

ISRAEL’S POLICY RESPONSES TO EGYPT IN THE POST-MUBARAK ERA

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ABSTRACT

ISRAEL’S POLICY RESPONSES TO EGYPT IN THE POST-MUBARAK ERA

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In this study, Israel’s policy responses to Egypt in the post-Mubarak era is examined through adoption of the defensive realist perspective. This study endeavors to explain Israel’s strategic silence in conjuncture with its changing threat perceptions and, by extension, its seemingly fluctuating levels of anxiety. By analyzing the discourse of Israeli political and military leaders, it is revealed that Israel perceived the events in Egypt negatively within the environment of uncertainty. At the same time, considering the country’s objective of maintaining national security and strategic interests, Israel preferred policy of silence during the period of the Egyptian Revolution and its aftermath.

Keywords: Israel, Egypt, defensive realism, strategic silence

ÖZ

MÜBAREK SONRASI DÖNEMDE İSRAİL’İN MİSİR’A KARŞI İZLEDİĞİ POLİTİKALAR

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Bu çalışma, İsrail’in Mübarek sonrası dönemde Mısır’a karşı izlediği politikaları savunmacı realist bakış açısıyla inceler. Bu çalışma, İsrail’in bu dönemde değişen tehdit algılarına ve buna bağlı olarak farklı seviyeler gösteren endişelerine rağmen stratejik sessizlik politikası izlemesini açıklamaya çalışır. İsrail’in siyasi ve askeri liderlerinin söylem analizi yapıldığında ülkenin, belirsizlik atmosferi içinde gelişen Mısır’daki olayları olumsuz şekilde algıladığı açığa çıkar. Bununla birlikte, ulusal güvenliğini ve stratejik çıkarlarını koruma hedeflerini göz önünde bulunduran İsrail’in, Mısır Devrimi sırasında ve sonrasında sessizlik politikası tercih ettiği görülür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İsrail, Mısır, savunmacı realizm, stratejik sessizlik

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Middle East has experienced profound changes since the beginning of the so-called ‘Arab Spring,’ the Arab uprisings starting at the end of 2010. In addition to domestic complications in individual countries, this phenomenon has produced ramifications all over the region. Concerning the uprisings, the importance of politics in Tunisia, Libya, Bahrain, and Syria aside, occurrences in Egypt, comprising more than eighty million population, could extensively determine which direction the Arab uprisings take in the Middle East.¹ Former Egyptian President Anwar Sadat’s (1970-1981) statement that there could be “no war without Egypt and no peace without Egypt”² underscores Egypt’s position as a cornerstone in the region as both a source of peace and of war. Israel is also aware of these facts about Egypt. Therefore, Israeli policy makers have focused their attention on the country’s one of the most immediate neighbors while consciously avoiding a regional approach to the events. Indeed, Israel did not heed the uprisings in Tunisia. However, when they spread into Egypt in January 2011, Israel gave particular attention to its most populous and important neighbor, which has tremendous influence on regional issues, including Pan-Arabism ideology and the Palestinian question. Therefore, it is no surprise that Israel’s response was “unequivocal” when the uprisings spread to Egypt.³

¹ David Schenker, “Arab Spring or Islamist Winter?” *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* (2012): 2.

² Ehud Yaari, “Israeli-Egyptian Peace: Forty Years After the 1973 War and Holding,” *The Washington Institute Policy Watch* (2149), October 2, 2013, accessed August 8, 2016, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/israeli-egyptian-peace-forty-years-after-the-1973-war-and-holding>.

³ Benedetta Berti, “Israel and the Arab Spring: Understanding Attitudes and Responses to the ‘New Middle East,’” in *The West and the Muslim Brotherhood after the Arab Spring*, ed. Lorenzo Vidino, (Al Mesbar Studies & Research Centre and The Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2013), 132.

Historically, Egypt was Israel's most dangerous enemy, it is non-striking when reminding that the two states engaged in bitter wars in 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973. This state of war was finally ended between the two states when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat made peace with Israel in 1979 and the neighbors have enjoyed a partnership ever since.⁴ The Peace Treaty of 1979 has become one of the most important constituents in Israel-Egypt relations. The Israeli foreign policy and national security system made all its strategic assessments on the assurance of this peace treaty until the resignation of Hosni Mubarak on February 11, 2011. When the Arab uprisings spread to Egypt, the relations between the two states were affected. The developments in Egypt following the revolution, the overthrown of Mubarak and the rise of political Islamists, made Israel anxious about the continuity of its security and strategic arrangements and the future of relations between the two states. The military coup later altered relations in favor of Israel and decreased its anxiety to great extent. Israel has remained silent during all of these processes in post-Mubarak Egypt. Though it has had almost opposite perceptions of threat in the two different periods, there has been no dramatic change in Israeli policies, a strategy intended to avoid possible conflict. In contemplating this puzzling situation, this study aims to determine Israel's policy responses towards post-Mubarak Egypt within the framework of concepts and theories of international relations.

Keeping its strategic silence, Israel was never involved "even in the dimensions most related to Israel,"⁵ and it did not show any military or rhetorical reaction even to changes with negative or positive consequences for Israel. With the case of the post-Mubarak era starting with the 'Egyptian Revolution,' this study endeavors to explain Israel's strategic silence in conjuncture with its seemingly contradictory fluctuating anxiety through the theory of defensive realism. Israel remained silent both during

⁴ Daniel Byman, "Israel's Pessimistic View of the Arab Spring," *The Washington Quarterly* 34:3, (2011): 124.

⁵ Mark A. Heller, "Israeli Responses to the Arab Spring," in "One Year of the Arab Spring: Global and Regional Implications," ed. Yoel Guzansky and Mark A. Heller, *INSS Memorandum* 113 (Mach 2012): 76.

the period when it had high anxiety in the face of uprisings and empowerment of Islamist groups; and when the wind turned to Israel's favor with the military coup in Egypt. Through analyzing the statements of policy makers in Israel this study intends to understand Israel's policy preferences depending on its policy objectives and perception of threat related to developments concerning its previous regional and strategic partner.

The time scope of the study was designated as between January of 2011 and June of 2015. The first period starts in January of 2011 when the Egyptian revolution erupted and Mubarak was ousted, and ends with the removal of the Morsi administration through the military coup in July of 2013. The second period begins when the old guard came back to the power with the coup d'état in Egypt, and continues until the signal of 'normalization' in bilateral relations between Israel and Egypt was formally given with the exchange of ambassadors in June of 2015.

This study was motivated by the belief that existing scholarly literature on the Israel-Egypt relations in the post-Mubarak era has considerably enhanced our understanding of the causes for Israel's security concerns, but has offered little assessment of their consequences, which are the policies of 'strategic silence' and 'non-engagement.' This area needs systematic scrutiny. Such an agenda does more than simply present the policies of Israel in the face of dramatic changes in Egypt. It also analyzes the discourse of policy-makers and provides suitable international relations theories and concepts for explaining these policies. This study is different from other works on the issue of Israeli reaction to post-Mubarak Egypt in that it combines discourse analysis with observance of the political context on the ground and theories in academic literature.

1.1. Research Questions

In order to achieve its aim, the main research question of this study will be as follows: How can Israel's 'strategic silence' towards Egypt be explained and conceptualized in the face of constantly changing perception of threat in the post-Mubarak era?

To answer to this question, we should start with several smaller questions regarding Israel's perceptions, objectives, and policies: Why Egypt has been so critical for Israel's strategic interests? What were Israel's perceptions of the significant political changes in Egypt? Why did Israel perceive them in this way? Taking into consideration the ups and downs in Israel's anxiety level, it can then be asked: What were the effects of anxiety on Israeli perceptions and foreign policy choices? What were the objectives based on its perceptions? Which policies were preferred by Israel to accomplish these objectives?

Once we answer these questions, we can understand how Israel made its policies regarding Egypt in the post-Mubarak era. Finally, it is possible to find an answer to the question: How can all of these perceptions and policies from Israel be explained within the framework of international relations?

1.2. Hypothesis

This study demonstrates that the policies of 'strategic silence' and 'non-engagement' adopted by Israel during the tremendous developments in Egypt after Mubarak endured despite changes in its threat perceptions and level of anxiety within the environment of uncertainty. Broadly speaking, it is argued that Israel's perceptions, objectives, and policies used in response to the developments in Egypt in the post-Mubarak era sit comfortably within theoretical axioms advanced by the defensive realist approach.

Apart from the fact that security is the dominant issue in the Egyptian-Israeli relations, Israel's national security concerns, strategic interests, and material and non-material strategic assets all together have a profound impact on how Israel decides policies regarding its relations with Egypt. Based on these considerations, Israel chose "to keep a low profile" in responding to the shifting dynamics in post-Mubarak Egypt.⁶ It adopted defensive goals, such as insulating its people and economy from

⁶ Berti, "Israel and Arab Spring," 144.

the regional tumult, choosing not “to deploy coercive means” or exhibit “rhetorical” reactions against Egypt.⁷

Consequently, the answer to the study’s primary puzzle is clear: not only perceptions, but also strategic objectives matter in explaining foreign policy preferences for Israel. Bearing in mind Israel’s threat perceptions, this study suggests that different approaches, examining Israel’s policies when facing post-Mubarak Egypt, explain different aspects of the issue, yet the defensive realist explanations are the most suitable to the situation. This is because defensive realism takes not only the security seeker’s perceptions and strategic interest into account, but also considers the security dilemma faced by states due to the environment of uncertainty. It should also be noted that defensive realists successfully explain *how* security seekers can expose their policy preferences as well as paying attention on understanding *why* they would do so.

To sum up, this study endeavors to indicate that Israel has adopted overwhelmingly, if not exclusively, defensive means during the Egyptian revolution and its aftermath by looking at the statements of Israeli decision makers.

1.3. Methodology

In order to answer the research questions, a method of discourse analysis will be conducted on the base of statements of Israeli foreign policy decision makers, with secondary sources also utilized. The events leading to the January ‘revolution’ and the fall of Mubarak grabbed the attention of Israeli officials at the highest echelons of the government, including the prime minister and his most intimate circle of advisors. Such scrutiny indicates with how much “seriousness” Israel has viewed the events in Egypt.⁸ In this respect, this study makes an effort to explain how Israeli policy makers regarded these developments, and in what way they applied policies

⁷ Amichai Magen, “Comparative Assessment of Israel’s Foreign Policy Response to the ‘Arab Spring,’” *Journal of European Integration* 37:1 (2015): 125.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

within this line of reasoning. Analyzing the Israeli discourse following the Egyptian revolution articulated by decision makers from the country's security and foreign policy establishments, plays a significant role in understanding the sources of Israeli foreign policy perceptions, objectives and preferences.

This study includes the analysis of their statements made in the Knesset speeches, national and international meetings, interviews and so on. These were primarily acquired from the Press Room section of the official website of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs', on which can be found many key statements made by the Israeli leaders. Exceeding 1000 texts were skimmed from this website, and 50 among them examined to be used in this study. Additionally, Israeli newspapers, especially *Haaretz*, *the Jerusalem Post*, and *the Times of Israel*; Middle Eastern newspapers, like *Al Jazeera* and *Al Monitor*; and international newspapers, such as *the New York Times*, *the Guardian*, and so on, used in compiling statements and opinions.

In addition to bureaucratic officials, this study attaches importance to military officials as well due to the fact that Israeli foreign policy decision-making circles cannot be thought of separately from defense and security officials. As a result of Israel's strategic situation in the region, its cold relations with close neighbors, the state of conflict with the Palestinians, and proxy war of non-state actors, the notion of national security has always been an essential issue in Israel. This characteristic of the country was explained by Israeli general Moshe Dayan as, "Israel has no foreign policy, only a defense policy."⁹ For that matter, it is stated that "Israeli foreign policy has become synonymous with national security."¹⁰ Therefore, defense officials have always had extraordinary impact on foreign policy-making and major policies in Israel.¹¹ Furthermore, those who are responsible for the foreign policy formulation in

⁹ Conor Cruise O'Brien, "Again the Agony: Israel's Brilliant Disaster," *Los Angeles Times*, August 6, 1989, accessed October 4, 2016, http://articles.latimes.com/1989-08-06/opinion/op-86_1_american-hostages.

¹⁰ Clive Jones, "The Foreign Policy of Israel," in *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 115.

¹¹ For more discussions on the military's role in Israeli foreign policy decision-making, see: Michael Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel: Setting, Images, Process* (London: Oxford University

the Knesset consists of the Minister of Defense right alongside the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs under the name of the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee.

Consequently, this study examines Israeli foreign policy makers from the establishment of the Prime Ministry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, and the National Security Council. Additionally, statements from the Military Secretary to the Prime Minister will be taken into account, as they are quite influential during decision making process. The Prime Minister ordinarily plays the major role in foreign policy, and these policies are implemented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Israeli National Security Council has become more important under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's leadership since its role has been expanded in foreign policy planning and decision-making.¹²

People who were/have been responsible for the offices mentioned above since the beginning of the Arab uprisings will be listed. The Prime Minister of Israel has been Benjamin Netanyahu. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was Avigdor Lieberman, but this role was filled by Netanyahu for one year from December 2012 to November 2013. The Defense Minister was Ehud Barak until March 2013, when Moshe Ya'alon took over this position. The head of the Israeli National Security Council was Yaakov Amidror, though Yossi Cohen has been serving as head since 2013. In addition to these basic actors, statements from other officials from the related offices were also taken into account for this study.

Benjamin Netanyahu has been serving as Israeli Prime Minister since 2009. He is from the Likud Party, which has been considered a right-wing political party. He

Press, 1972); Brecher, *Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974); Michael Handel, *Israel's Political-Military Doctrine* (Cambridge: Occasional Papers, 1973); Bernard Reich, "Israeli National Security Policy: Issues and Actors," in *Israeli National Security: Political Actors and Perspectives*, ed. Bernard Reich and Gershon R. Kieval, 1-18 (London: Greenwood Press, 1988).

¹² Haviv Rettig Gur, "Inside Israel's White House: How Netanyahu runs the country," *The Times of Israel*, January 6, 2014, accessed March 5, 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/inside-israels-white-house-how-netanyahu-runs-the-country/>.

stands in a distinctive position as being the only prime minister in Israel's history to have been elected three times in sequence. Netanyahu's statements are significantly important to this issue not only because he has been serving as Prime Minister, but also because he fought in the Israeli army in the crucial wars of Israel with Egypt and its allies. He was on the front lines in the War of Attrition between 1967 and 1970.

Moshe Ya'alon was the defense minister and "the second highest ranking member of the Israeli government."¹³ Previously, he served 37 years in the Israel Defense Forces. He then joined Netanyahu's party Likud in 2009. Ya'alon is regarded as one of Israel's master strategists, particularly for his role in preventing Iran from gaining further nuclear weapons capabilities.¹⁴

Serving as a military man, foreign minister, prime minister, and finally defense minister **Ehud Barak** is very familiar with every level of the decision making process of the country. Barak made efforts to end conflicts with Israel's neighboring countries. For instance, he attempted to resume peace negotiations with the PLO and to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through taking part in the Camp David 2000 Summit, though his efforts failed. Considering his background and important positions in decision making, statements from Barak were central to Israeli-Egyptian relations in such a critical period.

Avigdor Lieberman held the post foreign minister from 2009 to 2012, and again from 2013 to 2015, covering the critical years analyzed in this study. Lieberman's remarks in this process are worth of consideration not only due to his position, but

¹³ Erick Stakelbeck, "Stakelbeck on Terror: Israeli Vice PM Moshe Yaalon", *Breitbart*, April 7, 2011, accessed September 21, 2016, <http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2011/04/07/stakelbeck-on-terror-israeli-vice-pm-moshe-yaalon/>.

¹⁴ Charley J. Levine, "Interview: Moshe Ya'alon", *Hadassah Magazine*, August 3, 2011, accessed September 21, 2016, <http://www.hadassahmagazine.org/2011/08/11/interview-moshe-yaalon/>.

also because of his views on Egypt, as they led to diplomatic tension between the two states in 2008-2009.¹⁵¹⁶

Former Israel Defense Forces (IDF) major-general **Yaakov Amidror** held the top NSC post in 2011 as the National Security Advisor, a figure that plays a significant role in determining Israel's national and security policies.¹⁷ He was one of the channels conducting the bulk of communications between the two states during the period following the 2011 revolution when there was no direct contact between the Israeli and Egyptian leadership.¹⁸

Additionally, statements from Netanyahu's senior military advisers, like Maj. Gen. Eyal Zamir, will be analyzed in this study. Comments made by some other officials such as Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee's Chairman Shaul Mofaz and Chief of General Staff Lt- Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi will also be taken into account.

Statements made by these and other Israeli leaders will be analyzed chronologically under each subsection in the third chapter. This chronological sequence will make it possible to more clearly see Israel's intensifying anxiety over time regarding the country's threat perceptions. Moreover, it is easier to trace Israeli objectives and policies in the face of perceived threats.

1.4. Literature Review

Present literature includes numerous evaluations of the relations between the Arab uprisings and Israel, and Israel's policies vis-à-vis this phenomenon. Reviewing the

¹⁵ "Lieberman: Israel acting like battered wife with Egypt," *Ynetnews*, January 11, 2008, accessed November 26, 2016, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3616101,00.html>.

¹⁶ Dina Kraft, "Egypt threatens to ignore new Israeli foreign minister," *The Telegraph*, March 22, 2009, accessed November 26, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/5032256/Egypt-threatens-to-ignore-new-Israeli-foreign-minister.html>.

¹⁷ Gur, "Inside Israel's White House."

¹⁸ Barak Ravid, "Netanyahu, Peres congratulate Egypt's Sisi on election win," *Haaretz*, June 6, 2014, accessed March 5, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.597339?v=F414D851358051C11D0026FF7B2A3DEE>.

literature within the framework of how the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ and its repercussions for Israel were analyzed, and to what the rationale of Israel’s perceptions and policy choices were attributed, provides an opportunity to understand the issue from different aspects as well as the position of the defensive realist approach.

Most of the literature handles the subject of Israel’s reactions to the Arab uprisings and their consequences within the context of democratization discussions. In this context, Israel’s ‘strategic silence’ in the presence of developments in Egypt, has been explained through the axis of authoritarianism and democratization by several scholars. Simply put, Israel was more comfortable with the authoritarian regimes of the Middle East in terms of its strategic and security concerns.

It is widely known that the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is branded by authoritarian systems, including military dictatorships and monarchies. While some are optimistic about the future of the region, others do not believe that the authoritarian regimes in the region are subject to change overnight. Indeed, Huntington (1991) supposed that the MENA would experience the third wave of democratization in 1990’s.¹⁹ Even though this did not occur as he had predicted in the 1990’s, two decades later Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk (2016) explored the idea of whether the developments in the region in the 2010’s could be considered as the continuation of the third wave of the democratization process.²⁰ By examining the causes, features, and transition processes of the uprising in the Arab countries, including Egypt, Abushouk concludes that the Arab uprisings can be categorized as “a fourth regional wave of democratization that shares some facets with the third

¹⁹ Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991). According to Huntington’s democratization theory, after the first and second democratic waves reversals occurred and reduced the number of democratic countries in the world. Based on this theory, following the process of transition to democracy in southern and eastern European countries, Latin America, and some Asian countries between 1970’s and 1980’s, these regions or countries would face reverse waves and witness regime changes “from democracy to authoritarianism” (Huntington 1991, 5). Additionally, his projection was that this wave would reach the MENA by encouraging democratic opposition groups (Huntington 1991, 289).

²⁰ Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk, “The Arab Spring: A Fourth Wave of Democratization?” *Digest of Middle East Studies* 25:1 (2016).

global wave.”²¹ Larry Diamond (2011) is another scholar who has positioned the Arab uprisings within the context of the fourth wave of democratization.²² Bearing in mind religious and sectarian struggles as well as the dominance of the military powers in the region, he deduces that the Middle East turned back to autocracies “faster and more harshly” than other regions following democratic revolutions.²³ In this regard, he expected the Arab uprisings to “eventually bring fundamental political change - but not necessarily democracy.”²⁴

Even though Israel has adopted the “iconic slogan” that it is “the only democracy in the Middle East,”²⁵ it is not eager to spread related values in the region. Instead, the West and Israel have held to common strategy of supporting the pro-Western and pro-American authoritarian regimes to preserve their interests.²⁶ However, when the Arab uprisings started in 2010 and spread to Egypt in 2011, the US and Israel found themselves at opposite poles in terms of support for the social movements demanding democratic rights in the Arab streets. While Israel did not expect any positive outcome from those upheavals and was indeed quite pessimistic about the process and prospective consequences, the US had hope that new pro-democratic groups might play a positive role in dealing with threats from Iran as well as preventing the rise of radical Islamist groups in the region.²⁷

²¹ Abushouk “A Fourth Wave of Democratization?” 66.

²² Larry Diamond, “Turbulence in the Fourth Wave,” *Hoover Digest* 4, 2011.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Haim Bresheeth, “The Arab Spring: A View from Israel,” *Middle East Journal of Cultural and Communication* 5 (2012): 45.

²⁶ Western and Israeli interests were explained by Eva Bellin as guarantying a reliable oil supply and containment of “the Islam threat” (Bellin 2004, 148); by Springborn as ensuring access to oil, control of immigration, and fighting terrorism (Springborn 2011, 6); and by Haim Bresheeth as preserving regional hegemony and economic penetration (Bresheeth 2012, 45). Based on these explanations, Aras and Falk concluded that the attitudes held by the West and Israel can be explained through “geopolitical reasoning” (Aras and Falk 2015). As a result, Eva Bellin argued that two features distinguishing MENA in terms of “the robustness of authoritarianism,” are “the fiscal health of the coercive apparatus” and “the maintenance of international support networks” (Bellin 2012, 128-9).

²⁷ Banu Eligür, “The ‘Arab Spring:’ Implications for US-Israeli Relations,” *Israel Affairs* 20:3 (2014).

Despite the existence of Western support and other components helping maintain the authoritarian regimes, following the uprisings, the region's "authoritarian durability" came under question by the majority of scholars as seen in the literature.²⁸ This questioning arose not only because of internal dynamics in the Arab countries and the emergence of social media as a new phenomenon in the regional social movements, but also due to Western powers' retracting their support for these regimes. In this regard, at the beginning of the regional uprisings, the US clearly abandoned its previous allies, instead adopting a new policy of supporting democratic demands. Specifically, in the case of Egypt, Mubarak was left to his fate, and the US welcomed Morsi's readiness to cooperate and embraced the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party both before and after the parliamentary elections in 2012.²⁹ These changes in US preferences were worrisome policies in the eyes of Israel.³⁰ Besides, the efforts of American and European counterparts for democratization in the region³¹ were inclined to be viewed by Israel as either Pollyannaish or naïve.³²

It should be noted that interests of Israel outweighed other concerns for the US at the end of the day, as Israel has been the "ultimate ally" of the US and maintenance of this relationship was needed more than ever before due to the chaotic climate in the region.³³ Particularly when Egyptian protestors attacked the American Embassy in

²⁸ Eva Bellin, "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring," *Comparative Politics* 44:2 (2012).

²⁹ Fawaz Gerges, "What Changes Have Taken Place in US Foreign Policy Towards Islamists?" *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 6:2 (2013).

³⁰ Douglas Hamilton, "Israel shocked by Obama's 'betrayal' of Mubarak," *Reuters*, January 31, 2011, accessed July 3, 2016, <http://af.reuters.com/article/egyptNews/idAFLDE70U1N820110131>.

³¹ Richard Youngs and Tamara Cofman Wittes, "Europe, the United States, and the Middle Eastern Democracy," in *Promoting Democracy and the Rule of Law: American and European Strategies*, ed. Amichai Magen, Thomas Risse, and Michael A. McFaul (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

³² Clive Jones and Beverley Milton-Edwards, "Missing the 'devils' we knew? Israel and political Islam amid the Arab Awakening," *International Affairs* 89:2 (2013).

³³ Michael Oren, "The ultimate ally: the 'realists' are wrong: America needs Israel now more than ever," *Foreign Policy* 186 (2011).

Cairo in September 2012,³⁴ an event accompanied by growing anti-American and anti-Western rhetoric,³⁵ the US noticed that its position was weakened in the Arab World, in terms of both state power and societal relations.³⁶ Israel welcomed this shift in the US foreign policy towards the developments in Egypt. However, during this process Israel avoided using harsh rhetoric against Egypt or the policies of the US. Moreover, Israel did not vocally rejoice over the Egyptian coup.

Those who approach this issue from democratization aspect assert that Israel preferred to remain silent, since any reaction from Israel, which is not a supporter of democratic regimes in the region, would stir up the criticism of the West – and not just Arab states and societies. In addition to Israel's lack of normative approach to the 'democratic' transition in the region,³⁷ Israel is also aware of its lack of institutional instruments for imposing democratic development on its neighbors. Therefore, Israel used neither economic conditionality nor state capacity-building instruments in order to promote democracy. Rather, Israel strategically kept its silence, and waited to see the end scene, instead of speaking up concerning its strategic interests.

However, this approach is insufficient to explain Israel's response to post-Mubarak Egypt. An important point to be mentioned here is that there was uncertainty over Egypt's democratic future and the ascent of Islamist groups, namely the MB, to power. Indeed, Israel's primary concern is the fulfilment of its security interests, namely preserving the status quo of regional balance of power, regardless of whether this is achieved by democratic or non-democratic regimes. In short, the country's

³⁴ Tamim Elyan, "Egyptians angry at film scale U.S. embassy walls," *Reuters*, September 11, 2012, accessed October 1, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-usa-protest-idUSBRE88A11N20120911>.

