türkiye's relations with Israel contributed to the enhancement of its developer role since it started to use the ports controlled by Israel to send aid to Gaza and reduce the Israeli disturbance of the Turkish projects in Jerusalem. Moreover, Türkiye continued to criticize Israel's actions even though there is a rapprochement between the two countries.

For the impact of the regional and international status of the two countries on their roles towards Palestine, it can be said that Egypt utilized its mediation role towards the Palestinian issue to increase its position especially in the times it needed to legitimize its rule, gain both regional and universal recognition and improve its relations with the United States. On the other side, Türkiye has harnessed its strong regional and international influence to empower its developer and defender role towards Palestine and at the same time, these roles helped improve Türkiye's regional relations and status in the regional blocs.

Regarding the source of the domestic audience, the circumstances following the Arab Spring in Egypt created a kind of fluctuating reactions among the Egyptian people towards the

developments in Palestine in which they sometimes prioritized the Palestinian issue and in other times they prioritized the economic and the security interests of their countries. The Egyptian leaders were interested in having a conformation between their roles and the public opinion but then given the undemocratic nature of the current Egyptian rule, the strength of the impact of the public opinion on Egypt's roles towards Palestine as well as the nature of this opinion remain to be seen. On the other side, large segments of the Turkish people have firm opinion about the developments in Palestine given their ideological and religious affinities. The Turkish President and the Turkish leaders of the political parties have also conformed their declarations to the Turkish supportive stance towards Palestine . Given the democratic nature of Türkiye and the nature of the current Turkish foreign policy and leadership , this conformation is expected to remain.

Conclusion

Finally, it can be said that it is important to examine these two countries' stances towards the Palestinian issue through a nuanced study of the nature of their roles and their sources to be able to better understand these roles, their impact on the Palestinian issue and their sustainability. This study tried to counter the random arguments regarding the rise or diminish of these countries' roles towards Palestine and tried instead to demonstrate the variety of their roles, their weaknesses and strengths and the similarities and differences between them. It can also be said that both countries can coordinate their roles towards the issue which will benefit from their rapprochement.

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