³⁵ Marc Lynch, "The Persistence of Arab Anti-Americanism: In the Middle East, Haters Gonna Hate," *Foreign Affairs* Review Essay, May-June 2013, accessed October 1, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/review-essay/persistence-arab-anti-americanism>.

³⁶ Eligür, "The 'Arab Spring,'" 288.

³⁷ Mehmet Yegin, "Turkey's Reaction to the Coup in Egypt in Comparison with the US and Israel," *Journal of Balkan & Near Eastern Studies* 18:4 (2016).

foreign policy responses should be evaluated not from an ideological stance but through its strategic interests.

Therefore, some scholars evaluated the position of Israel vis-à-vis the regional turmoil through placing the regional balance of power in the center with realist theory. As one of the significant scholars researching on Israeli foreign policy, Clive Jones states that “[i]t has become almost an axiom to view Israel’s foreign policy through a realist prism.”³⁸ He verifies this argument by drawing attention to Israel’s approaches to relations with its Arab neighbors using the concept of a “zero-sum-game” and the notion that “Israel has no foreign policy, only a defense policy.”³⁹ Efraim Inbar, a renowned Israeli professor who specializes in the politics and strategy of Israeli national security, also evaluates Israeli foreign policy through the realist perspective lenses in all his works. For instance, in his book *Rabin and Israel's National Security*, Inbar frankly states that “political realism became the dominant conceptual framework for understanding regional and international politics.”⁴⁰ On the ground, that balance of power is the core component of national security, as regional balance of power has always been important for Israeli foreign policy, and foreign policy cannot be separated from its defense policy.

Inbar also evaluates the developments and possibilities after the Arab uprisings and Israel’s responses to the new environment in the region through the realist approach.⁴¹ According to Inbar, the weakening of the Arab regimes and nascent Islamist powers created certain concerns in Israeli side related to regional balance of power.⁴² First, Israel did not believe these to precede a democratic transition, but, even if so, it could

³⁸ Jones, “The Foreign Policy of Israel,” 115.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Efraim Inbar, *Rabin and Israel's National Security* (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 7.

⁴¹ Efraim Inbar, “The 2011 Arab Uprisings and Israel’s National Security,” *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* 95 (2012); “Israel’s National Security Amidst Unrest in the Arab World,” *The Washington Quarterly* 35:3 (2012).

⁴² Ibid.

be “war-prone” because every transition process is always painful.⁴³ Additionally, the future of this process was full of clouds of uncertainty, as no one can predict the “nature of any successor regime” or the foreign policy preferences of new leaders.⁴⁴ In this sense, since rising Islamist powers and their supporters are known to be anti-American, anti-Western, and anti-Israeli, Israel worried about future of relations with these powers. Considering America’s declining regional clout, this is even more concerning for Israel. As Israel was not able to predict any prospective change in the balance of power in the region, it became anxious. The second cause for concern for Israel in the face of the weakening of the Arab states was that non-Arab Middle Eastern powers started to rise, namely Iran and Turkey.⁴⁵ This was another factor that could play a role in the change of regional balance of power to the detriment of Israel as both Iran – in holding nuclear power⁴⁶- and Turkey – in being governed under the “Islamist AKP”⁴⁷- were unfriendly to Israel.⁴⁸ On one hand, this would lead to greater isolation of Israel in the region; on the other, weaker Arab states would become more vulnerable to Iranian and Islamist influences that oppose to Israel.

Muriel Asseburg (2012) demonstrates the repercussions of the fall of the Arab states and familiar leadership within the framework of balance of power and isolation of

⁴³ Inbar, “Israel’s National Security,” 60.

⁴⁴ Inbar, “Arab Uprisings and Israel’s National Security,” 3.

⁴⁵ Inbar, “Israel’s National Security,” 61.

⁴⁶ When the nuclear negotiations between Iran and P5+1 started in 2012, and a deal was formally reached in October 2015, Israel did not welcome, and drastically opposed this deal. However, Iranian influence has been continuously increasing in the region, which is not in Israel’s favor. Moreover, it seems that Iran has become a modest actor in the region as opposed to the so-called Sunni Islamist threat in the eyes of the West.

⁴⁷ In Turkey, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been in power since 2002. Its relations with Israel started to be deteriorated during the 2008-9 Gaza War, and then continued worsening with the Davos crisis in 2009 and the low-chair crisis in January 2010. Deterioration climaxed with the Mavi Marmara flotilla incident in 2010. During the Arab uprisings and aftermath, the AKP government in Turkey supported the Islamist powers in the region, such as Hamas in Gaza and Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

⁴⁸ Inbar, “Arab Uprisings and Israel’s National Security,” 10.

Israel.⁴⁹ Asseburg emphasizes that Israel has faced growing isolation in the region since 2011 as a result of negative implications of developments concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and an increasingly volatile situation in the Eastern Mediterranean.⁵⁰ As a consequence, Israel lost its neighboring partners. She mentions that signs of the isolation of Israel started occurring with Turkey during the 2008-9 Gaza War and 2010 flotilla affair; continued with the removal of old Arab regimes and replacement by new political Islamist powers, of whom “none of them will have an interest in positioning themselves on Israel’s side or being perceived as doing so”; and reached a peak when Israel lost Egypt with the fall of Mubarak, who had been “one of the most important and reliable Arab partners,” in February 2011.⁵¹ Consequently, Israel found itself in a new regional conjuncture in terms of strategic partners. If an abiding regional ally is one of the components of balance of power, then it can be said that the balance has changed to the disadvantage of Israel.

Coming from a different viewpoint, some other scholars also draw attention to how Israel is becoming more isolated as a consequence of the Arab uprisings altering the regional balances of power. They indicate that, from the Iranian state perspective, “the fall of Egypt’s Mubarak, a staunch member of the anti-Iran coalition” was regarded as “the only real positive outcome” of the uprisings in the region.⁵² Collapse or ineffectiveness of the anti-Iran coalition would leave Israel more isolated in the region. Briefly, from a realist perspective, all these factors had strategic implications for Israel and the regional power constellation, such as the erosion of Israel’s deterrence, growing security threats, a more complicated situation in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Iranian nuclear challenge.

⁴⁹ Muriel Asseburg, “The Arab Spring and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Vicious Circle of Mutually Reinforcing Negative Repercussions,” in *An Arab Springboard for EU Foreign Policy?* ed. Sven Biscop, Rosa Balfour, and Michael Emerson, (Gent: Academia Press, 2012).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 84-86.

⁵² Michael Bauer and Thomas Schiller, “The Arab Spring in 2012,” *Center for Applied Studies Policy Perspectives* 1 (2012): 2.

In the face of the new balances in the Middle East, and their effects on Israel's isolation, Israel did not want to involve itself in risky situations. It is claimed that Israel could have made a move which may have swayed the regional balances in favor of Israel when the uprisings started in the Arab countries. However, some scholars said that the Israeli government "missed the opportunity" to change the regional balances in its favor.⁵³ Even though the realist perspective is able to explain the situation regarding the changes in the regional balances, it is not adequate to explain Israel's response. This is because, from a classic realist approach, Israel should had to maximize its power and act in order to alter the balances in its favor. Yet, in direct contradiction to this, Israel did not engaged in the regional turmoil, instead remaining silent. In examining this stance, subdivisions of realist theory, which point out the game-changer role of uncertainty on policy-making, provide better explanation.

As opposed to using the realist approach, other scholars have tried to explain Israel's policies towards the Egyptian revolution through social constructivism, in which states are guided by the logic of appropriateness. According to proponents of this perspective, Israel preferred to remain silent in order to preserve its interests, rather than speaking up with aim to maximize them, due to the fact that the wisest preference for actors is to "do the right thing."⁵⁴ Israel made that choice considering the country's mutually constituted political, historical, and cultural relations with Egypt as the social constructivist approach also underlines is the influence of historical and cultural circumstances being on par with political circumstances in terms of influence on international politics and interactions. Given the fact that intersubjective understandings between Israel and Egypt are constituted by the history of the state of war between Israel and the Arabs, and the Palestinian issue, in which Egypt was the leading actor. Therefore, Israel has always adopted a prudent attitude towards Egypt.

Social constructivists claim that in defining Israel's national interests regarding Egypt, only material forces, such as having military and economic power, cannot be

⁵³ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁴ Thomas Risse, "'Let's Argue!': Communicative Action in World Politics," *International Organizations* 54:1 (2000): 4.

sufficient to explain the country's policies. Rather, interpretation "through the prism of ideas" can also shape "national interest."⁵⁵ For instance, Egypt has geostrategic importance and substantial population. Furthermore, Egypt is an idea, and has a social meaning that people and states attach to it, such as 'leader of Arabs' and 'the hearth of the Islamic World.' These images of Egypt obliged Israel to stay silent on behalf of its national interests because it could not afford the backfire of a military reaction.

From this perspective, Israel's policy of strategic silence can also be explained via self-understanding, as a component of social constructivism. Israel is "aware of being a regional misfit" and, conscious of that, it cannot "promote positive political and economic change among its Arab neighbors."⁵⁶ Therefore, unlike Turkey, Israel avoided any kind of vocal statements, either positive or negative, in the face of developments in Egypt, as these would have held opposite consequences for Israel.

In addition to conflicts of interests, what shapes perceptions of threat are "cultural disharmonies, ideological incompatibilities, hostile discourse, belligerent activities, and a whole host of other circumstances that transcend mere perceptions."⁵⁷ In this manner, in making a decision in the face of threats, Israel's historical relations with Egypt, its self-image in the region as an actor, and constraints created by public and elite perceptions are also highly influential factors. To an extent, social constructivism may be helpful in explaining Israel's policy choices following the Egyptian revolution as being in order to avoid any possible conflict. However, this is not sufficient because, rather than historical and cultural background of the relations between the two countries, ongoing uncertainty was the main determinant of Israel's policies. Additionally, an issue between two states cannot be restricted to the relations between them, as there are broader international affairs to be considered.

⁵⁵ David P. Houghton, "Revisiting the Study of Foreign Policy Decision Making: Toward a Constructivist Approach," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 3 (2007): 29.

⁵⁶ Magen, "Comparative Assessment" 129.

⁵⁷ Fred H. Lawson, "International Relations Theory and the Middle East," in *International Relations of the Middle East*, ed. Louise Fawcett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 29.

Given the fact that domestic and international affairs influence one another, one can explain Israel's strategic silence and non-engagement policies in the face of security threats during the Egyptian Revolution and its aftermath through *intermestics*,⁵⁸ or linkage politics. In order to analyze the developments in the Middle East and their impacts on the region and Israel, Shmuel Sandler (2013) suggests a perspective emphasizing the interconnection between international and domestic affairs.⁵⁹ In doing this, he refers to James Rosenau's concept of "linkage politics," which is defined as "the analysis of domestic and international interface."⁶⁰ It is clear that the Arab uprisings not only altered the "international setting of the Middle East," but also affected the domestic and international politics in Israel.⁶¹ Despite the pessimistic perception of Israel concerning the security threats basically as a result of the weakening of the Arab regimes, Israel did not respond to any of these threats with a military operation. Israel's non-engagement policy was based on certain calculations. For instance, a military operations could do "damage to Israel's international image;" meanwhile, such a move could be perceived by the Israeli public "as an attempt to draw away attention from the anti-government, socioeconomic demonstrations of summer 2011."⁶² Additionally, attention of the international community could shift away from "the atrocities in several Arab states, especially Syria, which would play into Iran's hands;" moreover, such an operation could turn their attention to Gaza, as if "Jews would be killing Muslims."⁶³

⁵⁸ Bahgat Korany (2009) conceptualize the interconnectedness of international relations and domestic politics in the Middle East with the neologism of "intermestics," which combines international and domestic dimensions of social and political dynamics and interactions. While Korany mentions "oil wealth and its impact" and "religio-politics and its international spillover" as demonstrators of intermestics in his work, this concept is also applicable to the Arab uprisings and repercussions throughout the world (Korany 2009, 64).

⁵⁹ Samuel Sandler, "The Arab Spring and the Linkage between Israel's Domestic and Foreign Policies," in *The Arab Spring, Democracy, and Security: Domestic and International Ramifications*, ed. Efraim Inbar, (London and New York: Routledge, 2013).

⁶⁰ James Rosenau, *Linkage Politics: Essays on the Convergence of National and International System*, (New York: The Free Press, 1969).

⁶¹ Sandler, "Linkage between Israel's Domestic and Foreign Policies," 128, 134.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 133.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

If one argues these calculations restrained Israel from having a military engagement, or even giving a rhetorical response, then the concepts of ‘intermestics’ and ‘linkage politics’ can be utilized. However, Israel generally tries to legitimize its policies stating the reason of their need for security rather than determining its policies figuring on international reactions. In other words, international communities’ reaction is not Israel’s primary concern. Therefore, this explanation cannot fully explain Israel’s response to post-Mubarak Egypt.

In addition to the above-mentioned deficiencies of different perspectives in explaining Israel’s policy of ‘strategic silence’ amidst developments in Egypt after Mubarak, the common gap in all these approaches is the environment of ‘uncertainty.’ It was the primary factor that engendered threat perceptions among Israeli leadership. Considering the situation of uncertainty, Israel wanted to be cautious in its discourse and policies. Without considering the environment of uncertainty, which led Israel into a security dilemma, the country’s reactions cannot be properly explained. This gap can be filled through adopting the approach of defensive realism.

1.5. Defensive Realism

The realist approach assumes that power is the main determinant in international politics. Power is measured through the economic and military assets of a state as compared to that of others. Additionally, having a balance of power in one’s favor is also important. Therefore, according to realists, states want power. There is, however, a difference among theorists in respect to why states want power. On one hand, classical realists like Hans Morgenthau (1948) believe that human nature that is embedded with a desire for power.⁶⁴ On the other hand, structural realists maintain that states seek power in order to survive in anarchic international politics. In brief, power is regarded as “an end in itself” by classical realists, whereas it is considered

⁶⁴ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1948).

as “a means to an end and the ultimate end is survival” by structural realists.⁶⁵ As to how much power is sufficient for survival within the international anarchy, there is another sub-division among structural realists, namely offensive and defensive.⁶⁶ Offensive realists like John Mearsheimer (2001) claim that trying to gain as much power as possible is the better strategy for states.⁶⁷ They argue that insecurity always pushes states to seek for opportunities to acquire more power.⁶⁸ What backs this quest for power is the idea that “aggression” and “expansionism” are “omnipresent” in “the prevalence of extreme conflict of interest.”⁶⁹ On the contrary, defensive realists like Charles Glaser (1994) believe that insecurity inclines states to seek for means to defend themselves.⁷⁰ Furthermore, another defensive realist, Kenneth Waltz (1979), asserts that trying to maximize power is not wise strategy for a state because others respond this action by attempting to balance their own power.⁷¹ Thus, in order to pursue their national interests, states are concerned about amassing an “appropriate amount of power” rather than seeking maximization of it.⁷² From the perspective of

⁶⁵ John J. Mearsheimer, “Structural Realism,” in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, ed. Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁶⁶ Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Relations*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Fareed Zakaria, “Realism and Domestic Politics,” *International Security* 17:1 (1992); Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security* 19:3 (1994); Frankel Benjamin, “Restating the Realist Case,” *Security Studies* 5:3 (1996); Eric J. Labs, “Beyond Victory: Offensive Realism and the Expansion of War Aims,” *Security Studies* 6:4 (1997); Stephen G. Brooks, “Dueling Realisms,” *International Organisation* 51:3 (1997); Kydd Andrew, “Sheep in Sheep’s Clothing: Why Security Seekers Do not Fight Each Other,” *Security Studies* 7:1 (1997).

⁶⁷ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001).

⁶⁸ Mearsheimer, “The False Promise.”

⁶⁹ Robert Jervis, “Realism in the Study of World Politics,” *International Organization* 52:4 (1998): 986.

⁷⁰ Charles L. Glaser, “Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-Help,” *International Security* 19:3 (1994).

⁷¹ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (London: McGraw-Hill; New York: Random House; Reading MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

⁷² *Ibid.*, 40.

defensive realists, this complicated situation in international politics can be described as a “Prisoners’ Dilemma” or a “more complex security dilemma.”⁷³

States seeking security do not prefer developments challenging the status quo, and thus demonstrate their preference for maintaining status quo by adopting “a more defensive military posture.”⁷⁴ Survival accompanied with territorial defense is the basic national interest to pursue, and is grounded in an emphasis in defensive realism. However, these are not sufficient for a comprehensive understanding of national interests. They also include other material concerns, namely economic interests and strategic security issues. Economic interests consist of trade agreements, energy supply, and major company investments in other countries. The strategic security interests contain alliance relations and military cooperation agreements. Furthermore, states have non-material interests, norms and values.⁷⁵ When these concerns are taken into account, a state defends the status-quo in order to protect all its material interests and values in the face of changes in another country.

Depending on their national interests, states response to challenges to the status-quo with different levels of aggression. The defensive realism approach advocates avoiding “hardline policies” and “unnecessary conflict with costly signals” since this would lead to self-defeating consequences.⁷⁶ Defensive realists maintain that “states respond to direct threats, but otherwise act with restraint when dealing with other states.”⁷⁷ According to this perspective, though states are expected to adopt a mistrustful and cautious approach, they are not always willing to act with aggression or antagonism.⁷⁸ Nonetheless, this unwillingness to react does not necessarily mean

⁷³ Robert Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30:2 (1978); Waltz, *International Politics*.

⁷⁴ Evan Braden Montgomery, “Breaking out of the Security Dilemma: Realism, Reassurance, and the Problem of Uncertainty,” *International Security* 31:2 (2006): 152.

⁷⁵ Waltz, *International Politics*.

⁷⁶ Montgomery, “Uncertainty,” 152.

⁷⁷ Lawson, “IR Theory and the Middle East,” 24.

⁷⁸ Kydd, “Sheep in Sheep’s Clothing.”

that these states are not ready for any retaliation. Defensive realist preferences provide an advantage of sending “a clear message that a state does not intend to expand, while leaving it no less capable of protecting itself.”⁷⁹ When the defensive realist posture is more advantageous for a state, it “does not pre-empt -since that would be a wasteful use of its military resources- but rather prepares to receive an attack.”⁸⁰ Thus, it ensures it is able to protect the status-quo without losing its own resources or threatening others.

Robert Jervis (1978) explains the security dilemma as a way to understand the security policies of a state using two variables, which are: whether defensive policies can be distinguished from offensive ones (offense-defense differentiation), and whether the defense or the offense has the advantage (offense-defense balance).⁸¹ Actually, the security dilemma refers to a situation wherein “an increase in one state’s security decreases the security of others.”⁸² Because such a situation has a risk of threatening states’ survival, states would find themselves worse off. The security dilemma has the potential to “aggravate mistrust and antagonism among states.”⁸³ Nevertheless, through defensive policies, states can ensure their security “without making others less secure” or making others less secure to only a small degree.⁸⁴ In this regard, when defense has the advantage, states can easily protect and maintain their interests without destroying others’, and then “enjoy a high level of security” by largely breaking away from “the state of nature.”⁸⁵ Moreover, if each side has

⁷⁹ Montgomery, “Uncertainty,” 164.

⁸⁰ Jervis, “Security Dilemma,” 190.

⁸¹ For more discussions on these concepts, see: Lynn-Jones (1995) “Offense-Defense Theory and Its Critics”; Glaser (1997) “The Security Dilemma Revisited”; and Glaser and Kaufman (1998) “What is the Offense-Defense Balance and Can We Measure it?”

⁸² Jervis, “Security Dilemma,” 186. For more details on the security dilemma, see: Glaser (1997) “The Security Dilemma Revisited” and Booth and Wheeler (2008) *The Security Dilemma*.

⁸³ Lawson, “IR Theory and the Middle East,” 21.

⁸⁴ Jervis, “Security Dilemma,” 187.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

“reasonable security requirements,” then it is probable that the conflict will not escalate.⁸⁶

One of the most important changes that is encountered by states is “the uncertainty over other’s intentions and motives.”⁸⁷ Uncertainty is an important determinant at that point, since uncertainty, as a source of security dilemma, could negatively affect security seekers.⁸⁸ Uncertainty over the current and/or future motivations of other states leads to “suspicion and conflict” between them and security seekers.⁸⁹ In this respect, uncertainty is regarded as “an aggravating factor for the security dilemma.”⁹⁰ In order to eliminate this factor, the offense-defense distinction is quite important in defensive realism. This way, security seekers can invest more on defensive means.⁹¹

Table 1.1. Offense-Defense Security Dilemma of Jervis (1978)

	Offense Has the Advantage	Defense Has the Advantage
Offensive Posture Not Distinguishable from Defensive One	1 Doubly dangerous	2 Security dilemma, but security requirements may be compatible.
Offensive Posture Distinguishable from Defensive One	3 No security dilemma, but aggression possible.	4 Doubly stable

⁸⁶ Ibid., 188.

⁸⁷ Montgomery, “Uncertainty,” 183.

⁸⁸ Kydd, “Sheep in Sheep’s Clothing,” 126.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 116.

⁹⁰ Glaser, “Realists as Optimists,” 67-70.

⁹¹ Kydd, “Sheep in Sheep’s Clothing,” 153.

When the offense has the advantage, as in the first and the third cases, states make effort to acquire more power. The first case is the worst scenario for a status-quo state, in which “attacking is the best route” to obtaining security and protecting its possessions.⁹² In the third case, aggression is more likely due to the enticement of the offense, which can entail “unnecessary mistrust, hostility, and war.”⁹³

On the other hand, when defense has the advantage, like in the second and the fourth scenarios, states either defend themselves with an appropriate amount of power or cooperate. In the second case, the indistinguishable situation between offensive and defensive postures generates a security dilemma.⁹⁴ However, the increase in one side’s power enhances its security “more than it decreases the others” since defense has the advantage.⁹⁵ In addition to not menacing other’s security, “if both sides have reasonable subjective requirements” and they hold more or less equal power, then “it is quite likely that status-quo states can adopt compatible security policies.”⁹⁶ Moreover, defensive means demonstrates that a state is reluctant to alter the status-quo, at least for the time-being.⁹⁷ The fourth situation includes neither security dilemma nor security problems “if the advantage of the defense is great enough.”⁹⁸ When the power challenging the status-quo is lost, reasons to exercise military means dissipate.⁹⁹

⁹² Jervis, “Security Dilemma,” 211.

⁹³ Ibid., 213.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 212.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 214.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

1.5.1. Israel and defensive realism

Given the literature on defensive realism and considering the regional conjuncture and Israel's position within, it can be argued that Israel's responses to the Egyptian revolution and its aftermath cannot be explained without mentioning the country's anxiety in the face of uncertainty and its strategic objectives.

Indeed, an Israeli professor framed Israel's foreign policy objectives as "security, security and security - and then other issues."¹⁰⁰ In this respect, regional balances are extremely important for Israel. Relatedly, the country's foreign policy is shaped by a realist perspective. Yet, considering Egypt's role in the region and in Israel's strategic concerns, Israel adopted a defensive realist approach. Were another approach adopted a retaliation between the two countries would have been likely, as remarked by Mordechai Kedar, an expert on Middle Eastern Affairs:

You can do things, but do them under the water. Israel, by supporting explicitly the army, exposes itself to retaliation. Israel should have done things behind the scenes, under the surface, without being associated with any side of the Egyptian problem.¹⁰¹

Concordantly, Amichai Magen (2015) presents Israel's policy objectives in the face of the developments in post-Mubarak Egypt, under three points.¹⁰² Israel's first objective was "non-entanglement" with the regional tumult to be achieved through exercising "strategic silence."¹⁰³ Israel's second objective was to preserve its "strategic assets," including the 1979 peace treaty with Egypt and its deterrence power over non-state actors such as Hamas and Hezbollah.¹⁰⁴ Finally, in order to offset the erosion of relationships with old allies, Israel made effort to establish new

¹⁰⁰ Jodi Rudoren, "Israel escalating efforts to shape allies' strategy," *New York Times*, August 18, 2015, accessed June 15, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/19/world/middleeast/israel-puts-more-urgency-on-shaping-allies-actions.html>.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Magen "Comparative Assessment."

¹⁰³ Ibid., 122.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 123.

alliances with countries in Southern Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Caucasus.¹⁰⁵ These objectives were also the main determinant in Israeli foreign policy preferences when the Arab uprisings erupted and spread to Egypt. While fulfilling these policy objectives, Israel avoided “coercive means” and “rhetorical action.”¹⁰⁶

At this point, mentioning the difference in Israel’s security approaches is important in order to rightly analyze why defensive policies were pursued by Israel. Threats posed by the developments in Egypt were based on “day-to-day security” and not “basic security,” as discussed in Avi Shlaim’s book, *The Iron Wall*.¹⁰⁷ He explains ‘day-to-day’ security as “provocations, other hostile acts along the borders, and minor incursions into Israel by civilians and irregular forces” whereas ‘basic security’ shields against “full-scale attack by a hostile state or coalition of states that might imperil Israel’s existence.”¹⁰⁸ Taking the Israel’s perceptions into account, threats that emerged from events in Egypt can be categorized under ‘day-to-day’ security.

In the face of emerging ‘day-to-day’ security threats, including greater uncertainty, terrorist activities, regional isolation and economic concerns, Inbar urged Israel to focus on these threats and “prepare adequate responses to parry them.”¹⁰⁹ By ‘adequate responses,’ he refers to adjustment to the developments in the region and attempting to defend itself, rather than trying to shape events in over-ambition.¹¹⁰ The approach of responding to the ‘day-to-day’ security in an adequate way established Israel’s defensive realist posture.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 124-5.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 125.

¹⁰⁷ Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall, Israel and the Arab World*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 81.

¹⁰⁹ Inbar, “Israel’s National Security,” 63.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 63, 71.

Clive Jones and Beverley Milton-Edwards (2013) have also conceptualized Israel's approach to the Arab uprisings through the paradigm of defensive realism.¹¹¹ In doing this they have emphasized Israel's concerns over its security, regional position, and international reputation, as well as the growing strength of political Islam.¹¹² From a defensive realist perspective, memories of events in Israel's recent history, such as *Intifada* and the 2006 Lebanon war, have also restrained the state from taking any action against the developments in the Arab region.¹¹³ Israel was understandably reluctant to risk its security interests in the face of highly uncertain circumstances and uncertainty over the intention of the new political Islamists powers. Therefore, Israel preferred to insulate itself and its people from any kind of conflict. In this sense, Jones and Milton-Edwards have also interpreted Israel's new construction of a wall along the Egyptian border as a part of its idea of the 'Iron Wall', where "separation remains the best guarantor of Israeli security."¹¹⁴ Implementation of this idea clearly signifies a defensive move in Israeli policies in respect to the repercussions of the Egyptian revolution.

Magen (2015), who focused on Israel's policy objectives, and Jones and Milton-Edwards (2013), who emphasized the country's strategic concerns, looked through the lens of defensive realism. While this study's argument is related to this literature, it is also distinct. At this point, two questions, which are important for any study should also be addressed: what is new here, and why is this an important topic? With regard to the question of what is new, a significant aspect of this study's argument will be that Israel's foreign policy cannot be evaluated if one disregards the combination of the anxiety factor emanated from concerns over national security, strategic objectives, and structural pressure emerging from uncertainty in regards to neighboring countries' intentions and motives. At this point, the breadth of defensive realism in this study is adequate to embrace all these factors when examining Israel's

¹¹¹ Jones and Milton-Edwards, "Missing the 'devils.'"

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 405-407.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 411.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 412-413.

policy responses of ‘strategic silence’ and ‘non-engagement’ regarding the developments in Egypt after Mubarak. The topic is important as this argument fits into defensive realism literature promulgating hypotheses about how states behave under a security dilemma, originating from the environment of uncertainty.

Even though some experts believed that Israel’s “wait and see” policy regarding the Egyptian revolution was risky,¹¹⁵ the Israeli public has also supported the government’s defensive realist policies, or, the policy of strategic silence.¹¹⁶

1.5.2. Israel’s anxiety and defensive realism

Mark Heller defines the initial reaction of Israel to the Arab uprisings and the Egyptian revolution with the term “high anxiety.”¹¹⁷ Actually, Israel felt different levels of anxiety, which had certain effects on its perceptions. The period of the Egyptian revolution and the Muslim Brotherhood administration was “a period of high anxiety” for Israel, while the period after the military coup and the Sisi administration became “a phase of reduced anxiety.”¹¹⁸ Therefore, seeing how anxiety affects the perceptions and thus policy preferences of a state will also be helpful in examining Israel’s policies towards post-Mubarak Egypt.

Explaining the two basic effects of anxiety may also be helpful in this study. First and foremost, anxiety leads to an overestimation of any possible risks.¹¹⁹ Especially when there is an association between previous and contemporary negative events,

¹¹⁵ Amnon Aran, “Israel and the Arab Uprisings,” *The RUSI Journal* 157:5 (2012).

¹¹⁶ According to the Peace Index Polls 2011 (February 28, 2011), 85% of the Jewish Israeli public supported the government’s policy of silence regarding the events in Egypt.

¹¹⁷ Heller, “Israeli Responses to the Arab Spring,” 75.

¹¹⁸ Magen, “Comparative Assessment,” 118.

¹¹⁹ Jennifer S. Lerner and Dacher Keltner, “Fear, Anger, and Risk,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81:1 (2001); Rajagopal Raghunathan and Michel Tuan Pham “All Negative Moods are not Equal: Motivational Influences of Anxiety and Sadness on Decision Making,” *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 79:1 (1999).

anxiety is more likely to increase perceived risks.¹²⁰ Moreover, having similar previous experiences creates a sense of vulnerability.¹²¹ For instance, since Israel likened the Arab uprisings to the Iranian revolution, this heightened the state's anxiety and made Israel more fearful about the risks of the consequences and repercussions of the uprisings.

Secondly, anxiety also increases risk aversion, and thus less risky options are preferred in order to reduce anxiety.¹²² Anxiety diminishes support for state retaliation against an event because retaliation is considered risky for its national security.¹²³ Moreover, it is clearly stated that states that have experienced "high levels of anxiety" have been "less supportive of aggressive military action" or belligerent rhetorical reactions.¹²⁴ Conversely, they usually prefer to remain isolated from the issue and to be silent. Consequently, it can be argued that risk aversion resulting from anxiety leads states to adopt defensive realist approaches and policies.

1.6. Conclusion

This chapter mainly presents this study's framework and research design, including its research question, hypothesis, and methodology. It also introduces the present literature addressing how Israel responded to developments in Egypt, referring to the theories and concepts of international relations. Then, with regard to the argument of the study, the defensive realism approach is discussed in detail. Bearing in mind these discussions, this study will examine the issue by presenting the political context and using discourse analysis to determine whether this approach is in fact suitable in the case of Israel's reaction towards post-Mubarak Egypt.

¹²⁰ Gillian Butler and Andrew Mathews, "Anticipatory Anxiety and Risk Perception," *Cognitive Therapy and Research* 11:5 (1987).

¹²¹ Leonie Huddy, Stanley Feldman, Charles Taber and Gallya Lahav, "Threat, Anxiety, and Support of Antiterrorism Policies," *American Journal of Political Science* 49:3 (2005): 595.

¹²² Lerner and Keltner, "Fear, Anger, and Risk;" Raghunathan and Phan, "Motivational Influences of Anxiety."

¹²³ Huddy et al. "Threat, Anxiety," 595-96.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 604.

The chapters that follow examine the dominant issues in which Israel-Egypt relations have come to head, referring to the turning points since the beginning of the foundation of Israel. This study surveys a range of statements, particularly those made by political and military figures, as well as comments from Israeli analysts. In doing this, it aims to explain Israeli perception and policies concerning Egypt as they have recurred in Israeli political discourse, as well as providing a suitable analysis of Israeli approach to the developments in Egypt.

Chapter one presents a brief background of Israeli-Egyptian relations starting from the establishment of the State of Israel up until the Egyptian revolution in 2011. In doing this, it mainly focuses on strategic interests, which have led to both discord and cooperation between the two states, such as the Suez Canal, the Sinai Peninsula, and relations with Hamas. The 1979 Peace Treaty is presented as the turning point in their relations, and the significance of Mubarak's unprecedented partnership with Israel concerning its national security and strategic interests is demonstrated.

Chapter two begins with revealing the developments in Egypt during the Egyptian revolution and under the Morsi administration, as these engendered great anxiety and perception of threat on the Israeli side. In order to support the argument based on defensive realism, factual threat perceptions held by Israel are examined in detail. It continues with the reconstruction of the military power in Egypt and its influences on relations with Israel and the subsequent reduction of Israel's anxiety.

Chapter three focuses more closely on Israel's perceptions, objectives, and policies in the light of statements made by the country's political and military leaders. Each is examined under the respective contexts, regarding the Mubarak's fall, the MB's rise to power, the threat of Hamas, questioning of the peace treaty, insecurity in the Sinai, and economic concerns. Leaders' discourse is analyzed chronologically within these contexts. In interpreting their statements, this chapter intends to demonstrate that there exists a concrete foundation for Israel's defensive posture.

It should be stressed in closing this introductory chapter that the intention of this study is not merely to present Egyptian-Israeli relations or conduct foreign policy analysis on Israel. Nor is it to imply that the defensive realism perspective can be applied to every case of threat perception. Rather, it is to show that Israeli perceptions and policies towards Egypt have been strongly influenced by the developments in the Egyptian political environment following the revolution and ensuing the military coup, as it has shaped, framed, and reinforced the strategic interests, security cooperation, and bilateral and regional relations. The balance of power in these issues is inextricably a part of the developments in Egypt and in Israeli-Egyptian relations. No understanding of Israeli defensive realist positioning towards Egypt in the post-Mubarak era is complete without recognition of this fact.



CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND OF ISRAEL-EGYPT RELATIONS (1948-2010)

2.1. State of War between Israel and Egypt

Following the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Egypt has been a key participant in the wars that broke out between Israel and its Arab neighbors. These two nations experienced four devastating inter-state wars. In fact, Egypt was “the pivotal Arab state and natural leader of an Arab coalition against Israel” in these wars and other political affairs.¹²⁵ Particularly during the administration of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Israel received its share of “the radicalization of Arab politics”, a situation which led Israel to feel constantly insecure, fearing the unified military potential of Arab nation, and worried about rhetoric of Nasserism, such as that concerning the liberation of Palestine from Zionist occupation.¹²⁶ Actually, it is not wrong to say that anti-Zionism and anti-imperialism was paramount in the official ideology of Nasserism.¹²⁷

2.1.1. Closure of the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran as a *casus belli*

Relations between Israel and Egypt were full of enmity under the era of Nasser. Conflicting strategic and security concerns of both countries led to wars between them. One of the most important strategic assets belonging to Egypt is the Suez

¹²⁵ Raymond Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 174.

¹²⁶ William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009), 323, 337.

¹²⁷ Ewan Stein, *Representing Israel in Modern Egypt: Ideas, Intellectuals and Foreign Policy from Nasser to Mubarak*, (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 17.

Canal.¹²⁸ Similarly, the Straits of Tiran here provide a geostrategic advantage for Egypt as a sea passage between the Gulf of Aqaba from the Red Sea, and is located between the Sinai and Arabian peninsulas. The Suez Canal, which connects the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, is considered “the shortest link between the East and the West.”¹²⁹ Correspondingly, its slice of the world’s shipping traffic is quite substantial. For instance; “about 7 percent of all seaborne traded oil and 13 percent of liquefied natural gas (LNG) traded worldwide” passed through the Suez Canal in 2012.¹³⁰ For this reason, the Suez Canal is regarded as one of the world’s most significant waterways. This role of the Canal is directly related to Israel’s economic interests. In the same vein, the Straits of Tiran also hold strategic importance for Israeli energy transportation as ninety percent of Israeli oil traverses this way.¹³¹ The Straits are also directly related to “Israeli oil importation, access to Africa and Asia, and most importantly, Israel’s deterrent capacity.”¹³² The conflict initiated over the use of these assets by Egypt as symbols of nationalization.

Since the mid-1950’s, the Egyptian military had been trying to end the British military presence in the Canal Zone, which had been granted in the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. In addition, sporadic battles sprang up between Nasser’s armed forces and Israeli soldiers along the border between the two nations. It should also be noted that in ending the British presence in the Canal and fighting against Israel, Nasser sought to secure his status in the Arab world and acknowledgement of his role

¹²⁸ “Importance and Advantages of The Canal,” *Suez Canal Authority*, accessed November 21, 2016, <http://www.suezcanal.gov.eg/sc.aspx?show=10>.

¹²⁹ Nour Mohammad Sarker, “Arab Spring and the Contemporary Geopolitics of the Middle East,” *Peace and Security Review* 6:12 (2014): 56.

¹³⁰ “Suez Canal, Sumed Pipeline are key parts of Egypt’s role in international energy markets,” *U.S. Energy Information Administration*, accessed September 21, 2016, <http://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.cfm?id=12371>.

¹³¹ William Roger Louis, “Britain: The Ghost Suez and Resolution 242,” in *The 1967 Arab-Israeli War: Origins and Consequences*, ed. Avi Shlaim and William Roger Louis, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 224.

¹³² Laura M. James, “Egypt: Dangerous Illusion,” in *The 1967 Arab-Israeli War: Origins and Consequences*, ed. Shlaim, Avi and William Roger Louis, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 64.

in the Palestinian cause.¹³³ To crown it all, Nasser's announcement of the nationalization of the Suez Canal in June 1956 became a catalyst to war. As a result, Israeli-British-French armies jointly attacked Egypt in order to regain Western control over the Canal, and Israel subsequently invaded the Sinai. Following this, the United Nations called for a cease-fire, though without first solving the problem. Whereas the Western powers, including the United States, were expecting that Nasser would become moderate as an outcome of what they offered, he became even more power-hungry.¹³⁴ In the end, Israel withdrew from the Sinai, and Nasser strengthened his power both in the country and the region.



Figure 2.1. The Sinai Peninsula, Suez Canal, Gulf of Aqaba, and Straits of Tiran

Source: ProCon.org, <https://www.procon.org/files/IsPal%20Images/1967warmap.jpg>

¹³³ Colin Shindler, *A History of Modern Israel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 109.

¹³⁴ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomasi*, trans. İbrahim H. Kurt. (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2006), 508-509.

Nevertheless, Israel also received tangible benefits from the conflict. First and foremost, the Straits of Tiran was re-opened to Israeli shipping, and the country was then also to transport goods to and from Africa and Asia. Moreover, the Israelis secured the presence of United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in the Sinai, which bought Israel security on its southern border with Egypt for eleven years. Furthermore, while Israel was withdrawing from the Sinai, it “had retained troops in Gaza and the Straits of Tiran,” which enabled it “to develop the port of Eilat.”¹³⁵ The port of Eilat holds strategic importance for the Israeli shipping because it provides Israel access to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean through the Gulf of Aqaba, thus eliminating need to sail through the Suez Canal. With naval blockades on the Straits of Tiran, Egypt aimed to control access to Eilat, which led to wars in 1956 and 1967. All these issues led to resentment in the Egyptian side.

As a consequence of the lack of a real settlement following the Suez Crisis in 1956, Israel and Egypt faced another war over Israel’s use of the Suez. In May 1967, Nasser announced that he had blockaded the Straits of Tiran to all Israeli-flagged ships, even though Egypt was aware of that such a move would trigger Israel to launch a war.¹³⁶ Moreover, Egypt expelled UNEF from the Sinai. The following day, Egypt also announced that the passage of strategic materials through the Gulf of Aqaba to Israel was banned, even for non-Israeli ships. Nasser’s decisions to close the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping inevitably brought on the War of 1967, also known as the Six-Day War.

The war was a disaster for the Arab World in general, and for Egypt in particular. Israel destroyed the Egyptian air-force, defeated the Egyptian army in Sinai, and expanded their territory to the east bank of the Suez Canal. Egypt’s revenues from the Sinai oil fields and the Suez Canal were dispossessed.¹³⁷ Such a grand defeat was

¹³⁵ M.E. Yapp, *The Near East since the First World War: A History to 1995*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 416.

¹³⁶ James, “Egypt: Dangerous Illusion,” 63.

¹³⁷ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 339.

humiliating for the Arab forces, and it was a shattering blow of Nasserism. In other words, it was a start of the “end of Nasser era.”¹³⁸ From then on, Egypt’s primary enemies became Israel, the “‘Zionist’ occupier of Arab territory”, and the United States, Israel’s “‘imperialist’ protector.”¹³⁹

On the Israeli side, such a victory was regarded as a fulfillment some of its objectives, mainly attaining freedom of navigation through the Straits of Tiran and defeating the Nasser’s legacy among Arab states. Israel viewed the Straits as of vital interest in terms of oil importation. In addition to its gain of passage from the Straits, Israel also captured the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt as well as the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) from Jordan, and Golan Heights from Syria. These achievements demonstrated that Israel could initiate strategic strikes and change the balance of power in the region.

The Arab states’ eagerness to regain the territories they lost in the 1967 war was accompanied by the no-diplomatic solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹⁴⁰ Nasser convinced Arab states that they could acquire what they want from Israel only through military initiative. Thus, the War of Attrition between 1967 and 1970, which took place along the Suez Canal, was fought over the full withdrawal of Israel from the Sinai Peninsula. Even though Egypt was determined to regain the Sinai, the war was inconclusive and the Sinai remained under the control of Israel.

2.1.2. Imbalance of powers

Anwar Sadat succeeded Nasser upon his death in 1970. He endeavored to reverse the diplomatic stalemate with Israel, and to this end he needed the United States to persuade Israel to alter its policies towards Egypt. As a result of the US’s unwillingness, Egyptian forces sent an attack across the Suez Canal in October 1973,

¹³⁸ Ibid., 344.

¹³⁹ James, “Egypt: Dangerous Illusion,” 77.

¹⁴⁰ Itamar Rabinovich, *The Lingering Conflict: Israel, the Arabs, and the Middle East 1948-2011*, (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2011), 8-9.

in order to show that Israel was not as powerful as assumed. Egypt proceeded through the Sinai Peninsula. However, Israel counter attacked and began slowly advancing into Egypt by crossing the Suez Canal. At the end of the war, despite Israel's military victory, both sides saw political gains and faced far-reaching implications of the war. For the Arab World, their early success in the conflict was considered as vindication of the humiliation experienced in the War of 1967. In Israel, despite impressive achievements on the battlefield, it was understood that the country's military dominance over Arab states was not guaranteed. This "absence of clear outcome" led the states to search for other options, mainly the "transition from violence to diplomacy," with the involvement of superpowers.¹⁴¹

Indeed, in fighting against Israel, Sadat hoped to bring Egypt into negotiations with Israel and engage superpowers – namely the US and the Soviet Union - in these negotiations. Sadat attained his goal and the superpowers became involved into the Middle Eastern conflict. Subsequently, the US and the SU tendered a cease-fire agreement that Egypt and Israel accepted; later, Syria became involved.¹⁴² US policy makers were obliged to accept incentives within the context of a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in a diplomatic way. Thanks to the 'shuttle diplomacy' of US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, a disengagement agreement between Israel and Egypt was signed in January 1974. In embracing mediation from the US, Sadat saw through a first disengagement agreement with Israel, and so rescued his position on the Suez Canal, though at the expense of curtailing military forces from the Sinai front.¹⁴³ In September 1975 Israeli forces withdrew from western Sinai upon signing the Sinai II document. These steps paved the way for the subsequent peace process, the 1978 Camp David Accords.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 12.

¹⁴² Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 375-76.

¹⁴³ Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East*, 178.

2.2. Quest for Peace and the 1979 Treaty

The period of animosity between the two states remained until 1977 despite secret talks.¹⁴⁴ In November of 1977, as a result of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's announcement that "in the interest of peace, he was prepared to travel to Jerusalem and speak in front of the Knesset," the two leaders decided to speak before the Knesset and then meet for direct talks.¹⁴⁵ Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, which was the first official visit of any Arab leader to Israel, is generally understood as the turning point of relations between Egypt and Israel. The central issue of the ensuing negotiations was the return of the Sinai to Egypt in exchange for the recognition of the State of Israel, and a peace treaty. A much tougher issue that came up during the talks was that of autonomy for the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The negotiations concluded with the Camp David meeting in September of 1978, and the framework for agreements finalized at the meeting. There were two main agreements that came out of the meetings at Camp David. The first concerned ultimate peace between Israel and Egypt, along with Israel's commitment to evacuate the Sinai by April 1982. Since the state of hostilities ended thanks to this accord, the diplomatic relations between the two countries stabilized. The second accord assured that peace throughout the Middle East, including the Palestinian issue, would be secured within the following five years. However, the two accords were not of equal importance: both sides were "primarily interested in their bilateral agreement."¹⁴⁶ As a result of this agreement, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and his Israeli counterpart Menachem Begin signed a comprehensive peace treaty in Washington on March 26, 1979.¹⁴⁷ In this regard, it can be said that "Sadat proceeded step-by-step, down the road to a separate peace [with Israel] at the expense of his Arab partners."¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Arash Beidollah Khani, "Egyptian-Israeli Relations, History, Progress, Challenges and Prospects in the Middle East," *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)* 7:3 (2013): 95-98.

¹⁴⁵ Douglas M. Stinnett, "International Uncertainty, Foreign Policy Flexibility, and Surplus Majority Coalitions in Israel," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51:3 (2007): 486.

¹⁴⁶ Rabinovich, *The Lingering Conflict*, 18.

¹⁴⁷ William B. Quandt and Martin S. Indyk, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics*, (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2016).

¹⁴⁸ Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East*, 178.

The 1979 Peace Treaty can be hailed as a landmark in Middle East peace-making. With this treaty, Egypt became ‘the first Arab country that officially recognized the State of Israel.’ Notwithstanding, participants from both parties were pessimistic about the likelihood of societal reconciliation between Arab and Israeli peoples.¹⁴⁹ As it turned out, during the thirty-years of the agreement, ‘peace’ was “never fully accepted by the Israeli and Egyptian peoples.”¹⁵⁰ Yet the agreement was signed, and the relationship between the two countries were in a state of “cold peace” for decades.¹⁵¹ Both countries respected the treaty and successfully worked for its survival.

Thanks to the 1979 Peace Treaty, the direction of the relationship shifted from the thirty-year animosity to a thirty-year partnership, at least terms of security and strategy. Indeed, the treaty with Egypt was a determinant “strategic pillar for Israel’s security concept” for more than three decades, both in bilateral and regional relations.¹⁵² In fact, Israel regards this treaty as “one of the cornerstones of regional stability.”¹⁵³ This is the reason why it designed its security arrangements in the region depending heavily on this treaty.¹⁵⁴ Considering Israel’s “strategic sensitivity” on this issue, it is evident that any ripple in the dynamics in Egypt has a potential to affect Israel’s foreign policy choices and its security strategies.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ Stephan Cohen and Edward E. Azar, “From War to Peace: The Transition between Egypt and Israel,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 25:1 (1981): 87.

¹⁵⁰ Tami Amanda Jacoby, “Israel’s Relations with Egypt and Turkey during the Arab Spring: Weathering the Storm,” *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 7:2 (2013): 30.

¹⁵¹ Ann Mosely Lesch and Mark Tessler, *Israel, Egypt, and the Palestinians*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 63; Ephraim Dowek, *Israeli-Egyptian Relations, 1980-2000*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 176; Robert Freedman, *The Middle East and the Peace Process: The impact of the Oslo Accords*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1998), 88.

¹⁵² Michael Milstein, “A New-Old Middle East: Current Developments and their Implications for Israel”, *INSS, Strategic Assessment* 14:1 (April 2011): 20.

¹⁵³ Berti, “Israel and Arab Spring,” 132.

¹⁵⁴ H.A. Hellyer, “The Chance for Change in the Arab World: Egypt’s uprising,” *International Affairs* 87:6 (2011): 1320.

¹⁵⁵ Berti, “Israel and Arab Spring,” 132.

2.2.1. Security in the Sinai Peninsula

Egypt's geostrategic position has critical importance for Israel's security interests, particularly in the Sinai Peninsula. At this point, it is necessary to remember the significance of the Sinai, as it is surrounded by Gaza, Israel, and the Gulf of Aqaba to its east, the Mediterranean to its north, and Suez Canal to its west.¹⁵⁶ The Sinai Peninsula is a strategic buffer for the southern border of Israel. In the 1979 treaty it was regarded as a "buffer zone to build trust and ensure peace."¹⁵⁷

Based on the treaty, Israel and Egypt built an Agreed Activities Mechanism, and thereby the Sinai Peninsula was demilitarized. With this mechanism, Egypt and Israel jointly altered the military configurations in the Sinai without an official revision in the treaty. In exchange for Egypt's recognition of Israel as a state, Israel withdrew its troops from the Sinai to the internationally recognized border. Since then, Israel and Egypt have maintained a permanent border and embarked upon a process of normalization in both diplomatic affairs and economic relations. In order to fill the security vacuum left by the Israeli troops in the Sinai, thousands of Egyptian forces were deployed to central and eastern Sinai with the aim of obviating mutual security concerns, such as threats from jihadi militant groups in these areas. The agreement was guaranteed by the Memorandum of Agreement signed between each party and the United States. It was agreed that the United Nations would intervene as supervisor for the implementation of the military annex, including "the terms of Israeli withdrawal and the security arrangements;"¹⁵⁸ for instance, by establishing checkpoints and providing observation posts. It can be said that the treaty between Egypt and Israel was the cornerstone of the security arrangements between the two countries sharing a 230 km-long border.

¹⁵⁶ For more technical details concerning the Sinai Peninsula see: Zachary Laub, "Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and Security," *Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounders* (December 12, 2013).

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Dareen Khalifa, "Saving peace: The case for amending the Egypt-Israel peace treaty," *The Atkin Paper Series* (February 2013): 3.

Thanks to agreement, Israel not only guaranteed security of its southern border, but also reduced its defense spending because, with the demilitarization of the Sinai Peninsula, Israel was released from its defense commitments in the south. Thirty percent of Israel's gross domestic product had been reserved for defense spending before the Camp David Accords and the 1979 agreement with Egypt.¹⁵⁹

2.2.2. Strategic and economic benefits

Another strategically important point in the 1979 agreement concerns Israel's access to the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran, which are geostrategic assets held by Egypt and of capital importance for Israel. As mentioned above, their importance in terms of geostrategic and economic interests of Israel are evident. With the agreement, the Gulf of Aqaba and the Straits of Tiran were recognized as international waterways and Israeli ships acquired the right to pass through these waterways and the Suez Canal unmolested. Therefore, their opening as international waterways gave back opportunities to Israel.

From an economic perspective, both Egypt and Israel benefited from the agreement. Egypt enjoyed American military and economic aid granted for the consolidation of the agreement.¹⁶⁰ Additionally, the treaty enhanced cooperation between the two countries in several sectors, such as energy. Israel, for example, was given the opportunity to purchase oil from Egypt at below market prices.

2.2.3. Normalization process

Finally, official international relations were established between the two countries in February 1980 with the formal exchange of ambassadors. Moreover, direct Cairo-Tel

¹⁵⁹ Jonathan Freedland and Daniel Levy, "Israel and the Arab Spring," (transcript of discussion, chaired by Yossi Mekelberg at the Chatham House, December 2011): 2, accessed August 29, 2016, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Meetings/Meeting%20Transcripts/121211freedland.pdf>.

¹⁶⁰ Approximately \$2 billion per year. See: Bernard Weinraub, "U. S. to Send Egypt \$2 Billion," *The New York Times*, March 20, 1979, accessed January 15, 2017, http://www.nytimes.com/1979/03/20/archives/us-to-send-egypt-2-billion-israelis-will-get-3-billion-treaty.html?_r=0. This is another point in the Egypt-American relations, which is beyond the scope of this study.

Aviv air service and postal-telephone communication started soon after commencement of this normalization process.¹⁶¹ All these developments had tremendous emotional and political impact on the achievement of a legal relationship with Egypt, which had been of crucial concern for Israel.¹⁶² All in all, it can be definitely stated that the 1979 treaty heralded a new era of relations between Israel and Egypt.

On one hand, Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, the Camp David Accords, the Egyptian-Israeli Treaty of 1979, and the process of normalization together constituted "the essential foundation for a regional peace."¹⁶³ On the other hand, these developments were not welcomed by other regional countries and certain groups in both countries.¹⁶⁴ From the Arab perspective, Sadat's separate peace with Israel shattered their solidarity and weakened the negotiating leverage of other Arab states. Therefore, other Arab states reacted negatively to the treaty between Israel and Egypt. Furthermore, these combined efforts of Sadat were not viewed positively by many Egyptian, especially those in Islamist groups. They assumed that the agreement with Israel was contrary to Egyptian national interests and a "vision of a united 'Arab front' against Israel", as well as a betrayal to the Palestinian cause.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, both Israeli and Egyptian participants of the agreement "agreed on the right of Palestinian self-determination, but disagreed on how to make it a reality."¹⁶⁶ Reflections of that disagreement were destructive on the ground. The MB were active in recruiting university students using their Islamic values and anti-Israeli approach. They created an Islamic opposition that was discontent with Sadat's policies, particularly the treaty

¹⁶¹ Cohen and Azar, "From War to Peace," 87-88.

¹⁶² Ibid., 111.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 88.

¹⁶⁴ Details about intra-dynamics of Arab states and internal dynamics of Israel and Egypt are not within the scope of this study.

¹⁶⁵ Khalifa, "Saving peace," 4.

¹⁶⁶ Cohen and Azar, "From War to Peace," 87.

with Israel.¹⁶⁷ These negative reactions culminated in the assassination of Sadat on October 6, 1981.

2.3. Strategic Partnership between Israel and Mubarak's Egypt

Following Sadat's assassination, Israelis worried – in vain, it turned out - that all of the advancements starting from the Sadat's visit to Jerusalem would be completely overturned in the following period.¹⁶⁸ However, when the Hosni Mubarak era started two years after Sadat's assassination, Mubarak entrenched Sadat's policies. A cold peace with Israel was maintained under Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak during this thirty-year rule without wavering. Moreover, the countries became strategic partners in the region, and this partnership grew in 2011 under Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.

From the beginning of the 1990's, under Mubarak, who took active role in the negotiations, Israel enjoyed cordial relations with Egypt. Egypt, under the rein of Mubarak, became a critically important neighbor for Israel, mainly because it “complemented Israel's vital security interests.”¹⁶⁹ To this end, military cooperation on the Sinai Peninsula also continued. The partnership between Israel and Egypt “reached unprecedented levels” when the foreign ministry's control of these areas was replaced by the general intelligence apparatus.¹⁷⁰

Indeed, it can be argued that the compromise between the foreign policies of the two countries stemmed from the Mubarak's basic goal, which was “to ensure the survival of the regime by introducing a minimum of structural adjustments.”¹⁷¹ The trivets of Mubarak's foreign policy were “the treaty with Israel, the new relationship with the

¹⁶⁷ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 382.

¹⁶⁸ Cohen and Azar, “From War to Peace,” 100.

¹⁶⁹ Heller, “Israeli Responses to the Arab Spring,” 75.

¹⁷⁰ Reem Abou-El-Fadl, “The Road to Jerusalem through Tahrir Square: Anti-Zionism and Palestine in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41:2 (2012): 8.

¹⁷¹ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 392.

United States, and domestic economic needs.”¹⁷² These were factors in Egyptian foreign policy restricting it from engaging in action against Israel. After the peace treaty neutralized Egypt, it did not engage any military action against Israel even when Israel engaged in wars against and invasions on Arabs in 1978, 1982, 1992, 1996, and 2006, even though this caused the Egyptian leadership to fall into disrepute in front of its country and the region.¹⁷³ Because Mubarak wanted to “preserve close relationship with the United States and the generous economic assistance it brought”, his single choice was “to honor the peace treaty” with Israel.¹⁷⁴ In this regard, Mubarak believed that maintaining the peace treaty with Israel was requisite for securing Egypt’s national interest.¹⁷⁵

2.3.1. Cooperation against political Islam and Hamas

Since the very beginning of the Palestinian question, and especially in 1950’s, the liberation of Palestine was considered as an issue within the realm of internal politics for Egypt, and it was “intertwined with concerns for Egyptian national security and dignity.”¹⁷⁶ Notwithstanding, neither Sadat nor his successor Mubarak devoted either themselves or state policies on this issue. Rather, they made efforts to provide reconciliation between Egyptians and Israel by detracting the popular commitment to the Palestinian issue.¹⁷⁷

Furthermore, Egypt under Mubarak confronted Islamists and actively put pressure on the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in the Gaza Strip, where they operated under the name Hamas. Hamas was a “radical Islamist” group opposed to “the very notion of a peaceful settlement with Israel,” and more specifically to the Madrid peace process

¹⁷² Ibid., 394.

¹⁷³ Khani, “Egyptian-Israeli Relations,” 101.

¹⁷⁴ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 394.

¹⁷⁵ Heller, “Israeli Responses to the Arab Spring,” 75.

¹⁷⁶ Abou-El-Fadl, “The Road to Jerusalem,” 6-7.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 7.

as well as Yasser Arafat¹⁷⁸ and his team.¹⁷⁹ In this regard, Mubarak clearly played his cards two-sided on the Palestinian issue. On the one hand, during the mid-1990's, Mubarak explicitly introduced the notion of counterterrorism against the rise of "violent Islamist extremism," including Islamist groups such as Hamas.¹⁸⁰ On the other hand, by capitalizing the 1993 Oslo Accords, he tried to legitimize his state's closer ties with Israel,¹⁸¹ he became a negotiator between Israel and the Palestinians. Yet, he never facilitated negotiations between Israel and Hamas, and, instead, only addressed Fatah. Its coordination with the US, Israel's closest ally, meant that Egypt was also playing a role in serving interests of Israel. In the aftermath of the Oslo process Egypt established itself as a regional mediator for the rest of the 1990's. Accompanied with their security cooperation, this role turned Egypt into a channel between the US-Israel and the Palestinian Authority.¹⁸²

Mubarak's cooperation with Israel against Hamas and Islamist movements was maintained throughout the following decade. For instance, in 2005, they signed the Agreed Arrangements regarding security in the Rafah area in order to prevent arm-smuggling into Gaza through the deployment of a 750-man border guard force to the Philadelphia corridor (a buffer zone between Egypt and Gaza) on the Egyptian side of the border.¹⁸³ Egypt cooperated with Israel when the Hamas-led government came to the power in the 2006 elections, an event which redefined the security context of the Israeli–Egyptian border. Egypt's relations with Israel grew closer after Hamas'

¹⁷⁸ Yasser Arafat was the leader of the Fatah as well as the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the president of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Hamas opposes him and his teams as it viewed them as too submissive in concessions to Israel.

¹⁷⁹ Rabinovich, *The Lingering Conflict*, 34-35.

¹⁸⁰ Abou-El-Fadl, "The Road to Jerusalem," 10.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid., 8.

¹⁸³ Brooke Neuman, "A New Reality on the Egypt-Gaza Border (Part I): Contents of the New Israel-Egypt Agreement," *The Washington Institute Policy Watch* 518, September 19, 2005, accessed September 25, 2016, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/a-new-reality-on-the-egypt-gaza-border-part-i-contents-of-the-new-israel-eg>.

victory in 2006 elections as, by putting economic and political pressures on Gaza, Egypt forced it to recognize Israel.¹⁸⁴

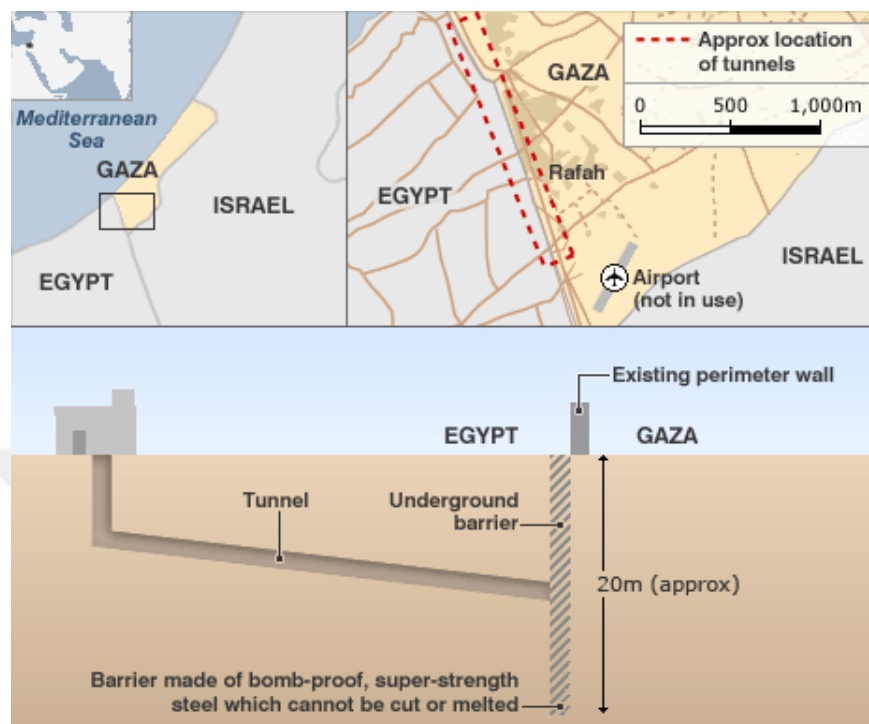


Figure 2.2. Rafah Crossing, Hamas' tunnels and Egyptian barriers

Source: Wordpress, 2010, https://brabosh.files.wordpress.com/2010/04/gaza_barrier1.gif?w=660

Since Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007, Israel has made efforts to contain and undermine it through “diplomatic isolation, economic pressure, and occasional military strikes,” even using massive military operations.¹⁸⁵ Throughout Israeli siege on Gaza and blockade against Hamas, the Mubarak regime quietly helped Israel by putting pressure on Hamas in different ways, such as closing the Rafah crossing point between Egypt and Gaza; restricting the “flow of goods and people into and out of Gaza;” and building a wall on the border that extended deep underground to prevent tunneling.¹⁸⁶ As a result of the Israeli blockade, a complex tunnel network was built from Gaza to Egypt in order to import medicine and goods for the reconstruction of

¹⁸⁴ Khani, “Egyptian-Israeli Relations,” 105.

¹⁸⁵ Byman, “Israel’s Pessimistic View,” 130.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

extensively destroyed infrastructure. In addition to their role in transferring goods and necessities, the tunnels were used for smuggling weapons. After the 2008-2009 war, Egypt built a wall to close these tunnels. At the same time, Egypt banned the MB and its activities within its borders.

2.3.2. The economy's supplementary role in cooperation

In addition to its importance for military and strategic cooperation, the role of the 1979 treaty and Mubarak's efforts on economic relations should also be mentioned. Following the treaty, Israel was able to purchase oil from Egypt. Additionally, Israel exported goods to Egypt, including chemical products, fertilizer and oil products.¹⁸⁷ They also established agricultural cooperation.¹⁸⁸

In the 2000's, economic relations between the two countries developed further. The Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZs) agreement between Egypt, Israel, and the US was signed in 2004 in order to increase trade rates.¹⁸⁹ It can be said that this agreement has played a tremendous role in boosting trade between the two states (see, Graph 2.1). In 2005, Egypt and Israel signed a fifteen-year deal for the export of Egypt's natural gas to Israel via an undersea pipeline.¹⁹⁰ This is also significant for Israeli energy sector.

In 2008, Israeli and Egyptian governments signed another natural gas agreement. Natural gas was expected to be "the primary energy source" of Israel, supplying forty percent of the country's energy consumption through a submarine pipeline from El

¹⁸⁷ "Egyptian - Israeli relations 1948-2011," *Middle East Monitor Fact Sheet*, February 2, 2011, accessed May 5, 2016, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/wp-content/uploads/downloads/factsheets/egyptian-israeli-relations-1948-2011.pdf>.

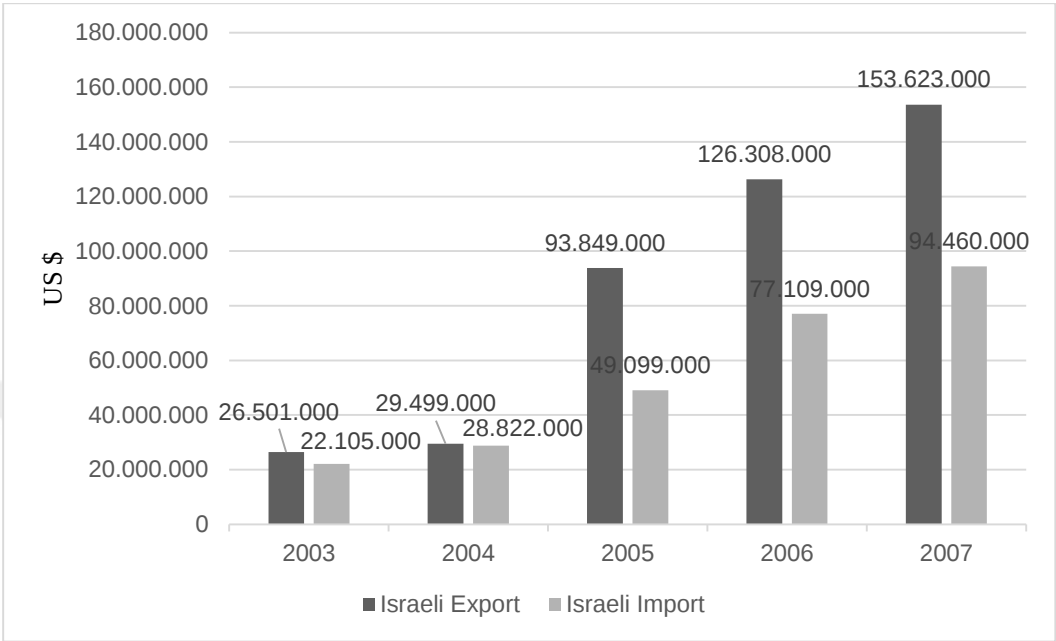
¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ *Egyptian Ministry of Trade and Industry*, accessed September 23, 2016, <http://www.mti.gov.eg/English/aboutus/Sectors/Trade/Entities/QualifyingIndustrialZones/Pages/default.aspx>.

¹⁹⁰ "Egypt and Israel sign 15-year natural gas deal," *The New York Times*, July 1, 2005, accessed September 23, 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/01/business/worldbusiness/egypt-and-israel-sign-15year-natural-gas-deal.html?_r=0.

Arish to Ashkelon.¹⁹¹ It can be said that these kind of agreements played supplementary roles in the development of cooperation between the two countries.

Graph 2.1. Israeli Trade with Egypt 2003-2007



Source: UN Comtrade Database

2.3.3. Conclusion

It can be claimed that the political history of Egypt-Israel relations changed in tandem with the 1979 peace treaty, which ended the decades-long conflict between the two states. The foreign policy doctrines of the Sadat era reflected significant continuity under Mubarak, especially in terms of ‘normalizing’ Egyptian-Israeli relations. In this regard, in addition to maintaining the peace treaty, Mubarak cooperated on counterterrorism, attempted to discredit the Palestinian cause, and shared strategic objectives with Israel. Therefore, from the Israeli perspective, Mubarak’s government was seen as a ‘strategic asset to Israel’. During the three-decades administration of Mubarak, Israel witnessed eight prime ministers, several wars, and multiple peace

¹⁹¹ “The Natural Gas Sector in Israel,” *Israeli Ministry of National Infrastructures, Energy and Water Resources*, accessed November 6, 2016, <http://www.energy.gov.il/English/Subjects/Natural%20Gas/Pages/GxmsMniNGEconomy.aspx>.

talks with different partners.¹⁹² Mubarak was thus a well-known partner, and it followed that whoever came to power next in Egypt could create “tremendous concern to Israel.”¹⁹³ Harsh criticisms and delegitimization of Sadat and then Mubarak for making peace with Israel by the domestic and regional opponents demonstrated that another actor in power in Egypt could change these ties with Israel. For this reason, the empowerment of Islamists, led by the Muslim Brotherhood, in Egypt was a fearsome possibility for both Netanyahu and other policy makers in Israel.¹⁹⁴

Having knowledge of the background of the relations between Israel and Egypt is critical for understanding Israel’s threat perceptions, objectives, and policies in the face of the regime change in Egypt. Indeed, change in the Egyptian regime would mean a change of balance of power not only in bilateral relations, but also in the region. Therefore, the situation in Egypt has been under serious consideration in Israel as it is one of the most important countries in the Middle East in terms of its geopolitical impacts on the regional issues, such as the Palestinian issue and political Islam. Considering its position at the political and cultural forefront among Arab countries, developments in Egypt, particularly regime changes, must not be neglected by Israel.

As explained in detail in this chapter, Israel has national security and strategic concerns regarding Egypt. There are the preserving of the 1979 Peace Treaty; maintaining security in the Sinai Peninsula; cooperating against political Islam, and Hamas in particular; and keeping economic relations alive, including goods and energy trade through the Suez Canal. Based on the defensive realist approach, status quo of this kind of strategic assets, which are determinant in the balance of power, is the main target. Otherwise, change could lead to war between the two states, as

¹⁹² Aluf Benn, “Overcoming Fear and Anxiety in Tel Aviv,” *Foreign Affairs*, February 8 2011, accessed August 5, 2016, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67353/aluf-benn/overcoming-fear-and-anxiety-in-tel-aviv>.

¹⁹³ Byman, “Israel’s Pessimistic View,” 124.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

happened before. The possibility of a change in balance engendered perception of threat in the Israeli side. However, considering these strategic assets, Israel took a defensive realist position in the face of the changes starting in 2011, with the spread of the Arab uprisings to its most immediate and important neighbor, Egypt.



CHAPTER 3

ISRAEL AND EGYPT IN THE POST-MUBAREK ERA (2011-2015)

The experience of Arab uprisings starting at the end of 2010 has brought about domestic complications and regional ramifications. As a result of upheavals in the Arab world, the political status quo in the Middle East has changed and regional dynamics have been redrawn. Former alliances have cracked while new ones have been formed. In other words, core changes have challenged the regional balance of powers, and led to the emergence of unfamiliar phenomena and new elements. Michael Milstein cites these as “the most dramatic changes to occur in the region since it was molded into its modern form after World War I.”¹⁹⁵

The Arab uprisings, bringing with them challenging consequences and uncertainty, led to various repercussions not only in the Arab states but also in non-Arab neighboring countries. Apart from Turkey, Israel too has been immediately and directly influenced by the causes and consequences of this phenomenon. As a nation characterized by its complex geostrategic position and difficult relations with its neighbors, Israel was bewildered by these changes. From an Israeli perspective, the new process of political and social settings in the Arab countries and the increased volatility of the region are worrisome trends in terms of the nations’ security. Entrenched regimes in the Middle East are usually described as ‘moderate camp’ by Israel, since they are seen as core sources of stability in the region. This is why the weakening or overthrow of pre-existing authoritarian regimes, which were benign

¹⁹⁵ Milstein, “A New-Old Middle East,” 19.

to Israeli interests, has been considered a potential threat to regional security.¹⁹⁶ Despite popular opposition, these authoritarian regimes had ensured that no threat to Israel's security emanated from their territories. Therefore, for decades Israel had relied upon a regional security strategy based on the existence of these regimes.¹⁹⁷

Taking these developments across the region and their possible repercussions into account, Israel has perceived threats to its national security and strategic interests. Israel's initial reaction to these developments in the Middle East is described by Mark Heller as indicating "high anxiety."¹⁹⁸

3.1. Breaking Point: Egyptian Revolution

On January 25, 2011, protests started in Egypt, and continued eighteen days until the resignation of Mubarak on February 11, 2011. In the first year of 'the Egyptian Revolution', the participation of different groups, including Islamists, liberals, socialists and communists, in the parliamentary elections was considered as a very positive political development in terms of democracy and popular legitimacy in Egypt. The social protests were, in fact, of a predominantly secular democratic character at the very beginning. International expectations were also in that direction. During the eighteen days of protests between 25 January and 11 February 2011, the revolutionaries' slogans by no means hinted at religious connotations; rather, they were dominated by "ideas of human rights, social equality, freedom, and dignity."¹⁹⁹ Even at gathering after Friday prayers protestors did not chant religious slogans. Indeed, Islamist groups only joined the protests later on. The Muslim Brotherhood announced their participation in the protests on January 26, and they affirmed the

¹⁹⁶ Berti, "Israel and Arab Spring," 130.

¹⁹⁷ Hellyer, "Egypt's uprising," 1321.

¹⁹⁸ Heller, "Israeli Responses to the Arab Spring," 75.

¹⁹⁹ Nadine Sika, "Dynamics of a Stagnant Religious Discourse and the Rise of New Secular Movements in Egypt," in *Arab Spring in Egypt: Revolution and Beyond*, ed. Bahgat Korany and Rabab El-Mahdi, (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2012), 63.

calls for nationwide demonstrations on the eve of January 28.²⁰⁰ Salafists joined the protests just a few days before the overthrow of Mubarak.²⁰¹ Notwithstanding, social movements retained secular ideas “even with the rising tide of new Islamist movements and leaders in the Egyptian public sphere.”²⁰²

3.1.1. Islamists hijacked the revolution

It is possible to acknowledge that revolutionaries joining together against the Mubarak regime consisted of three groups, “youth movements, labor movements, and the political parties and movements.”²⁰³ Thanks to these groups, large segments of the society could witness “political alternatives that were not available to them before” if they formed new parties, which attracted a certain portion of the MB vote.²⁰⁴ However, liberal and secular elements were not prepared for political rivalry, whereas the Muslim Brotherhood “had been waiting for such a historic moment for decades and seized its opportunity.”²⁰⁵ Even though the MB had long been an important part of the Egyptian political arena, it was “not the biggest or the most important one.”²⁰⁶ Nevertheless, other groups were excluded from the political processes under the Morsi administration. Therefore, many Egyptian and international scholars have reached a common conclusion that the revolution was

²⁰⁰ Ibrahim Houdaiby, “Islamism in and after Egypt’s Revolution,” in *Arab Spring in Egypt: Revolution and Beyond*, ed. Bahgat Korany and Rabab El-Mahdi, (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2012): 137.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 138.

²⁰² Sika, “Dynamics of a Stagnant Religious Discourse,” 63.

²⁰³ Dina Shehata, “Youth Movements and the 25 January Revolution,” in *Arab Spring in Egypt: Revolution and Beyond*, ed. Bahgat Korany and Rabab El-Mahdi, (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2012): 119.

²⁰⁴ Asher Susser, “The ‘Arab Spring’: The Origins of a Misnomer,” *Tel Aviv Notes* 6:6 (2012): 112.

²⁰⁵ Fouad Ajami, “The Arab Spring at One: A Year of Living Dangerously,” *Foreign Affairs* 91:2 (2012): 58.

²⁰⁶ Susser, “The Origins of a Misnomer,” 112.

“hijacked” by the Islamist movements, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.²⁰⁷

At the end, the revolution in Egypt resulted in the strengthening of Islamic political movements and the electoral victory of the Muslim Brotherhood. Since it was the most structured political organization, the Freedom and Justice Party, the MB’s political wing, took the lead in the elections. Moreover, in the presidential elections of June 2012, Mohammad Morsi, the MB candidate, became ‘Egypt’s first elected president.’²⁰⁸ Thus, the MB ensured its power in the political arena. It is commonly claimed that Islamist groups, namely the MB and Salafists, were highly dominant during the establishment process of a constitution in 2012. All these domestic developments in Egyptian political landscape could be regarded as evidence of the strengthening of political Islamist groups, particularly the MB. Arash Beidollah Khani defines the MB as “the largest Islamic movement in both Egypt and the Islamic world and one of the most powerful opposition groups to Mubarak.”²⁰⁹ Therefore, it was considered one of the greatest threats to Israel regarding its relations with Egypt and its position in the region.

The situation in the societal arena was not different from the political scene, with political Islamists gaining dominance in both. The new reality on the ground in the Arab region was identified as an “axis of resistance”, which can be defined as anti-Israeli and anti-Western/US cooperation with capacity to limit external dictates to Arab policies.²¹⁰ Previously, Arab regimes were capable of checking the public’s defeatist approach, as regimes were pro-Israeli and pro-West/US, unlike society-at-large, which was anti-Israeli and anti-Western/US. With the outbreak of the uprisings,

²⁰⁷ John R. Bradley, *After the Arab Spring: How Islamists Hijacked the Middle East Revolts*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

²⁰⁸ Morsi elected with 52 percent of the votes on 16-17 June 2012.

²⁰⁹ Khani, “Egyptian-Israeli Relations,” 115.

²¹⁰ “Arab Revolutions and Geostrategic Balances and Interactions,” *Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies*, Policy Analysis Unit, (October 2012): 23, accessed May 7, 2016, <http://english.dohainstitute.org/file/get/11121b1c-f2ff-41a1-9f83-42724b10929b.pdf>.

Arab regimes that could buffer this attitude emanating from Arab societies broke down. In this new conjuncture, Arab regimes are forced “to adopt more robust foreign policy towards Israeli aggression, inevitably isolating Israelis, limiting their regional influences, and depriving its ability to impose its will on its neighboring region,” especially with regards to such strategically important countries like Egypt.²¹¹ As an explicit example, such public opinion precipitated the cancellation of the 2005 natural gas deal in April 2012.²¹²

It was obvious that new leaders also faced difficulties in terms of satisfying the conflicting demands of different actors and structures. They were walking “a tightrope between Western aid, regional perspective, and popular will.”²¹³ New Islamist regimes were seeking legitimacy among the public because the ideals behind the Arab uprisings forced them to find renewed legitimacy. One of the basic ways they could do this was by reviewing their relations with Israel. This option can be interpreted as meaning “no Arab government is going to push for peace initiative towards Israel’s right-wing government.”²¹⁴

3.1.2. Influences on the Palestinian cause

When Islamist joined the protests in Tahrir, especially after the fall of Mubarak, they chanted pro-Palestinian slogans and carried Palestinian scarves and flags.²¹⁵ From the aspect of public demand, it would not be easy to convince or satisfy a newly emerged politicized Egyptian public if/when the issue of the relations with Israel and the rights of Palestinians would come to surface in public debates, which is more concerning for Israel. Israel’s feeling of insecurity in terms of whether the Egyptian revolution would influence the Palestinian issue and Israeli security in the Gaza border reached a peak when Nabil al-Arabi was nominated as a new foreign minister as Al-Arabi,

²¹¹ Ibid., 24.

²¹² Jacoby, “Israel’s Relations with Egypt and Turkey,” 31.

²¹³ Ibid., 29.

²¹⁴ Asseburg, “The Arab Spring and the Arab-Israeli Conflict,” 86.

²¹⁵ Abou-El-Fadl, “The Road to Jerusalem,” 13.

who openly criticized the siege of Gaza, had said that “Egyptian national security and Palestinian security are one” in announcing the opening of the Rafah crossing.²¹⁶

In addition to the impact on the Palestinian cause, the revolution and related Islamist empowerment also had influence on relations of Hamas with Israel and Egypt. Hamas leaders appraised Morsi’s victory as “a defeat for the program of normalization and security co-operation with the enemy.”²¹⁷ While the Muslim Brotherhood had fruitful relations with Hamas, Morsi imposed heavy restrictions on Hamas’s military activities while he played the role of ceasefire broker between Israel and Hamas after the 2012 War of Gaza.²¹⁸ Some saw his double-play as indicating that “while Egypt works to broker an end to the fighting, Morsi will continue to exploit the crisis as a means to demonstrate that the Muslim Brotherhood’s Egypt is no longer Israel’s or the West’s lapdog.”²¹⁹

Furthermore, under the new leadership of the MB, the future of the Camp David agreement was unclear as Morsi too did not make a clear distinction between the two Accords, the bilateral treaty and the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.²²⁰ In other words, if there was no settlement in the conflict with the Palestinians, then the peace treaty could be at risk. In such a case, Israel would face two options, either “to allow a Palestinian reconciliation” or “to do nothing.”²²¹ Since the first scenario would be very risky, Israel preferred to wait and see what would happen.

²¹⁶ Elior Levy, “Egypt to Open Rafah Crossing,” *Ynetnews*, April 29, 2011, accessed November 30, 2016, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4062118,00.html>.

²¹⁷ Ian Black, “Mohamed Morsi victory unsettles Middle East neighbours,” *The Guardian*, June 25, 2012, accessed November 31, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/25/mohamed-morsi-middle-east-neighbours>.

²¹⁸ David D. Kirkpatrick and Jodi Rudoren, “Israel and Hamas Agree to a Cease-Fire, After a U.S.-Egypt Push,” *The New York Times*, November 21, 2012, accessed November 26, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/22/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-conflict.html>.

²¹⁹ Brandon Friedman, “Israel, Hamas and “the Egypt We Were Waiting For,” *Tel Aviv Notes* 6:22 (2012).

²²⁰ Nathan J. Brown, “Evolution after Revolution: Egypt, Israel, and the United States,” *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* VII:1 (2013): 11.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

3.1.3. Egypt's hesitation over the 1979 Peace Treaty

From the perspective of a new Egyptian government, there were uncertainties regarding maintenance of Egypt's domestic power and regional position. In order to eliminate these uncertainties, a new government uttered its intention to abolish the peace treaty, or at least revise it in the name of reshaping Egypt's strategic position. In doing so, this new political actor could convince the politicized Egyptian public of its capability of power using the three reasons to amend the peace treaty with Israel: "restoring Egypt's self-image," "restoring security in Sinai," and "restoring Egypt's role in the Palestine conflict."²²² In the international arena, it could use the justification that "the peace treaty clearly puts limitations on Egypt's sovereignty over its own territory; it takes priority over all other treaties; and it ensures that no future treaty can affect it in any way."²²³ In the end, a new Egyptian government seeking legitimacy would attempt to cancel or change the peace treaty with Israel. This intention was clearly reflected by the Egyptian Prime Minister Essam Sharaf during the transition period:

The Camp David agreement is not a sacred thing and is always open to discussion with what would benefit the region and the case of fair peace. We could make a change if needed.²²⁴

Moreover, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohamed Badie, also commented on the ties with Israel. He called for a review of the relations, including the peace treaty, which provided normalization:

We should now raise our voice to ask for: an end to normalization [with Israel] which has given our enemy stability; an end to [Egyptian] efforts to secure from infiltrators the borders of the Zionists; the abolition of all

²²² Khalifa, "Saving peace," 8.

²²³ Ibid., 14.

²²⁴ Adrian Blomfield, "Egypt crisis: Israel rallies to support of Egyptian regime," *The Telegraph*, January 31, 2011, accessed December 14, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/egypt/8293536/Egypt-crisis-Israel-rallies-to-support-of-Egyptian-regime.html>.

economic interests such as the Qualified Industrial Zones agreement and the export of Egyptian gas to Israel.²²⁵

Notwithstanding, some security officials and analysts believe that no Egyptian government is likely to abolish the peace treaty, due to persisting economic and military concerns.²²⁶ Indeed, Egypt's Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) stated its commitment to maintaining the treaty with Israel, because it "is more aware than possibly any other institution in Egypt of the potential cost to the country if Egypt were to break the accords, and does not believe it is in Egypt's interest to do so."²²⁷ Still, Israel felt uncomfortable considering the possible ramifications of a situation in which Egypt would decide to revise the treaty.

3.1.4. Lack of control in the Sinai Peninsula

The maintenance of the treaty between Israel and Egypt is also important for the security arrangements in the Sinai Peninsula. In this respect, in a closed-door meeting with senior Israeli diplomats, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman stated "We need to be stubborn and insist on every single detail, otherwise it will be a slippery slope concerning the enforcement of the peace treaty."²²⁸

During the lack of control in the Sinai, more radical groups emerged in the area. One of them was Ansar Beit al-Maqdis, which declared its primary mission as acting "against 'the Zionist entity,'" and to this end several times sabotaged the gas pipelines to cut off "Egyptian gas supply to Israel."²²⁹ The most prominent example showing to the extent to which Sinai-based terrorism could cause conflict between the two states

²²⁵ Heba Saleh, "Muslim Brotherhood urges review of Israel ties," *Financial Times*, May 5, 2011, accessed November 20, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/009e8a1a-7736-11e0-aed6-00144feabdc0>.

²²⁶ Byman, "Israel's Pessimistic View," 126.

²²⁷ Hellyer, "Egypt's uprising," 1321.

²²⁸ Ilan Ben Zion and Stuart Winer, "Lieberman urges strict enforcement of peace treaty as Cairo sends tanks, planes into Sinai," *The Times of Israel*, August 22, 2012, accessed October 31, 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/liberman-urges-strict-enforcement-of-peace-treaty-as-egypt-militarizes-the-sinai/>.

²²⁹ Yehudit Ronen, "The effects of the 'Arab Spring' on Israel's geostrategic and security environment: the escalating jihadist terror in the Sinai Peninsula," *Israel Affairs* 20:3 (2014): 302.

was the terrorist attack launched from the Sinai at northern Israel on August 18, 2011 that caused the death of eight Israelis and the subsequent retaliation from the Israeli side to Egyptian territory with helicopter fire, which led to the death of three Egyptian police officers. Since terrorist had worn Egyptian uniforms, Israel killed a number of Egyptian soldiers in addition to terrorists.²³⁰ Following this event, Egyptians protested against Israel; moreover, they stormed the Israeli embassy in Cairo in September of 2011. Egypt's failure to prevent the attack to the embassy was "symptomatic of their reluctance to confront anti-Israeli agitators."²³¹ Since then, things became more serious when the Israeli embassy in Cairo was attacked, an event which symbolized the enormous difficulties facing relations between the countries in the post-Mubarak era. As a result of the attack, the Israeli ambassador was called back to his home country. When condemning the attack, Netanyahu said that the ambassador would return to Egypt if his and other personnels' security could be guaranteed.²³² Following the attack and the embassy's evacuation, Israel carefully studied the security situation in Egypt and chose "to maintain a low-key diplomatic presence, with the ambassador flying in for several days a week and operating out of his official residence."²³³

On August 5, 2012, a terrorist group in the Sinai slaughtered fifteen Egyptian security officers at the cross-border attack on Israel.²³⁴ Following this, Morsi replaced defense minister Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi with General Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, a man

²³⁰ Rabinovich, *The Lingering Conflict*, 213.

²³¹ Ibid., 277.

²³² "Statement by PM Netanyahu following events in Cairo" *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, September 10, 2011, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2011/Pages/Statement_PM_Netanyahu_events_Cairo_10-Sep-2011.aspx.

²³³ Marc J. Sievers, "Riding the Egyptian-Israeli Roller Coaster 2011-2015," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy's Policy Notes*, 27 (2015): 3.

²³⁴ Harriet Sherwood, "Sinai attack presents dilemma for Israel," *The Guardian*, August 6, 2012, accessed November 24, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/aug/06/israel-egypt-relations-sinai-attack>.

who adopted “a more aggressive military posture in the Sinai.”²³⁵ Sisi increased the presence of Egyptian military in the area, which made Israel uncomfortable. Yet, Israel “did not complain publicly, but the story was leaked to the *Haaretz* newspaper,”²³⁶ and published under the headline “Egypt Deployed Troops in Sinai without Israel’s Prior Approval.”²³⁷ This act demonstrates Israel’s effort to prevent Egypt from taking steps against Israeli security in the Sinai not through direct confrontation but via other channels.

3.1.5. MB’s economic mindset

In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood is historically known for its anti-globalization mindset.²³⁸ At first glance, the MB may be seen as a supporter of a free-market economy, but they limited the scope of intended trade to only Islamic countries.²³⁹ The MB promote ‘Islamic’ partners not only in trade, but also in tourism and banking.²⁴⁰ In this vein, it is not wrong to say that the new Islamist powers in the Middle East deflected investment and cooperation from the West and Israel into Arab and Islamic states. This principle of the MB concretized to some extent when Turkey’s AKP government decided to develop a strategic cooperation with Egypt, including trade and industrial fields, by precluding Israel.²⁴¹

²³⁵ Sievers, “Egyptian-Israeli Roller Coaster,” 4.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

²³⁷ Avi Issacharoff, “Egypt Deployed Troops in Sinai without Israel’s Prior Approval,” *Haaretz*, August 16, 2012, accessed November 20, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/egypt-deployed-troops-in-sinai-without-israel-s-prior-approval-1.458511>.

²³⁸ Ali G. Mansour, “How Rethinking Globalization Can Avert the Clash of Civilisations: Case Study of Muslim Brotherhood,” *Ikhwan Web: The Muslim Brotherhood’s Official English Website*, November 19, 2008, accessed October 6, 2016, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=18665>.

²³⁹ Gil Feiler, “The economic implications of the Arab Spring,” in *The Arab Spring, Democracy, and Security: Domestic and International Ramifications*, ed. Efraim Inbar, (Routledge: London and New York, 2013): 117.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ Aviel Magnezi, “Turkey to sign strategic alliance with Egypt,” *Ynet News*, September 4, 2011, accessed October 6, 2016, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4117727,00.html>.

Moreover, natural gas pipelines became vulnerable after the fall of Mubarak, and they were exposed to series of terrorist attacks and sabotages.²⁴² Those attacks and sabotages should be seen not only from within the framework of security, as they were also “political attacks” against the deal itself due to artificially low prices granted to Israel.²⁴³ From the perspective of the Egyptian government, taking threats to the pipelines and criticism of the deal into account, it would be better not to export its gas to Israel. Egypt’s reduction in natural gas supply to Israel directly influenced the Israeli economy and energy sector by leading to an increase in electricity prices in Israel.²⁴⁴

In deference to such negative economic outcomes of political developments in the region on its economic relations and energy sector, Israel turned to other options. For trade, Israel improved its economic ties with European and OECD member countries. For energy security, Israel found other partners for cooperation in the Mediterranean, namely Cyprus and Greece.²⁴⁵ As a precaution to attacks against the pipelines, Israel increased its defense spending.

3.2. Major Threat Perceptions Held by Israel: High Anxiety

The more elucidated the perception of threat are, the more suitable explanations one can give for Israel’s foreign policy preferences concerning the Egyptian revolution. As long as the uprisings continued solidifying in Egypt and Islamist movements continued consolidating their power in state institutions, Israel’s perception of threat

²⁴² Examples of attacks from different times: Heba Afify and Kareem Fahim, “Gunmen Attack Sinai Gas Pipeline,” *The New York Times*, July 30, 2011, accessed October 6, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/31/world/middleeast/31egypt.html>; “New attack on Egypt gas pipeline to Israel and Jordan,” *BBC News*, November 10, 2011, accessed October 6 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15670301>.

²⁴³ Feiler, “The economic implications of the Arab Spring,” 121.

²⁴⁴ Avi Bar-Eli, “Amid Uncertainties over Egyptian Gas Supply Electricity Rates May Increase Only for Summer,” *Haaretz*, July 3, 2011, accessed October 6, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/business/amid-uncertainties-over-egyptian-gas-supply-electricity-rates-may-increase-only-for-summer-1.370959>.

²⁴⁵ Derek Gatopoulos, “Greece, Israel, Cyprus eye gas exports in future,” *Yahoo News*, March 28, 2012, accessed October 5, 2016, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/greece-israel-cyprus-eye-gas-104509627.html>.

escalated regarding the Egyptian revolution. Israel was anxious as to whether these developments would lead to significant reshuffling of its strategic position and relationships in the region. Since the beginning of the events in Egypt, Israel's basic concern was over the uncertainty of the future of relations between the two countries.²⁴⁶ Israel's primary concerns may be divided into five major topics, as follows:

3.2.1. Political Islamist threat

Major concern held by Israel was that the power vacuum left by previous regimes would be filled by Islamist movements, as these hold antagonist feelings towards Israel. In comparing the new Islamist regimes and previous autocratic ones, Israeli historian Avi Shlaim has stated that "upheaval always leads to an Islamic theocracy that is worse than the dictators."²⁴⁷ In that vein, as Israel compared the uprisings in the region to the Iranian revolution, it feared that the crowds in the streets across the Middle East would create an unpleasant situation for all parties.²⁴⁸ Besides leading to regional chaos, the new Islamist regimes would pose severe security challenges to Israel.²⁴⁹

The consequences of such a situation have been considered "something less than an unmitigated political disaster and intolerable security threat" for Israel.²⁵⁰ The Arab uprisings and the rise of political Islam throughout the region would influence not only Israel's relations with neighbors on a regional level but also on its bilateral relations with states where political Islam has already determinant, such as Egypt, Jordan, and Turkey.

²⁴⁶ "Arab upheaval prompts concerns in Israel," *IISS Strategic Comments* 17:4 (2011), accessed July 17, 2016, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13567888.2011.596313>.

²⁴⁷ Lawrence Joffe, "Arab risings and the Israel-Palestine conflict: from national to human rights," *Open Democracy*, July 23 2011, accessed September 20, 2015, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/author/lawrence-joffe>.

²⁴⁸ Brown, "Tracking the 'Arab Spring': Egypt's Failed Transition," *Journal of Democracy* 24:4 (2013): 9.

²⁴⁹ Byman, "Israel's Pessimistic View," 123.

²⁵⁰ Heller, "Israeli Responses to the Arab Spring," 76.

The rise to power of the Muslim Brotherhood brought with it the popularity of political Islam in Egypt.²⁵¹ When examining the policies of the MB under the Morsi administration, it has been said that Islamist rule would become authoritarian and irreversible. Moreover, since political Islamist groups were inexperienced in both politics and defense, particularly in the Sinai, they would use anti-Israeli discourse and policies to secure their domestic power. These changes in attitudes towards Israel would endanger the peace treaty while also empowering Hamas to attack Israel. For these reasons, from an Israeli point of view, one of the new set of challenges in post-Mubarak Egypt was “the rise of political Islam in the country.”²⁵²

Another one of Israel’s considerations over the rise of Islamist movements is related to the empowerment of Hamas and the raising of the Palestinian issue. Israel has worried that the rise of political Islam throughout the region would benefit Hamas, and this would in turn have direct negative effects on both Israel’s national security and the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians.

3.2.2. Palestinian issue and Gaza

Israel was anxious about the possibility that the wave of protests among Arab states would influence the Palestinians, and lead to the latter engaging in a struggle with their military branch. However, this did not happen in this manner. Unlike other cases in the Middle East, Palestinians protested neither against their leaders in the West Bank and Gaza nor against the Israeli administration. Alexander Bligh (2013) explains the reasons behind Palestinian indulgence as stemming from external and internal causes.²⁵³ Externally, Palestinians are confused about “the identity of enemy,” meaning that they were confounded as to whether “the Palestinian internal

²⁵¹ Uzi Rabi, “The Sick Man on the Nile: Egypt’s ‘Second Revolution,’” *The Moshe Dayan Center Director’s Brief* (4 July 2013).

²⁵² Berti, “Israel and Arab Spring,” 139.

²⁵³ Alexander Bligh, “The Arab Spring and Palestinian apathy,” in *The Arab Spring, Democracy, and Security: Domestic and International Ramifications*, ed. Efraim Inbar, (Routledge: London and New York, 2013).

leadership or the Israeli ‘oppressors’” is bigger enemy.²⁵⁴ Internal reasons include three factors: Abbas’s call for new elections as a preemptive step, division between the Palestinian factions (namely Fatah and Hamas), and relatively less corruption in the Palestinian territories when compared to other regional countries.²⁵⁵ Indeed, there is a desire for confrontation with Israel, especially among the youth, but division within Palestinians makes this difficult to actualize:

It is clear, however, that for all of the growing expectations of a confrontation with Israel, the internal obstacles to youth-based mobilization are every bit as formidable as the external ones. There are wide areas of consensus in Palestinian political life that may soon support an upsurge of activism, but internal divisions still run very deep and might easily lead any new round to fizzle or devolve into self-defeating actions.²⁵⁶

Bearing in mind that the Palestinian issue has always been indispensable from greater Arab politics, it can be assumed that, in the case of an escalation between Israel and the Palestinians, new Islamist Arab regimes would not be more benign toward Israel than before.²⁵⁷ In addition to ramifications from a Palestinian act against Israel and Israel’s counteract against Palestinians, any possible reaction from regional countries and directed at Israel would be likely to worsen the conflict between Israel and Palestine, including the crisis in Gaza, and make the prospects for peace between the two sides even slighter.²⁵⁸ Having a potential to create such a vicious cycle, mobilization in the Arab states, especially in Egypt, could serve negatively for both normalization and the Palestinian issue.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 85-86.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 75-76.

²⁵⁶ Brown, “Report on the Prospects for Popular Mobilization in the Palestinian Territories in the Light of Arab Spring,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41:1 (2011): 215.

²⁵⁷ Yaniv Voller, “After the Arab Spring: power shift in the Middle East? Turmoil and Uncertainty: Israel and the New Middle East,” *LSE Ideas reports*, ed. Nicholas Kitchen, SR011, (2012): 62.

²⁵⁸ Byman, “Israel’s Pessimistic View,” 123.

The Mubarak regime had cooperated with Israel to pressure Hamas in different ways. However, the Egyptian revolution and empowerment of Islamist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood changed this equilibrium to the advantage of Hamas, the Palestinian branch of Muslim Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip. New trends on the ground strengthened the hands of Hamas. After the fall of Mubarak, control of the Gaza border loosened while flow of men and material to Hamas increased.²⁵⁹ Security on the Gaza border is significant not only in terms of threats to Israel, but also for the relations between Israel and Egypt in terms of testing “their ability to promote stability on their respective borders.”²⁶⁰ Therefore, any military help from Egypt to Hamas carried a high possibility of tension between the two states.²⁶¹

It is also worrying for Israel that the equilibrium between the Palestinian factions could be affected by the ascent of the Islamists. Hamas would enjoy empowerment while Fatah would face weakening in the Palestinian territories. First and foremost, the Fatah regime and its leader Mahmud Abbas worried about losing his powerful regional ally, the Mubarak regime. This is true even though Mubarak’s Egypt has been “sponsoring reconciliation talks between Fatah and Hamas, exerting considerable pressure on the latter whenever talks stalled under the weight of the imbalance.”²⁶² This ‘balance’ shifted in favor of Hamas, particularly when Hamas’ tutelary Muslim Brotherhood came to the power in Egypt. As Israel sees Fatah as a more reasonable actor for peace talks than Hamas, this was seen as an adverse change in circumstances. This is especially the case since Hamas has launched rocket attacks from Gaza against Israel.

3.2.3. Abolition of the Peace treaty

It can be said that one of Israel’s main concerns regarding the Egyptian revolution was the future of the peace treaty. This is true to the extent that the “focus of

²⁵⁹ “Arab upheaval prompts concerns in Israel,” 1-3.

²⁶⁰ Jacoby, “Israel’s Relations with Egypt and Turkey,” 31.

²⁶¹ Khani, “Egyptian-Israeli Relations,” 114.

²⁶² Abou-El-Fadl, “The Road to Jerusalem,” 8.

mainstream political debate on Israel” was “whether or not Egypt should rethink—or even cancel—the peace treaty.”²⁶³ The 1979 Peace Treaty, which has strategic significance for Israel’s foreign policy relations and security arrangements, was maintained under the authoritarian regime in Egypt. The Mubarak regime sustained its relations with Israel despite the popular inconvenience these relations posed. Indeed, “the agreement was never subjected to popular critique.”²⁶⁴ However, Israel worried that if the Egyptian regime was switched to an Islamist group, then the agreement would be subjected to the Egyptian public which does not support positive relations with Israel. According to the Pew Research, fifty one percent of the Egyptian population said that their country should annul the peace treaty with Israel while thirty six percent were in favor of maintaining it.²⁶⁵

As a result of the fact that governmental intentions and public questioning concerning the peace treaty accompanied the erosion of security in the Sinai Peninsula, other concerns emerged as to whether a new Egyptian government would be able to “uphold its obligations with respect to containing the security situation” in the Sinai, based on the treaty.²⁶⁶

In the wake of the realization of these possibilities, Israel would be forced to alter its concept of security in its foreign policy design throughout the region.²⁶⁷ Decades-long security strategies would be turned upside-down, which would be a nightmare for Israel, especially when chaos dominates the region, the regional balance of power was fragile, and the political situation was substantially uncertain in Egypt. When Mohammad Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood came to the power, Israel began to face these fears. The Islamist population started to raise their voices against Israel,

²⁶³ Ibid., 12.

²⁶⁴ Jacoby, “Israel’s Relations with Egypt and Turkey,” 30.

²⁶⁵ “U.S. Wins No Friends, End of Treaty with Israel Sought,” *Pew Research Center Global Attitudes Project*, (25 April 2011): 26.

²⁶⁶ Khalifa, “Saving peace,” 1-2.

²⁶⁷ Milstein, “A New-Old Middle East,” 20.

relations with Israel, and the peace treaty. Even though some Egyptian officials made certain statements promising the maintenance of the treaty, there were also conflicting statements issued from that same group. Therefore, Israel's anxiety over the possibility of the abolition of the peace treaty remained until the military captured power in July 2015.

3.2.4. Threats from the Sinai Peninsula

On top of their concern over the sustainability of the peace treaty with Egypt, the security vacuum in the Sinai Peninsula made Israel anxious. Subsequent to the fall of the Mubarak government, Israel witnessed the disintegration of the state security apparatus in the Sinai Peninsula. The chaotic political and security landscape of Egypt brought about "a security and military vacuum throughout the Sinai desert."²⁶⁸ Described by Yehudit Ronen as "a fertile paradise," this vacuum in the Sinai gave radical organizations and terrorist groups a free hand "to strengthen their position as central players on the local stage."²⁶⁹ Exploitation of the power vacuum in the Sinai Peninsula by these armed groups meant not only a rising threat of terrorism to Israel's national security from this region, but also "[a] risk of confrontation between the Egyptian and Israeli militaries."²⁷⁰ In this context, the Sinai is regarded as "a crucial litmus test" for Israeli-Egyptian relations.²⁷¹

In addition to local radical groups, other power brokers such as Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, and even al-Qaida benefitted from the situation and attempted to recruit Bedouin fighters from the Sinai desert.²⁷² Moreover, terrorist groups capitalized on the political-security vacuum in the area "to establish an ideological-operational cooperative axis, inspired by or without Iran, with jihadist organizations that have set

²⁶⁸ Ronen, "The escalating jihadist terror in the Sinai Peninsula," 311.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 315.

²⁷⁰ Berti, "Israel and Arab Spring," 139.

²⁷¹ Jacoby, "Israel's Relations with Egypt and Turkey," 33.

²⁷² "Egypt revolution leaves Sinai increasingly lawless," *BBC News*, June 1, 2011, accessed August 16, 2016, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/mobile/programmes/newsnight/9501505.stm>.

up operations on Israel's northern front – in Syria and Lebanon.”²⁷³ Therefore, Israel was anxious about “even more radical actors such as Iran-backed Palestinian Islamic Jihad or Salafi jihadists” establishing power bases in the area.²⁷⁴ In these circumstances, regional players in the complex battle in the Sinai would include not only Egypt, Israel and local radical groups, but also Gaza, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and terrorist groups with international networks. In other words, the area could turn into “a proxy battle field for surrounding powers.”²⁷⁵ For Israel, this would mean existence of a direct threat of terrorism to its southern and northern borders, and the reshaping of the geostrategic map of regional threats and challenges.

Another source of Israeli threat perception related to the fragile situation in Sinai was the repeated attacks on the gas pipelines.²⁷⁶ More importantly, serious cross-border attacks in August 2011 provoked both sides.²⁷⁷ Further attacks would lead to a violent escalation of tension between the two states. Such a situation would further deteriorate Israel-Egypt relations, and thus bring greater threat to the peace treaty, which Israel claimed as its greatest concern.

In the case of a lack of control among the Sinai border, Israel worries also about the possibility of a migrant influx by African asylum-seekers from war-torn countries such as Eritrea and Sudan.²⁷⁸ Indeed, Israel's concern was proved not without reason

²⁷³ Ronen, “The escalating jihadist terror in the Sinai Peninsula,” 315.

²⁷⁴ Ehud Yaari, “The New Triangle of Egypt, Israel, and Hamas,” *The Washington Institute*, Policy Watch 2193, January 17, 2014, accessed September 25, 2016, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-new-triangle-of-egypt-israel-and-hamas>.

²⁷⁵ Khalifa, “Saving peace,” 11.

²⁷⁶ “Egypt's gas pipeline to Israel attacked,” *The Telegraph*, April 27, 2011, accessed October 8, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/egypt/8475778/Egypt-gas-pipeline-to-Israel-attacked.html>.

²⁷⁷ Heba Afify and Isabel Kershner, “A Long Peace Is Threatened in Israel Attack,” *The New York Times*, August 19, 2011, accessed October 8, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/20/world/middleeast/20egypt.html?_r=0.

²⁷⁸ Jacoby, “Israel's Relations with Egypt and Turkey,” 33.

when the country saw a dramatic increase in the number of African migrants crossing the Israeli border following the beginning of the Arab uprisings.²⁷⁹

In brief, from an Israeli perspective, Egypt's incremental instability and inability to provide security in the Sinai Peninsula led to proliferation of local and international radical and terrorist groups. This situation increased Israel's anxiety as its consequences would lead to direct security threats for the country.

3.2.5. Economic concerns

Given that "a reciprocal relationship exists between expectations of peace and the development of a high degree of economic integration,"²⁸⁰ the opposite is also a valid assumption - the fewer expectations there are of peace, the less development there is in economic integration. In other words, an insecure environment, instability, and political uncertainties in the region have always been important players in diminishing economic relations, including energy exports, trade, and investment.²⁸¹ Accordingly, following the ousting of Mubarak, one of Israel's concerns was a constant deterioration of the economic relations with Egypt.²⁸² For Israel, establishing economic relations with regional countries has been already more difficult due to boycotts against Israel.²⁸³ To top this off, Israel would face the negative effects of the economic policies of the new Islamist regimes coming to the power in the train of the Arab uprisings.

Moreover, Israel was worried about the possibility of the closure of the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping. These sea lines are of vital importance for

²⁷⁹ Shira Rubin, "Sharp rise in African migration into Israel from Egypt," *The Times of Israel*, May 31, 2012, accessed August 16, 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/african-immigration-into-israel-from-egypt-more-than-tripled-this-year/>.

²⁸⁰ Jervis, "Realism," 985.

²⁸¹ Anthony H. Cordesman, "Stability and Instability in the Middle East," *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Report*, (May 14, 2001).

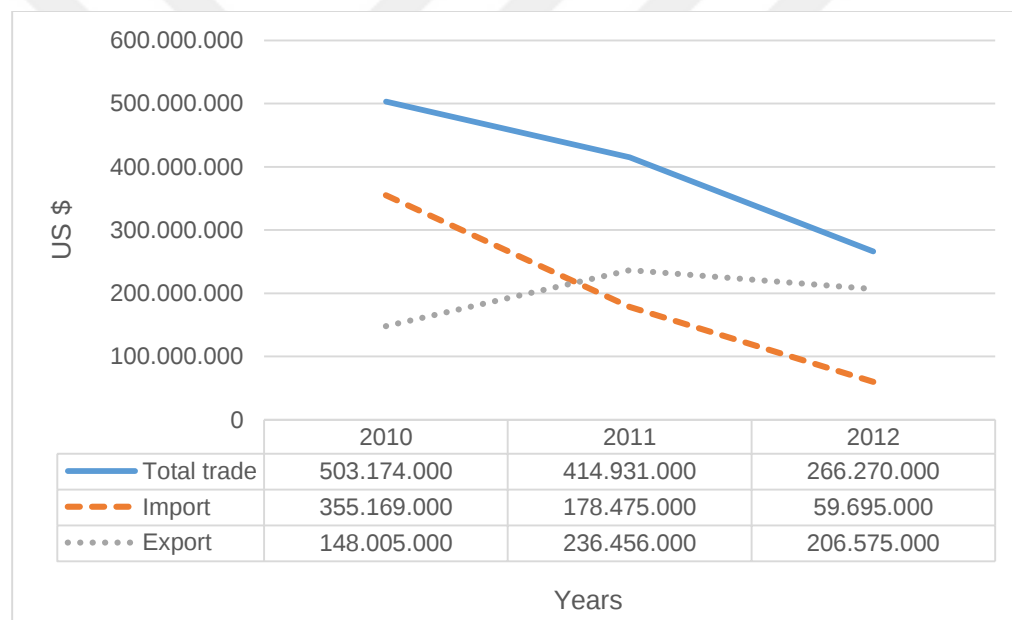
²⁸² Berti, "Israel and Arab Spring," 140.

²⁸³ Feiler, *From boycott to economic cooperation: The political economy of the Arab boycott of Israel*, (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 1998).

Israel's economic well-being, as about ninety percent of the country's trade is via the Mediterranean.²⁸⁴ The security of these areas is also crucial. In this sense, Israel worried more when Egypt opened the Suez Canal to Iranian military vessels, as this would allow Iran to supply its Mediterranean allies, namely Hezbollah and Hamas.²⁸⁵

Combining the consequences of all these realities from increasing uncertainty in the region to the exclusivist Islamist manners in economy directly reflected economic rates. It is evident that trade rates between Israel and Egypt started to decline when the uprisings started in Egypt in 2011, and continued to decline when the Muslim Brotherhood came to the power (see, Graph 3.2).

Graph 3.2. Israeli Trade with Egypt 2010-2012



Source: *UN Comtrade Database*

Israel worried because, in addition to uncertainty in the new Islamist government's foreign and economic policies, public opinion was opposed to any kind of relations with Israel, including in the energy sector. As mentioned in Tami Amanda Jacoby's article, a research poll conducted in October of 2011, showed that "73 percent of

²⁸⁴ Inbar, "Israel's National Security," 66.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 67.

Egyptians were opposed to gas exports to Israel; only 9 percent said they approved.”²⁸⁶ Similar to the peace treaty that was to become subject to the people, the energy issue would also be subjected to the criticism of the Egyptian people, who had already accused the government of selling oil and natural gas to Israel below market price. Moreover, continuous attacks on the gas pipelines between Egypt and Israel have justified Israel’s concerns over the future of energy ties with Egypt. Given the fact that Israel is an energy-dependent country, developments in the energy-holder Arab neighborhood would immediately influence the energy sector in Israel.

If one looks specifically at influences of these realities on Israel-Egypt economic ties, it is not hard to understand pertinent concerns of Israel about the future political and economic landscape of Egypt, considering instability, low economic growth, and the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.²⁸⁷

3.3. Military Coup in Egypt, Backspin with Israel

While the exposed face of the developments misrepresented Egyptian politics, such as making it seem as if the Egyptian public was now enjoying democratic rights, for many, right below the surface was the fact that ‘Islamists hijacked the revolution.’ Some groups were displeased with the ongoing situation in the country because they believed that the Morsi administration was trying to first consolidate their power instead of focusing on solving the deep-rooted structural problems of the country. In fact, solving these social, demographic, and economic problems was difficult to do at the speed desired by the masses. In the end, the expectations of the people were unfulfilled, and new protests arose in Egypt against the MB. Yet, ignorance of the Morsi administration to the protests displeased people, provoked greater reactions, and opened the way for the eventual military coup.

In the face of ongoing protests against the MB administration, the military sent a 48-hour ultimatum to Morsi. Due to his persistent claim that he was the elected president

²⁸⁶ Jacoby, “Israel’s Relations with Egypt and Turkey,” 31.

²⁸⁷ Feiler, “The economic implications of the Arab Spring,” 120.

and would not step down, on July 3rd the military, under the head of General el-Sisi, seized control of the government and announced that it had suspended the constitution and presented a road map intended to guide a transition period. In the following period, the MB was suppressed in all areas. Moreover, the group was declared to be a “terrorist organization.”²⁸⁸ Though not an official figure, media channels asserted that around 40 thousand MB members were arrested,²⁸⁹ and hundreds of MB members were sentenced to death.²⁹⁰ The fall of Muslim Brotherhood meant not only a change in the country’s political equation, but also a blow to political Islam.²⁹¹

3.3.1. Reconstruction of new-old actor: the Egyptian military

At the same time, the process of reconstruction of state institutions by new-old elements continued at full steam. In January 2014, a new constitution was accepted with an affirmative vote of 98 percent of voter after the referendum. In the presidential elections in May, Abdul Fattah el-Sisi was elected as the new president of Egypt with the 97 percent of votes. Sisi is who known as a secular military man “effectively sided with Israel against the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas,” as were previous leaders.²⁹² With his rise to power and the establishment of the new–old Egyptian regime, the Egyptian military started to take determined action against growing threats to national security and stability of the country. In addition, Sisi put a premium on the peace agreement with Israel. Moreover, he presented the relation

²⁸⁸ “Egypt Declares Muslim Brotherhood a Terrorist Group,” *The Guardian*, December 25, 2013, accessed July 10, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/25/egypt-declares-muslim-brotherhood-terrorist-group>.

²⁸⁹ “President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi Fails to Bring Enough Voters to the Ballot Box,” *Economist*, May 31, 2014, accessed July 28, 2014, <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21603071-president-abdel-fattah-al-sisi-fails-bring-enough-voters-ballot-box>.

²⁹⁰ “Court confirms Egypt Muslim Brotherhood death sentences,” *BBC News*, June 21 2014, accessed September 25, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27952321>.

²⁹¹ Rabi, “Egypt’s ‘Second Revolution.’”

²⁹² David D. Kirkpatrick, “As Egyptians Grasp for Stability, Sisi Fortifies His Presidency,” *The New York Times*, October 7, 2014, accessed September 25, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/08/world/as-egyptians-grasp-for-stability-sisi-fortifies-his-presidency.html?_r=0.

between Egypt and Israel “as a model” for Israeli-Palestinian peace at the Davos Economic Forum in 2015.²⁹³ In brief, it is commonly argued that he has been “following in the footsteps of Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak” in terms of Egyptianization, the authoritarian system and security interests coinciding with Israel.²⁹⁴ Due to his apparent Israeli sympathies, before the presidential elections, Muslim Brotherhood supporters alleged that he was Jewish.²⁹⁵

The military has always been one of the most important actors in Egyptian internal and foreign affairs. No modification can be realized either in the political structure or in the foreign relations without the intervention of the Egyptian military. Indeed, all Egyptian presidents, from Mohammed Naguib and Nasser to Anwar Al-Sadat and Mubarak, were military men, and so it is said that, “while the president governed, the military ruled.”²⁹⁶ In addition to being well-integrated in to political system, the military also controls approximately thirty percent of the Egyptian economy through a considerable variety of commercial enterprises.²⁹⁷ Considering the role of the military in the country, Israel would not have to worry about the future of its relations with Egypt as long as it has good connections with the military structure.

With the demise of the Muslim Brotherhood and recapturing of power by the Egyptian military, followed by the rise of Sisi to power, feelings of anxiety were reduced and replaced instead by complacency in Israel, as Egyptian army has brought the country into closer identification with Israel’s perception of threat regarding the MB and its Palestinian branch, Hamas, along with the security situation in Sinai.

²⁹³ Sievers, “Egyptian-Israeli Roller Coaster,” 1.

²⁹⁴ Susser, “Egypt after Morsi’s Ouster: Democracy without Democrats?” *Tel Aviv Notes*, 7:3 (2013).

²⁹⁵ Khaled Diab, “Al-Sisi, the Jew?” *Haaretz*, May 8, 2014, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.589552?=&ts=1480057696505>.

²⁹⁶ John R. Bradley, *After the Arab Spring: How Islamists Hijacked the Middle East Revolts*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 77.

²⁹⁷ Susser, “Democracy without Democrats?”; Rabi, “Egypt’s ‘Second Revolution.’”

3.3.2. Fight against terrorism in the Sinai and Gaza

Morsi's ouster was analyzed within the framework of the Sinai security by Israel as it is "inherently dependent on the [Egyptian] military's ability" to provide security.²⁹⁸ From an Israeli perspective, fulfilment of this ability seemed more probable with Sisi, who has been "aware of the advantages of military coordination with Israel" by reason of his previous positions as the head of Egyptian intelligence and defense minister.²⁹⁹ For the military and Sisi, security cooperation with Israel has been serving Egypt's interest, and Egyptian society also realized this in time.³⁰⁰

In the wake of the military coup, the Sinai Peninsula has again become the ground for "tactical cooperation" and convergent "strategic interest."³⁰¹ Sisi attempted to strengthen security in the northern Sinai by working within the restrictions presented by the current circumstances.³⁰² Thereupon, Israel allowed Egypt to deploy more troops, tanks, and helicopters in central and eastern Sinai as stipulated in the 1979 treaty. This new configuration of the Egyptian army gave them the upper hand over terrorist groups in the Sinai Peninsula, most notably Ansar Beit al-Maqdis. According to the *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, the number of terrorism-related deaths in Egypt for the first seven months following the military coup surpassed that of the 1990's, the country's previously deadliest years related to terrorism.³⁰³ This led some terrorists to leave the Sinai, since they themselves feared attacks.³⁰⁴ The re-

²⁹⁸ Rabi, "Egypt's 'Second Revolution.'"

²⁹⁹ Ephraim Kam, "The Election of Abd al-Fatah el-Sisi as President of Egypt," *INSS Insight* 557 (June 3, 2014).

³⁰⁰ Mira Tzoreff, "What's Behind al-Sisi's Cold Shoulder Towards Hamas?" *Tel Aviv Notes* 8: Special Edition 2 (2014).

³⁰¹ Amos Harel, "Ties between Israel and Egypt only getting stronger, despite regional tension," *Haaretz*, September 8, 2013, accessed May 12, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium-1.545682>.

³⁰² Ronen, "The escalating jihadist terror in the Sinai Peninsula," 314.

³⁰³ Michele Dunne and Scott Williamson, "Egypt's Unprecedented Instability by the Numbers," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 24, 2014, accessed May 5, 2016, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/03/24/egypt-s-unprecedented-instability-by-numbers-pub-55078>.

³⁰⁴ Yaari, "The New Triangle."

emergence of security in the Sinai also brought about “safety of shipping through the Suez Canal” for both sides.³⁰⁵

As Sisi has viewed the MB and Hamas as terrorist organizations, it seemed quite promising he would promote cooperating with Israel in the field of security and political Islam.³⁰⁶ Following the military’s ascension to the power, Egypt destroyed many “smuggling tunnels under the Rafah border” and prevented “the transform of fuel to the Gaza Strip.”³⁰⁷ Moreover, the closure of the Gaza-Sinai border by the Egyptian army reached “a far greater extent in the past two years under Mubarak.”³⁰⁸ All these actions of military rule in Egypt not only pleased Israel, but also Israel encouraged them to be more proactive against terrorists.

In terms of the easing the tensions between Israel and Hamas, the Sisi government also played a role. To end the 2014 Gaza War, Egypt put in effort by coordinating with Israel.³⁰⁹ Egypt also again closed the Rafah crossing, claiming that Hamas was supporting terrorists in the Sinai.

In short, radical Islamist groups based in the Sinai and other political Islamist groups, such as the MB in Egypt and its outside branch Hamas, were early on added to the Sisi administration’s list of priority problems. In this regard, as a result of Egypt’s unprecedented campaign against terrorism in the Sinai and its pressure on Hamas, security cooperation between Israel and Egypt have reached to noticeable levels.³¹⁰

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Kam, “The Election of Abd al-Fatah el-Sisi.”

³⁰⁷ Harel, “Ties between Israel and Egypt.”

³⁰⁸ Yossi Alpher, “Revolutionary events in Egypt: ramifications for Israel,” *Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Center (NOREF)*, (August 2013).

³⁰⁹ Sievers, “Egyptian-Israeli Roller Coaster,” 5.

³¹⁰ Yaari, “The New Triangle.”

3.3.3. Energy cooperation

One of the most important development in the changing nature of the relations between Israel and Egypt was natural gas sales from Israel to Egypt. Provocations of the gas pipelines in the Sinai transporting Egyptian gas to Israel under the Morsi period were eliminated by increasing security in the Sinai. Additionally, Israel and Egypt reached an agreement in March 2015, procuring natural gas “from offshore Israeli Tamar field to a private group of Egyptian investors.”³¹¹ Moreover, there were discussions over whether the gas from the Tamar field could pipe to Egyptian liquefaction plants in order to reach to European markets.³¹² When it comes to the reaction of the Egyptian population towards such extensive economic cooperation, it can easily be said that public opposition has seen relative decreased.³¹³

To sum up, Israel’s regional geopolitical calculations did not, after all, need to change course. Instead, they reached the hey-day of Mubarak times; they crowned this period of relations turning back the clock to a golden age with the exchange of the ambassadors in June, 2015.

3.4. Conclusion

In brief, this chapter presents the developments in Egypt in the post-Mubarak era, focusing on the country’s relations with Israel. It intends to demonstrate that, with the change in status quo after 1979 in terms of political, religious, and social establishments, certitude morphed into gripping anxiety for Israel, a state that endured until the Egyptian military took power back from the Islamists in July 2013.

In order to comprehend Israeli discourse and policies, having a solid knowledge of the facts on the ground is of capital importance. However, this chapter does not only

³¹¹ Sievers, “Egyptian-Israeli Roller Coaster,” 7.

³¹² Mohamed Adel, “Government studies importing gas from Israeli Tamar field,” *Daily News Egypt*, June 22, 2015, accessed November 26, 2016, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2015/06/22/government-studies-importing-gas-from-israeli-tamar-field/>.

³¹³ Sievers, “Egyptian-Israeli Roller Coaster,” 1.

describes the developments in Egypt. Rather, this part tries to clarify Israeli threat perceptions in the face of these developments, which have great potential to upset the regional balance and thereby worsen the state of regional strategy for Israel. It is also showed that the balances in Egypt reverted back and Israel's perceptions changed with the military coup. All these developments and Israeli threat perceptions pave the way to the perspective of defensive realism in the country's policies.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Egypt has strategic significance for Israel in various spheres. More importantly, however, the core of relations between Israel and Egypt has been based primarily on security concerns. Considering Israel's strategic sensitivity on these issues, it is evident that any ripple in the dynamics in Egypt has a potential to affect Israel's foreign policy choices and its security strategies. Taking a longer view about this potential, Israel has preferred to adopt defensive policies. Thus, Israel did not neglect the developments in Egypt, rather it monitored carefully, but it did not give military or rhetorical reaction.

CHAPTER 4

ISRAELI LEADERSHIP DISCOURSE ON EGYPT IN THE POST-MUBAREK ERA

A new Middle East, but not the one we wished for.

Amos Harel³¹⁴

Israeli leadership, including the security establishment, devoted a great deal of attention to the repercussions of the Egyptian revolution and the process in its aftermath on Israel. Their concern was multifaceted, extending in particular to the bilateral relations and the regional balance of power. To be able to analyze the Israel's position in the face of these dramatic developments after Mubarak, the country's perceptions, objectives, and policies should be fully examined. This chapter endeavors to examine them in lights of the discourse of Israeli leaders.

First and foremost, understanding the Israeli perception of threat plays a great part in explaining the country's approach to the issue. Be that as it may, Israel's strategic objectives significantly matter in determining its policies. Taken together, they represent the country's stance towards post-Mubarak Egypt. Each is examined under the respective contexts, regarding the Mubarak's fall, the MB's rise to power, the threat of Hamas, questioning of the peace treaty, insecurity in the Sinai, and economic concerns. Statements made by Israeli leaders are analyzed chronologically within these contexts. This makes it possible to more clearly see Israel's intensifying anxiety

³¹⁴ Amos Harel is one of Israel's leading media experts on military and defense issues.

over time regarding each issue. Moreover, it is easier to trace Israeli objectives and policies in the face of perceived threats.

Before proceeding to Israel's comments on post-Mubarak Egypt, looking at the state's general perspective concerning the regional uprisings may be helpful in establishing a base for its negative perceptions. First of all, the use of the term 'Arab Spring'³¹⁵ was discussed in Israel among state institutions, military establishment, and many Israeli academics and commentators who did not perceive the events as a positive opportunity for either the region or Israel. The military intelligence body of the IDF officially rejected the term, claiming it to be misleading, and decided instead to use the phrase 'the regional upheaval.'³¹⁶ Minister of Strategic Affairs Moshe Ya'alon also said that "the event is dramatic and historic and will be given a name, but not the Arab spring."³¹⁷ Former head of military intelligence Amos Yadlin agreed that "the pair of words 'Arab spring' did not properly describe the phenomenon."³¹⁸ Some started to label the phenomenon in question "Arab Winter"³¹⁹ and "Islamist Winter."³²⁰

Anxiety in Israeli foreign policy has existed since the very beginning of the uprisings in the Middle East, despite the optimistic perspective of some political

³¹⁵ The term 'spring' originates from the 'Spring of Nations' of 1848 in Europe.

³¹⁶ Harel and Issacarov, 2011.

³¹⁷ Lion Lehrs, "Egyptian Plague or Spring of Youth? The Israeli Discourse regarding the Arab Spring," *Mitvim - The Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies*, 2013, 1.

³¹⁸ Amos Yadlin, "The Arab Uprising One Year On," in "One Year of the Arab Spring: Global and Regional Implications," ed. Yoel Guzansky and Mark A. Heller, *INSS Memorandum* 113 (Mach 2012): 11.

³¹⁹ For specific examples, see: Philip Gourevitch, "The Arab Winter," *The New Yorker*, December 28, 2011, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/the-arab-winter>; Richard Spencer, "Middle East review of 2012: the Arab Winter," *The Telegraph*, December 31, 2012, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/9753123/Middle-East-review-of-2012-the-Arab-Winter.html>.

³²⁰ For instance, Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Yoav Galant said that "the Arab Spring might turn out to be a long and cold Islamic winter." See also: Schenker, "Islamist Winter"; Tamara Cofman Wittes, "Learning to Live with the Islamist Winter," *Foreign Policy*, July 19, 2012, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/07/19/learning-to-live-with-the-islamist-winter/>.

commentators.³²¹ However, in parallel with the upheavals throughout the region and their chaotic repercussions, positive assessments of possible outcomes were eradicated in Israel. Instead, Israel saw an increase in anxiety due to regional instability and uncertainty. In the opening session of the Knesset in October 2011, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the Members of Knesset (MK) on the regional issues in detail and delivered pointed messages on the Israeli position:

If I had to summarize what will happen in our region, I would use two terms: instability and uncertainty... In the face of the uncertainty and the instability before us we need two things: power and responsibility.³²²

4.1. Egyptian Revolution and Israel's Strategic Silence

When the uprisings spread to Egypt, anxiety among Israeli leadership increased. Considering Egypt's regional position and strategic importance for Israel, Avi Shlaim said that "Israel is especially scared about Egypt" because it was "scared to lose its privileged position" in the face of the Egyptian revolution.³²³ Moreover, Egypt, with a population of more than eighty million could have extensive impact on the direction the Arab uprisings would take in the Middle East, and could create "a domino effect," as stated by the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee's Chairman Shaul Mofaz.³²⁴ Likewise, as stated by different political commentators, including Netanyahu, Barak, and Lieberman, developments in Egypt were considered to be an 'earthquake,' which could spread to entire region, including the Palestinian

³²¹ For example, Netanyahu gave a speech addressing to the Knesset in February 2011: "It is obvious that an Egypt that fully embraces the 21st century and that adopts these reforms would be a source of great hope for the entire world, the region and for us." See, "PM Netanyahu addresses the Knesset: The situation in Egypt," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, February 2, 2011, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2011/Pages/PM_Netanyahu_addresses_Knesset_situation_Egypt_2-Feb-2011.aspx.

³²² "PM Netanyahu addresses opening of Knesset winter session," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, October 31, 2011, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2011/Pages/PM_Netanyahu_opening_Knesset_winter_session_31-Oct-2011.aspx.

³²³ Joffe, "Arab risings and the Israel-Palestine conflict."

³²⁴ Rebecca Anna Stoil, "EU officials meet in Knesset, but eyes are on Egypt," *The Jerusalem Post*, February 2, 2011, accessed October 30, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/EU-officials-meet-in-Knesset-but-eyes-are-on-Egypt>.

territories. Therefore, as remarked by Ely Karmon, an expert on Israel-Egypt relations, “the way Egypt will change and develop in the near future is the main strategic issue for Israel.”³²⁵

Netanyahu predicted three possible futures for the developments in Egypt, which were (i) “Egyptians may choose to embrace the model of a secular reformist state with a prominent role for the military;” (ii) “the Islamists exploit the influence to gradually take the country into a reverse direction - not towards modernity and reform but backward;” and (iii) “Egypt would go the way of Iran, where calls for progress would be silenced by a dark and violent despotism.”³²⁶ From this point of view, it can be said that Netanyahu did not believe that there could be progress with the Islamists, but rather only with the military. Based on this assumption, Israel was very anxious.

Despite experiencing high anxiety, Israel was extremely cautious in issuing official statements from the very beginning. At the start of the weekly cabinet meeting on January 30, 2011 Prime Minister Netanyahu said:

We are anxiously monitoring what is happening in Egypt and [elsewhere] in our region... I also held consultations with Defense Minister Ehud Barak, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman and with Israeli intelligence officials. Our efforts are designed to continue and maintain stability and security in our region. I remind you that the peace between Israel and Egypt has endured for over three decades and our goal is to ensure that these relations continue. Of course, at this time, we must show maximum responsibility, restraint and sagacity and, to this end, I have instructed my fellow ministers to refrain from commenting on this issue. Naturally,

³²⁵ “Mideast Report: Isolating Israel,” *CBN News*, September 14, 2011, accessed September 21, 2016, <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/insideisrael/2011/september/mideast-report-september-2011/?mobile=false>.

³²⁶ “Address by PM Netanyahu to the European Friends of Israel Conference,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, February 7, 2011, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2011/Pages/PM_Netanyahu_European_Friends_Israel_7-Feb-2011.aspx.

we are also holding consultations in the appropriate government forums.³²⁷

This statement demonstrates Israel's primary perception of the developments in Egypt. Israel's anxiety in the face of the events was mentioned by the country's prime minister himself. Instead of reacting, Netanyahu declared the country's policy as 'wait and see,' or, in his words, 'monitoring.'³²⁸ Israel's policy of 'strategic silence' can be seen from Netanyahu's strict warning to all ministers and government officials to keep a low profile and refrain from commenting on the current issues in Egypt. From this we can also see who the main decision-makers in the Knesset were. Additionally, Israel's main objectives can also be found in this same statement: to 'continue and maintain stability and security.'

Following the order of silence, an Israeli general said: "Yes, we are very, very worried about the situation."³²⁹ Sievers explained the reason behind why Netanyahu's imposition a policy banning on Israeli officials to make unauthorized public comments about Egypt in a way that "every Israeli pronouncement about Egypt would inevitably have been played up and picked apart by an Egyptian media that had become both hyper-nationalistic and deeply sensitive to foreign criticism after Mubarak's fall."³³⁰ The reasons behind Israeli silence can again be found in the statements of Netanyahu himself:

All of us know one thing - that ultimately, the people of Egypt are those who will decide their own fate. But Israel cannot profess a neutrality as

³²⁷ "PM Netanyahu on the situation in Egypt," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, January 30, 2011, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2011/Pages/PM_Netanyahu_situation_Egypt_30-Jan-2011.aspx.

³²⁸ The foreign ministry proved this close monitoring by "conducting status updates on Egypt every couple of hours," and by Lieberman's close contacts with Israel's ambassador to Egypt, Yitzhak Levanon. See: Barak Ravid and News Agencies, "PM Netanyahu: Israel Will Monitor but Not Comment on Egypt Protests," *Haaretz*, January 29, 2011, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/pm-netanyahu-israel-will-monitor-but-not-comment-on-egypt-protests-1.339895>.

³²⁹ Karl Vick, "As Egypt's Crisis Grows, So Do the Anxieties in Israel," *TIME*, January 30, 2011, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2045166,00.html>.

³³⁰ Sievers, "Egyptian-Israeli Roller Coaster," 3.

to the outcome. Because above all, we want the Egyptian government to remain committed to the peace with Israel.³³¹

It is seen that Israeli policies were determined by its foreign policy objectives regarding Egypt and the region - maintaining the status-quo of the regional balance of power - which is largely dependent upon the peace treaty.

Newspaper headlines went against Netanyahu's order of silence to officials and in clearly reflecting the general perception in the country with titles like "A 30-Year Step Backward," "What Frightens Us," "All Alone,"³³² and "Fire on the Nile."³³³ Another unmistakable indication of Israeli fear is that Israelis, including diplomatic dependents, were evacuated from Egypt on an emergency flight; furthermore, the Israeli government warned its citizens against travel to Egypt.³³⁴ In addition to taking precautionary measures for its citizen, Israel was cautious on strategic level. The governmental and security officials held "urgent consultations" and "lengthy strategy sessions, assessing possible scenarios of a post-Mubarak Egypt."³³⁵ Regarding a post-Mubarak era, IDF Chief of General Staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi explained that "the quiet [in Israeli security realm] is fragile, and the security reality can easily change."³³⁶ Therefore, Israel prepared itself for the worst-case scenario.³³⁷ This

³³¹ "Address by PM Netanyahu to the Conference of Presidents of Major North American Jewish Organizations," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, February 16, 2011, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2011/Pages/PM_Netanyahu_Conference_Presidents_16-Feb-2011.aspx.

³³² Vick, "As Egypt's Crisis Grows."

³³³ Broadcasts were reported under this title in the state-funded Israel Radio.

³³⁴ Josef Federman, "Israel watches Egypt uprising with fear," *Washington Times*, January 29, 2011, accessed September 21, 2016, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/jan/29/israel-watches-egypt-uprising-fear/>.

³³⁵ "Israel 'fears' post-Mubarak era," *Al Jazeera*, January 31, 2011, accessed October 31, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/01/201113177145613.html>.

³³⁶ Yaakov Katz, "Ashkenazi: Unrest could change our security reality," *The Jerusalem Post*, 1 February 2011, accessed June 16, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Ashkenazi-Unrest-could-change-our-security-reality>.

³³⁷ Inbar, "Arab Uprisings and Israel's National Security," 8.

scenario was illustrated by Yaakov Amidror, former head of the Israel Defense Forces' Research and Assessment Directorate, in the following metaphor,

We need to understand that we are living on a volcano. Conditions can change from today until tomorrow. We must ask ourselves, what is the worst-case scenario? We are on thick ice, but even that melts eventually.³³⁸

Considering the precarious nature of events, Shaul Mofaz suggested Israel “not interfere with what is happening in Egypt,” but at the same time review their strategy on a national level.³³⁹ Netanyahu also agreed to not interfering with, but just watching the events in Egypt unfold as an Israeli strategy following the end of the thirty-year Mubarak regime:

We must also humbly recognize the truth - that these immense revolutions, these dramatic changes, this earthquake - none of this is about us... But I will say one thing: we are in a turbulent situation. In such situations we must look around with our eyes wide open. We must identify things as they are, not as we'd like them to be. We must not try to force reality into a preconceived pattern. We must accept that a huge change is taking place, and while it is happening - keep a watchful eye. In this reality, Israel must fortify its might. We must maintain our security. We must strive for a stable peace with determination, caution, responsibility, and above all, with watchful eyes that recognize reality.³⁴⁰

A ‘watchful eye’ referred to two stances which were not mutually exclusive. First, Israel would not involve itself in events in Egypt, instead it would only try to understand the issue in detail by watching carefully. Second, as mentioned in several other statements, the offices of both the prime minister and that of the foreign minister were closely following the events through close contact with their staff on the ground in Egypt.

³³⁸ Yaakov Lappin, “‘We’re living on a volcano,’ experts warn,” *The Jerusalem Post*, January 28, 2011, accessed December 12, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Were-living-on-a-volcano-experts-warn>.

³³⁹ Katz, “Ashkenazi: Unrest could change our security reality.”

³⁴⁰ “PM Netanyahu addresses the Knesset: The situation in Egypt,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, February 2, 2011.

Indeed, the communication channels between the countries diminished following the Egyptian revolution, and there was almost no contact between the Israeli prime minister's office and the Egyptian leadership after the revolution. Netanyahu's former national security advisor, Uzi Arad, used to visit Egypt "at least once a month," yet the replaced advisor, Yaakov Amidror, did not visit Egypt.³⁴¹ Henceforth, communications between Israel and Egypt were mostly conducted through security and intelligence channels. For Israel, their motivation in maintaining contact with the Egyptian military, particularly SCAF, which was perceived as "Israel's best ally in Egypt,"³⁴² was their intention to preserve "relations with the elements with which a dialogue already exists."³⁴³ However, when the head of Egyptian intelligence Omar Suleiman, who had enjoyed close relations with Netanyahu and had been one of Israel's primary contacts in Egypt, was ousted, the already limited channels of contact between Mossad and the head of Egyptian intelligence or Supreme Military Council (SMC) shrunk further.³⁴⁴ When the Egyptian military took power temporarily before the elections in 2011, Israel's anxiety decreased and over the phone Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak told the chief of SCAF, Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, that "they had a

³⁴¹ Barak Ravid, "Israel's Diplomatic Ties with Egypt Down to Bare Minimum," *Haaretz*, September 12, 2011, accessed October 1, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-s-diplomatic-ties-with-egypt-down-to-bare-minimum-1.383848>.

³⁴² Steven A. Cook, "Sinai in Between Egypt and Israel," Council on Foreign Relations, September 1, 2011, accessed June 16, 2016, <http://blogs.cfr.org/cook/2011/09/01/sinai-in-between-egypt-and-israel/>.

³⁴³ Shlomo Brom, "Egypt after Morsi's Victory in the Presidential Elections," *Strategic Assessments* 15:2 (2012): 25.

³⁴⁴ The main communication line continued between the Israeli head of the diplomatic-security bureau at the Defense Ministry, Amos Gilad, and a few Egyptian SMC and intelligence officials. See: Ravid, "Israel's Diplomatic Ties with Egypt Down to Bare Minimum."

responsibility to prevent any return to that situation.”³⁴⁵ Netanyahu also welcomed this statement from the Egyptian military.³⁴⁶

In truth, as long as the ultimate power in Egypt was the military, Israel did not expect any immediate change in relations. Nonetheless, as time passed the relationship between the two countries deteriorated, contact between Tantawi and Israel evaporated, and Israel began to prefer relying on the US to relay messages to Egypt.³⁴⁷ In other words, it can be said that “it [was] preferable that Israel tackle this issue as well behind the scenes, and not dragged into threats and drastic actions that will damage the delicate relations” with post-Mubarak Egypt.³⁴⁸

Given the circumstances of the period between January of 2011 and July 2013, including uncertainty about future of developments, Israel’s high anxiety and strategic silence, lack of communication between Israel and Egypt, and so on, Israel initially wanted to preserve the status-quo, namely the Mubarak regime. Then, expressed its concerns about the rise of an Islamist power in Egypt, and repercussions of such a development on the region and Israel.

4.1.1. Mubarak as a contributor to regional peace and stability

Since the beginning, Israeli leadership hailing from different ideological groups all called for support for Mubarak. Labor Party MK Binyamin Ben-Eliezer stated his belief that the situation in Egypt would soon calm down and in this regard “all we

³⁴⁵ Isabel Kershner, “As Egypt Calms Down, So Do Israeli Nerves,” *The New York Times*, February 13, 2011, accessed June 16, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/14/world/middleeast/14israel.html>.

³⁴⁶ “PM Netanyahu welcomes Egyptian statement that Egypt will honor peace treaty with Israel,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, February 12, 2011, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2011/Pages/PM_Netanyahu_welcomes_Egyptian_statement_hon_or_peace_treaty_Israel_12-Feb-2011.aspx.

³⁴⁷ Ravid, “Israel’s Diplomatic Ties with Egypt Down to Bare Minimum.”

³⁴⁸ Oded Eran, “Egypt-Israel-United States: Problems on the Horizon?” *INSS Insight* 255 (May 15, 2011): 4.

can do is express our support for Mubarak and hope the riots pass quietly.”³⁴⁹ Amos Harel explained the negative influences of the possible collapse of the Mubarak regime on Israel as endangering the peace treaty with Egypt, “the greatest of Israel’s strategic assets after US support,” which “is likely to bring about changes in the IDF and worsen the Israeli economy,” damaging Israel-Egypt cooperation against Hamas, weakening the Sinai security by ending the presence of international peacekeeping forces there, ceasing “movement of Israeli military submarines and ships in the Suez Canal,” and increasing arms-smuggling to Gaza, freezing all the relations with Israel “if a radical government achieves power, rather than a variation of the current one.”³⁵⁰ These potential outcomes together mean a reassessment of security strategies for Israel along its borders and throughout the region. This is especially true considering that Egypt has one of the most modern militaries in the Middle East. Here, it should be again underscored that Israel’s paramount interest in security is closely linked to Egypt’s internal politics and the prolongation of the Mubarak regime.

In addition to bringing about security concerns, the fall of Mubarak would also leave Israel with few friends in the Middle East,³⁵¹ as it was already an ‘unwanted state’ in the region. If the blow dealt to other authoritarian regimes in the region was followed by one to Egypt, this could lead to greater isolation for Israel. Israel was worried about not only isolation at the state level, but also freer rein given to popular anti-Israeli sentiment in Egypt, something which had been carefully contained by the Mubarak regime. Connecting this issue to Egyptians’ willingness to have peace with Israel, the country’s former ambassador to Cairo, Eli Shaked, wrote in an Israeli newspaper:

³⁴⁹ “Ben-Eliezer: All We Can Do Is Express Support for Mubarak”, *The Jerusalem Post*, January 26, 2011, accessed September 21, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/Ben-Eliezer-All-we-can-do-is-express-support-for-Mubarak>.

³⁵⁰ Amos Harel, “Cairo Tremors Will Be Felt Here,” *Haaretz*, January 30, 2011, accessed November 1, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/cairo-tremors-will-be-felt-here-1.340058>.

³⁵¹ Aluf Benn, “Without Egypt, Israel Will Be Left with No Friends in Mideast,” *Haaretz*, January 29, 2011, accessed December 12, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/without-egypt-israel-will-be-left-with-no-friends-in-mideast-1.339926>.

The only people in Egypt who are committed to peace are the people in Mubarak's inner circle, and if the next president is not one of them, we are going to be in trouble. There can be no doubt that the new regime will seek to deal the peace with Israel a very public blow.³⁵²

Taking together, all these adverse possibilities contingent on the fall of the Mubarak regime, Giora Eiland, a former national security adviser, reflected on Israeli concern about the strategic shift in security planning and the possibility of a war with Egypt, referring to their erstwhile confidence resting on Mubarak's non-engagement with any military confrontation with Israel during Lebanon wars and the intifadas.³⁵³ Israeli President Shimon Peres also praised Mubarak's contribution to peace: "Mubarak's contribution to peace will never be forgotten, I thank him for saving many people's lives by preventing war."³⁵⁴

On the basis of this perspective - that Mubarak was necessary for security and stability in the region - Israel tried to convince the West not to criticize, but to support the Egyptian regime. When Western leaders isolated Mubarak and called for reforms in Egypt, an Israeli official criticized the West by saying, "The Americans and the Europeans are being pulled along by public opinion and are not considering their genuine interests."³⁵⁵ Another senior Israeli official explained the differences between the perceptions and actions of the West and Israel by comparing the importance of Egypt's stability for these two actors: "For the United States, Egypt is the keystone of its Middle East policy; for Israel, it's the whole arch."³⁵⁶ In criticizing the West, Israel sought to convince them "to curb their criticism of Hosni Mubarak

³⁵² Blomfield, "Israel rallies to support of Egyptian regime."

³⁵³ Ethan Bronner, "Israel Shaken as Turbulence Rocks an Ally," *The New York Times*, January 30, 2011, accessed November 1, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/31/world/middleeast/31israel.html>.

³⁵⁴ Omri Efraim, "Peres praises Mubarak for his contribution to peace," *Ynetnews*, February 2, 2011, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4024283,00.html>.

³⁵⁵ Barak Ravid, "Israel Urges World to Curb Criticism of Egypt's Mubarak," *Haaretz*, January 31, 2011, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-urges-world-to-curb-criticism-of-egypt-s-mubarak-1.340238>.

³⁵⁶ Bronner, "Israel Shaken."

to preserve stability in the region.”³⁵⁷ Indeed, Israel was in almost daily contact with the US in order to convince them that Mubarak’s ousting would destabilize the region.³⁵⁸ Furthermore, it was reported that, following the Egyptian revolution, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent secret messages to its ambassadors in more than ten countries, including the US, China, and several European countries, in order to urge them to curb criticism against the Mubarak regime and to convince the world that Egypt’s instability could negatively affect the situation for the entire region.³⁵⁹

Following the attack on the US diplomatic mission in Egypt in September 2012, Lieberman condemned the attack by defining it as an “evil terrorist attacks,” and added that the aim of these attacks were “the West and the entire democratic world.”³⁶⁰ In this statement, Israel’s attempt to pull the West’s attention to the instability in Egypt can be seen. Moreover, in the UN General Assembly, Netanyahu raised the idea that the developments were anti-American and anti-Western as well as an existential threat to Israel:

And the world around Israel is definitely becoming more dangerous... It's determined to tear apart the peace treaties between Israel and Egypt.... It [militant Islam] has poisoned many Arab minds against Jews and Israel, against America and the West. It opposes not the policies of Israel but the existence of Israel.³⁶¹

³⁵⁷ Ian Black, “Egypt protests: Israel fears unrest may threaten peace treaty,” *The Guardian*, January 31, 2011, accessed June 16, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jan/31/israel-egypt-mubarak-peace-treaty-fears>.

³⁵⁸ Kershner, “As Egypt Calms Down, So Do Israeli Nerves.”

³⁵⁹ Atef al-Ghamri, “Some Israelis Mourn Mubarak as Change Looms in Egypt,” *Al Monitor*, May, 2012, accessed September 21, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/fa/politics/2012/05/israel-following-egypts-revoluti.html#ixzz4KutK8UUL>.

³⁶⁰ “Israel condemns attacks on US diplomatic missions,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, September 12, 2012, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2012/Pages/Israel_condemns_attacks_US_diplomatic_missions_12-Sep-2012.aspx.

³⁶¹ “Remarks by PM Benjamin Netanyahu to the U.N. General Assembly,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, September 23, 2011, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2011/Pages/Remarks_PM_Netanyahu_UN_General%20Assembly_23-Sep-2011.aspx.

Based on these arguments, he called for international support:

I think the international community should be very clear to the new government of Egypt that it expects all future governments to abide by the peace treaty. It's been the anchor of stability. It's been the anchor of peace, really, in the Middle East for more than three decades.³⁶²

From an Israeli perspective, the Mubarak regime needed to be supported and preserved due to its moderate policies towards Israel and the West. However, neither Israel's individual support nor its call for international support helped prolong Mubarak's reign. These official and diplomatic reactions did not continue after Mubarak's fall. The reason behind this silence was explained as, Israel did not want "to sound disloyal to Mubarak or supportive of dictatorship."³⁶³ Indeed, more than the fall of its most important regional ally, now for Israel "the harder question is what comes next."³⁶⁴

4.1.2. The Muslim Brotherhood goes the way of Iran, not of democracy

The answer to the question 'what comes next' was clear to Inbar, who claimed that the sole "alternative" to the previous dictators was populist and Islamic politics.³⁶⁵ This regional change was interpreted as the replacement of "secular dictators" with "theocratic dictators."³⁶⁶ In addition to Western and Israeli scholars, Egyptian scholars also warned against turbulence and uncertainty in the upcoming period following from the strengthening of Islamists. Moreover, Milstein believed that the region would witness circumstances under even worse than the executions under

³⁶² "PM Netanyahu addresses the JNF Conference in Jerusalem," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, March 28, 2011, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2011/Pages/PM_Netanyahu_addresses_JNF_Conference_28-Mar-2011.aspx.

³⁶³ Kershner, "As Egypt Calms Down, So Do Israeli Nerves."

³⁶⁴ Karl Vick, "Israel Has Faith Mubarak Will Prevail," *TIME*, January 28, 2011, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2044929,00.html>.

³⁶⁵ Inbar, "Israel's National Security," 60.

³⁶⁶ Schenker, "Islamist Winter," 3.

tyranny, if “the major winners [of the ongoing struggle] would be the region’s extremists.”³⁶⁷ Grippled by these fears, Israel was preoccupied with the presidential elections in Egypt.

Considering the high possibility of the Muslim Brotherhood’s victory in the elections, several statements were broadcast by Israeli leaders, primarily by Netanyahu. During this process, “the military, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the revolutionary youth” became the new actors on the scene of the Egyptian domestic politics and foreign policy.³⁶⁸ Although the Egyptian military and Israel had a strong history of cooperation, the two other newcomers would complicate Israel-Egypt relations. In fact, Vice Prime Minister Moshe Ya’alon explained in an interview that Israel was not as much worried about the youth as the country was about the victory of radical Islamists.³⁶⁹ Rather, Israel was anxious about the rise of the MB to power at the end of the process as they were largely perceived to have an antagonistic stance towards Israel.³⁷⁰ This was the reason behind the state’s fear, particularly when considering that the new regime would not act as a buffer between Israel and the Egyptian general population, 85 percent of which viewed Israel negatively.³⁷¹

Netanyahu had more optimistic views about the change and democracy in the region in the 1990’s. This appears in his book, *A Place among the Nations: Israel and the World*, in which he argued that real peace can be constituted and continued solely with democratic states. However, during the Egyptian revolution, Netanyahu did not think that the time was suitable for democracy in Egypt:

³⁶⁷ Milstein, “A New-Old Middle East,” 22-23.

³⁶⁸ Khani, “Egyptian-Israeli Relations,” 115.

³⁶⁹ Levine, “Interview: Moshe Ya’alon.”

³⁷⁰ David Kirkpatrick and Isabel Kershner, “Israel is Anxiously Watching Egyptian Vote,” *New York Times* May 26, 2012, accessed May 15, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/26/world/middleeast/israel-anxiously-watches-egyptian-election.html>.

³⁷¹ Oren Kessler, “Analysis: Unrest Mars Egypt Army’s Sterling Image,” *The Jerusalem Post*, November 24, 2011, accessed May 15, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Analysis-Unrest-mars-Egypt-armys-sterling-image>.

Democracies make better neighbors, because democracies do not initiate wars. Having said that, I'm not sure the time is right for the Arab region to go through the democratic process. You can't make it with elections, especially in the current situation where radical elements, especially Islamist groups, may exploit the situation. It might take a generation or so.³⁷²

Israel did not believe democratization process would end with the achievements of democratic values, but its exploitation by extremists, as stated by Netanyahu as a possibility:

Israel is a democracy and supports the advance of liberal and democratic values in the Middle East. The advancement of those values is good for peace. But if extremist forces are allowed to exploit democratic processes to come to power to advance anti-democratic goals - as has happened in Iran and elsewhere - the outcome will be bad for peace and bad for democracy.³⁷³

This process of uncertainty was quite worrying for Israel and the possibility of the rise of the MB was not good for Israeli interests. Yet, except for these few humble comments, Israeli officials kept silent, an act which was appreciated by Eli Shaked.³⁷⁴ Peres also expressed their anxiety over the elections and the possibility of the Muslim Brotherhood's victory:

Elections in Egypt are dangerous. Should the Muslim Brotherhood be elected they will not bring peace. Democracy without peace is not a democracy. We fear there will be a change in government without a change in the circumstances which led to this state.³⁷⁵

³⁷² Vick, "Israel Has Faith Mubarak Will Prevail."

³⁷³ "PM Netanyahu comments on situation in Egypt," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, February 1, 2011, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2011/Pages/PM_Netanyahu_situation_Egypt_1-Feb-2011.aspx.

³⁷⁴ Federman, "Israel watches Egypt."

³⁷⁵ Efraim, "Peres praises Mubarak."

To prove that the election of the MB would not bring about peace and democracy, Netanyahu compared the Egyptian Islamists with the radical Islamist powers in the regional countries, such as Iran, Lebanon, and Gaza; and claimed that none of them enjoyed freedom, democracy, or human rights.³⁷⁶ With these historical examples, Netanyahu tried to show that these developments in Egypt would also not reach a democratic end. The country's fear of Islamist powers rose from their experience with other Islamist powers in the region. Likewise, Moshe Ya'alon compared the empowerment of political Islamists in Gaza and Egypt. His statement showed that, from the vantage point of the Israeli leadership, Islamist powers are not democratic and elections do not necessarily bring democracy and democratic parties to the power:

Israel learned a bitter lesson about democracy in the Middle East when Islamist Hamas militants came to power in free elections in Palestinian territories in 2006. Democratic elections don't necessarily make for democratic practices. Hamas exploited the democratic rules of the game ... to impose a non-democratic regime. We believe that you can't reach democracy by elections.³⁷⁷

In the face of ongoing hopes of European countries for reform in Egypt, Israeli leaders advised the world to connect with Egyptians "behind closed doors and secure lines" in order to convince them to "concrete" and "coherent" change in the elections without Islamists.³⁷⁸

Whereas from the Western perspective the Egyptian demonstrations in Tahrir Square and overthrow of the Mubarak's regime were usually regarded as a peaceful revolution in the fashion of "Europe 1989," Israel regarded them as akin to "Tehran

³⁷⁶ "PM Netanyahu addresses the Knesset: The situation in Egypt," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, February 2, 2011.

³⁷⁷ "Senior Israeli: Arabs not ready for democracy", *Daily News Egypt*, December 13, 2011, accessed September 21, 2016, <http://www.dailynewsegyp.com/2011/12/13/senior-israeli-arabs-not-ready-for-democracy/>.

³⁷⁸ "Israel's Barak warns of perils in Egypt elections", *Al Arabiya News*, February 11, 2011, accessed September 21, 2016, <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/02/11/137182.html>.

1979”.³⁷⁹ In an interview Netanyahu defined the situation as akin to an “Iranian Winter.”³⁸⁰ This was a widespread stance in Israeli politics. In this regard, Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin told the delegation during a closing session that:

I fear that in neighboring countries, murderous and oppressive regimes will flourish, that make a mockery of their citizens’ hopes for freedom, just as happened in Iran in 1979... I hope that the recent changes in administrations do not bear prophetic warnings of a ‘new Middle East’ that is more radical and dangerous.³⁸¹

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman moved beyond drawing this comparison, and, in regards to the potential threat emerging from the developments in the political scene in Egypt, said that “the Egyptian issue is much more disturbing than the Iranian problem.”³⁸²

As aforementioned, Israel did not expect any democratic outcome from these uprisings, elections, and emergence of stronger Islamist groups, unlike its European and American counterparts. Indeed, Israel considered their optimistic expectations as “naïve.” In this context, Netanyahu gave a poignant Knesset speech, which included an important clue for understanding the Israeli stance towards the developments in Egypt:

The Middle East is no place for the naïve. I stood on this podium last February, when millions of Egyptian citizens were pouring into the streets of Cairo. Commentators and quite a few members of the Opposition explained to me that we were on the verge of a new era of

³⁷⁹ Janine Zacharia, “Israel wary of transition in Egypt, concerned about regional stability,” *The Washington Post*, February 2, 2011, accessed July 17, 2016, http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/israelworries-about-peace-amid-regional-tumult/2011/02/01/ABZtFbE_story.html.

³⁸⁰ “Netanyahu: ‘Arab Spring’ could turn into ‘Iranian Winter,’” *The Jerusalem Post*, April 20, 2011, accessed November 16, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Netanyahu-Arab-Spring-could-turn-into-Iranian-Winter>.

³⁸¹ Stoil, “EU officials meet in Knesset, but eyes are on Egypt.”

³⁸² Tzvi Ben Gedalyahu, “Lieberman Warns Netanyahu Egypt More Dangerous than Iran,” *Arutz Sheva*, April 22, 2012, accessed October 31, 2016, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/154991>.

liberalism and progress that will wash away the old order... I said that we hope that will happen, but despite all our hopes, the chances are that an Islamist wave will wash over the Arab countries, an anti-West, anti-liberal, anti-Israel and ultimately an anti-democratic wave... They are moving, but they are not moving forward towards progress, they are going backwards.³⁸³

When the MB started to gain strength, Israel's National Security Council, providing strategic assessments to the prime minister and the cabinet, organized a discussion platform under the title of "*The Challenge of the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood and its Offshoots*."³⁸⁴ Even this title elucidates how Israel perceived the rise of the MB: as a challenge. The discussion was concluded with the idea that acknowledging the Obama administration about the real threat posed by the MB.³⁸⁵

Another point that made Israel cautious was the Iranian influence on Egypt. In an interview, Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon expressed concern about the outside influences on Egypt, especially those coming from Tehran.³⁸⁶ An increase in Tehran's influence on Egypt, which already existed even before Mubarak's fall, was considered as constituting a direct security threat by Israel. Netanyahu speculated about the intentions or expectations of Iran regarding Egypt:

The leaders in Tehran want to see an Egypt that is ruled by that same iron despotism that has crushed human rights in Iran for the last three decades... They want an Egypt that will break the peace with Israel - that

³⁸³ "Excerpts from PM Netanyahu's statement at the Knesset," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, November 23, 2011, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2011/Pages/PM_Netanyahu_statement_Knesset_23-Nov-2011.aspx.

³⁸⁴ Gedalyahu, "Israel Security Council: Obama Naive on Muslim Brotherhood," *Arutz Sheva*, January 3, 2012, accessed October 16, 2016, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/151359>.

³⁸⁵ Ryan Jones, "Israel: Obama 'naive' on Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood," *Israel Today*, January 4, 2012, accessed October 16, 2016, http://www.israeltoday.co.il/NewsItem/tabid/178/nid/23071/Default.aspx?topic=article_title.

³⁸⁶ "Deputy FM Ayalon interview on BBC Radio," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, February 14, 2011, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2011/Pages/Deputy_FM_Ayalon_interview_BBC_Radio_14-Feb-2011.aspx.

will join Iran in supporting terrorism and promoting bloodshed throughout the region and in many parts of the world.³⁸⁷

It should be also noted that Israeli leadership considered the new regime under Morsi weaker than the former regime both in terms of security and in buffering anti-Israeli societal sentiment. Therefore, the ‘cold peace’ was set to become even “chillier,” from an Israeli perspective.³⁸⁸

4.1.3. Hamas as the greatest danger

One of the most pressing issues for Israel regarding the influences of the Egyptian revolution on the country’s interests concerned the Palestinian issue. It is known that the Muslim Brotherhood has historically been “a champion of the Palestinian cause.”³⁸⁹ Thereby, under its administration, it was predicted that the MB would act against Israel in order to support the Palestinians. For instance; in May 2011, Egypt decided to open the Rafah border and loosen the siege slightly, if not remove it entirely. Ya’alon expressed the general Israeli view on Egypt’s decision, and Israel’s policy of ‘wait and see’ even in the face of threat from Gaza:

Clearly, Israel is not happy that the Egyptian military regime decided to open the Rafah crossing point without consulting us. As long as the Egyptian security forces check what is going on there and do a good job, we might be satisfied. We have to watch very carefully.³⁹⁰

Besides, with the spread of demonstrations from Egypt to the Palestinian territories, the Palestinians could adopt a “popular violence” and advancement of “their statehood bid without the need for an agreement that would include obligations to

³⁸⁷ “Address by PM Netanyahu to the Conference of Presidents of Major North American Jewish Organizations,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, February 16, 2011, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2011/Pages/PM_Netanyahu_Conference_Presidents_16-Feb-2011.aspx.

³⁸⁸ Inbar, “Israel’s National Security,” 63.

³⁸⁹ Berti, “Israel and Arab Spring,” 142.

³⁹⁰ Levine, “Interview: Moshe Ya’alon.”

Israel.”³⁹¹ Therefore, with this fear of fervor spreading to the West Bank, Israel was quite careful as mentioned by a senior IDF official:

The army has, however, been keeping a ‘watchful’ eye on the West Bank out of concern that Palestinians will launch demonstrations similar to the ones in Egypt and that terrorist groups will try to launch attacks against Israel, which is focused on Egypt. We are being a little more careful these days.³⁹²

The PA President Mahmoud Abbas’s attempt to seek UN membership for a Palestinian state in this period shows that Israel’s concern regarding the Palestinian issue was not worthless. If the West Bank is an issue for Israel, the Gaza Strip is much more worrying as Gaza is under the control of Hamas and the Israeli siege, which prevented the entrance of goods, construction materials, and weapons. Therefore, if given the chance, then “they will now try to get in everything they couldn’t get in before,” according to Yaakov Amidror.³⁹³ On the contrary, Lieberman did not evaluate the issue of the siege within the framework of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but viewed Hamas as a source of danger for the Middle East:

Whoever thinks that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is part of the problems in the Middle East is trying to escape reality. Big picture of the Middle East shows that major points of contention stem from challenges and confrontations within Islamic society. The Arab world is becoming increasingly weakened. At the end of the day, it is clear to everyone, even to the Palestinian Authority, that the greatest danger they are facing is not Zionism, but rather Hamas and Jihad.³⁹⁴

It can be said that Israeli fearful expectations concerning Hamas-MB relations were proved by Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh’s congratulations to Morsi in becoming Egypt’s first Islamist president, “This is a victory for all Arabs and

³⁹¹ Harel, “Cairo Tremors Will Be Felt Here.”

³⁹² Katz, “Ashkenazi: Unrest could change our security reality.”

³⁹³ “Israel ‘fears’ post-Mubarak era.”

³⁹⁴ Jonathan Lis, “Lieberman: Mideast Uprisings Show the Arab World Is Weakening,” *Haaretz*, February 7, 2011, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/lieberman-mideast-uprisings-show-the-arab-world-is-weakening-1.341859>.

Muslims, and this is God's promise to his believers;" while Fatah President in the West Bank Mahmoud Abbas sent a more neutral message, "The president expressed his respect for the choice of the great Egyptian people."³⁹⁵ Another corresponding point was that the balance between the Palestinian branches would change as a consequence of the empowerment of the MB. While President Mahmoud Abbas in the West Bank was supported by the West, Hamas in the Gaza Strip was backed by Islamist and radical powers, such as Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah.³⁹⁶ Therefore, if Hamas's Egyptian brethren came to power, this would also strengthen Hamas.

When Morsi was elected, he raised the issue of the Palestinians in response to Israel's emphasis on the peace treaty:

We carry a message of peace to the world. We emphasize the state of Egypt's commitment to international treaties and agreements. I announce from here that Egypt, its people and presidential institution, stand with the Palestinian people until they regain all their rights [and sovereignty over their land].³⁹⁷

In analyzing these statements, many analysts said that Morsi gave a thinly veiled reference to the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Instead of a direct reference, Morsi's vague statement led analysts to think this might be the case. Morsi's chosen attitude created another uncertainty for the future of relations with Israel. Additionally, Egyptians also thought that the Morsi administration cared more about the Palestinian issue than about domestic problems in Egypt.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁵ "Israel Jittery after Brotherhood Victory in Egypt", *cbs news*, June 24, 2012, accessed October 16, 2016, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/israel-jittery-after-brotherhood-victory-in-egypt/>.

³⁹⁶ Federman, "Israel watches Egypt."

³⁹⁷ Philip Polodsky, "New Egyptian president Morsi calls for unity, peace in first speech," *The Times of Israel*, June 24, 2012, accessed October 16, 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/new-egyptian-president-wants-unity-peace/>.

³⁹⁸ Reena Ninan and Dana Hughes, "Egypt's President Morsi Wins U.S. and Israeli Gratitude in Gaza Deal," *ABC news*, November 21, 2012, accessed October 16, 2016, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/egypts-president-morsi-wins-us-israeli-gratitude-gaza/story?id=17780177>.

4.1.4. The Peace Treaty as an anchor of stability and peace

Prime Minister Netanyahu defined Israel's main policy objectives in the region as preserving "the security of the nation," "the security of our people," and "the security of peace."³⁹⁹ These three areas of security are directly related to the peace treaty with Egypt, as explained in detail earlier. The treaty is significant for the regional balance of power, "particularly over each country's status, role, influence, and ability to affect developments in the region."⁴⁰⁰ In this regard, it can be said that the maintenance of the peace treaty with Egypt is one of Israel's priority objectives. If the treaty is not upheld, the overall picture for Israel could change and the threats would become "much more realistic than before."⁴⁰¹ The vital importance of the treaty for security and stability in the region, and its significance for political and economic affairs, was emphasized by Netanyahu in the US congress. He also gave several historical examples from before the treaty, to emphasize the imminent threats facing Israel should there be no peace treaty:

While Israel will be ever vigilant in its defense, we will never give up on our quest for peace. I guess we'll give it up when we achieve it. Israel wants peace. Israel needs peace. We've achieved historic peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan that have held up for decades. I remember what it was like before we had peace. I was nearly killed in a firefight inside the Suez Canal... Too many Israelis have lost loved ones. I know their grief. I lost my brother. So no one in Israel wants a return to those terrible days. The peace with Egypt and Jordan has long served as an anchor of stability and peace in the heart of the Middle East. This peace should be bolstered by economic and political support to all those who remain committed to peace. The peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan are vital.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁹ "PM Netanyahu at annual meeting with members of the international press in Israel," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, January 11, 2011, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2011/Pages/PM_Netanyahu_international_press_11-Jan-2011.aspx.

⁴⁰⁰ Mahmoud Muhareb, "Israel and the Egyptian Revolution," *Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies (Doha Institute)* Case Analysis (May 2011): 1.

⁴⁰¹ Bronner, "Israel Shaken."

⁴⁰² "Speech by PM Netanyahu to a Joint Meeting of the U.S. Congress," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, May 24, 2011, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2011/Pages/Speech_PM_Netanyahu_US_Congress_24-May-2011.aspx.

Perpetuation of the peace treaty was taken as the main objective in Israeli policy during this process, as the treaty has “great importance and great strategic value for stability in the Middle East,” as stated by Ehud Barak.⁴⁰³ Former defense minister Ben-Eliezer gave a clue as to how such an objective could be realized,

We have to make every effort to keep our relations with the Egyptians as normal as we possibly can. This is an Arab superpower. Who knows what the next government there will look like? We should try, as much as possible, to keep it business as usual.⁴⁰⁴

Shaul Mofaz also expressed his hope in front of the MK and Europeans that “Israel hopes that in spite of the events in Egypt, the peace agreement will be maintained.”⁴⁰⁵ So that this hope might be realized, in May Israeli analysts warned officials that “Israel has an interest in preserving the treaty with Egypt and therefore should refrain from hasty responses to the comments by the presidential candidates,” for the elections that were to be held in September 2011.⁴⁰⁶ These statements proved that, from an Israeli perspective, the country’s objectives and interest came first, before the ideologies or values of other states. Thus, Israel can maintain its relations with every government regardless of their ideological background as long as Israeli interests are met. This attitude can be clearly seen in Netanyahu’s announcement. He stipulated his government’s work even with an Islamic government in Egypt for the maintenance of the peace treaty:

I am willing to work with anyone who will maintain peace, there is no question. Normal relations between Israel and Egypt can certainly be

⁴⁰³ Joel Greenberg, “Israel mulls ties with a changed Egypt,” *The Washington Post*, August 27, 2011, accessed June 16, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/israel-mulls-ties-with-a-changed-egypt/2011/08/25/gIQA3Sc6iJ_story.html.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Stoil, “EU officials meet in Knesset, but eyes are on Egypt.”

⁴⁰⁶ Eran, “Egypt-Israel-United States,” 3.

maintained, even if an Islamist leader wins next month's presidential elections.⁴⁰⁷

When pointing to the elections in Egypt, Netanyahu again expressed his country's "hope that any government elected in Egypt will recognize the value of maintaining the peace," as it is "a strategic asset for both countries" and provides Israel with quiet on its southern border.⁴⁰⁸ The Prime Minister's office also officially declared their respect for the elections referring to the peace treaty:

Israel appreciates the democratic process in Egypt and respects the results of the presidential elections. Israel looks forward to continuing cooperation with the Egyptian government on the basis of the peace treaty between the two countries, which is a joint interest of both peoples and contributes to regional stability.⁴⁰⁹

Additionally, on many platforms, Israel expressed its willingness and intention to preserve the peace treaty with Egypt.⁴¹⁰ Moreover, through the mouth of Prime Minister Netanyahu, Israel made it clear that they wanted to reopen the embassy in Cairo, which was closed after Egyptian protesters stormed the building and burned the Israeli flag.⁴¹¹ In February 2012, an Israeli ambassador to Egypt was appointed,⁴¹² and the peace treaty was first among items emphasized during the credential

⁴⁰⁷ Gabe Fisher, "PM: We'll work with an Islamist president of Egypt so long as peace treaty is respected," *The Times of Israel*, April 24, 2012, accessed October 1, 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-speaks/>.

⁴⁰⁸ "Excerpts from PM Netanyahu's statement at the Knesset," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, December 28, 2011, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2011/Pages/PM_Netanyahu_statement_Knesset_28-Dec-2011.aspx.

⁴⁰⁹ "PMO statement on Egyptian presidential elections," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, June 24, 2012, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2012/Pages/PMO_statement_Egyptian_presidential_elections_24-Jun-2012.aspx.

⁴¹⁰ "PM Netanyahu addresses UN General Assembly," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, September 27, 2012, accessed October 28, 2016, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2012/Pages/PM-Netanyahu-addresses-UN-27-Sep-2012.aspx>.

⁴¹¹ "Mideast Report: Isolating Israel."

⁴¹² Egypt's ambassador to Israel was sent in October 2012. This time difference shows which side is more willing to the normalization of the relations in addition to political stability in the countries.

ceremony, in which new Israeli Ambassador Ya'acov Amitai promised: "I will do everything I can to enhance understanding and to foster cooperation between Israel and Egypt."⁴¹³

In realizing these objectives, Netanyahu called upon the international community to confirm their support in protecting the peace treaty under any Egyptian government.⁴¹⁴ He specifically asked for support from European countries, clarifying Israel's expectation from them:

I don't know what will happen in Egypt. But from Israel's perspective, our interest is clear. Our interest is to maintain the peace that we have enjoyed for three decades. That peace has brought quiet to our southern border and it served the strategic interests of both countries, and brought stability to the region, in fact to the entire Middle East. We expect the international community to be equally clear that it expects any Egyptian government to maintain the peace.⁴¹⁵

When elections were held and Morsi elected as a president in June of 2012, MB members called for abolishment, or at least revision of the treaty. Even though the Egyptian military and SCAF leaders "were determined to maintain the peace treaty and security cooperation with Israel," Islamists pressured them.⁴¹⁶ Nonetheless, Netanyahu repeated this interest in the continuation of the treaty in the letter of congratulations to the new president. According to a senior official, in the letter, Netanyahu conveyed his hope that both countries would observe the peace treaty and emphasized that honoring the agreement would serve both countries' interests as well

⁴¹³ "Israeli ambassador to Egypt presents credentials," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, February 27, 2012, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2012/Pages/Israeli_ambassador_Egypt_presents_credentials_27-Feb-2012.aspx.

⁴¹⁴ "PM Netanyahu comments on situation in Egypt," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, February 1, 2011.

⁴¹⁵ "Address by PM Netanyahu to the European Friends of Israel Conference," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, February 7, 2011.

⁴¹⁶ Rabinovich, *The Lingering Conflict*, 276.

as regional stability and security.⁴¹⁷ A similar letter, including the same messages, was sent by the Israeli President Shimon Peres:

As someone who took part in the process that led to the signing of the peace agreement between your country and mine, I know that both Egypt and Israel see with utmost importance peace and stability in our region as something that serves the interests of all peoples of the region. We look forward to further cooperating with you based on the peace accords signed between us more than three decades ago. Our commitment to preserve and nurture these accords will benefit both our peoples.⁴¹⁸

From all statements, it can be understood that Israel was not inclined towards using harsh rhetoric with Egypt and its new leaders. Rather, it generally tried to preserve its existing relations and interests. With this objective, Israel adopted defensive realist approach during the period of the Egyptian Revolution and Morsi administration.

4.1.5. The Sinai Peninsula as a lawless territory

The changes in the Egyptian political and security arenas accelerated terrorism in the Sinai, in which there was a lack of order and control. As a result, Israeli borders along the Sinai became vulnerable to terrorist attacks. The pipelines carrying natural gas from Egypt to Israel were repeatedly sabotaged by Sinai terrorists. Smuggling of weapons increased in the area, as had been predicted by a former Israeli general Yaakov Amidror:

In the short term, Israel will face increased smuggling activities in the Sinai Peninsula, where the authority of the Cairo government has been further weakened by the unrest.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁷ Barak Ravid and News Agencies, "In Personal Letter, Netanyahu Urges Egypt's Morsi to Honor Peace Treaty with Israel," *Haaretz*, July 1, 2012, accessed October 16, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/in-personal-letter-netanyahu-urges-egypt-s-morsi-to-honor-peace-treaty-with-israel-1.447917>.

⁴¹⁸ Raphael Ahren, "Peres to Morsi: Israelis greatly respect the Egyptian people," *Times of Israel*, July 1, 2012, accessed October 16, 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/peres-to-morsi-all-israelis-greatly-respect-the-egyptian-people/>.

⁴¹⁹ "Israel 'fears' post-Mubarak era."

Moreover, arm-smuggling became un-trackable, and it was reported that Iran provided weapons to Hamas through this region.⁴²⁰ The weakening of the Egyptian regime and the increase in smuggling strengthened terrorist groups in the Sinai. Since these were politically dissatisfied groups, they sought to harm.⁴²¹ They attacked not only gas pipelines, but also both Israelis and Egyptians at different times. On August 18, 2011, a terrorist attack from the Sinai targeted “Israeli civilians on Israeli territory;” in condemning the attack, Defense Minister Barak referred to the necessity of the peace treaty for the security in the Sinai and, indeed, the entire Middle East.⁴²²

Furthermore, thousands of African migrants and Arab militants snuck into Israel through the uncontrolled Sinai; and terrorist groups operated freely in the area.⁴²³ Regarding the African immigrants, Deputy Foreign Minister Ayalon addressed a UNHCR Ministerial meeting, and explained the nature of problems Israel faced due to these infiltrations:

Israel, as a flourishing democracy with a contiguous land access from Africa is facing a growing number of illegal immigrants and asylum seekers arriving in its territory. In a small country such as Israel, it has severe implications on society, economy, demography and security.⁴²⁴

In the face of terrorist penetrations into the country and infiltration of illegal immigrants, Israel adopted defensive measures. One of the most apparent of these

⁴²⁰ Yaakov Katz, “Hamas sets up rocket production line in Sinai,” *The Jerusalem Post*, December 11, 2011, accessed October 16, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Hamas-sets-up-rocket-production-line-in-Sinai>.

⁴²¹ Inbar, “Israel’s National Security,” 65.

⁴²² “Statement by DM Barak on relations with Egypt and situation in the South,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, August 20, 2011, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2011/Pages/Statement_DM_Barak_south_20-Aug-2011.aspx.

⁴²³ “Israel Jittery.”

⁴²⁴ “Dep FM Ayalon addresses UNHCR Ministerial Meeting, Geneva,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, December 8, 2011, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2011/Pages/DepFM_Ayalon_addresses_UNHCR_Meeting_8-Dec-2011.aspx.

measures taken by Israel was the construction a fence along this border.⁴²⁵ In a Knesset speech, Netanyahu explained that the border fence was built in order to protect the national security of the country against the threats posed from the Sinai:

Regarding the terrorist organizations that think we will sit on our hands in the face of their attempts to harm us from the Sinai, they will discover our firm hand. In any event, within less than a year, we will complete the construction of the border fence along our common border with the Sinai. This step is essential in stopping the penetration of terrorists into our territory and in stopping the flood of illegal labor infiltrators into our cities.⁴²⁶

Defensive policies of Israel remained even in the face of direct attacks from the Sinai. Following the August 2012 attack of Sinai terrorists, Netanyahu explained that they were staying “on alert” and he “ordered the closure of the road on the Egyptian border” to block any attack from their “southern border with Egypt.”⁴²⁷ An MFA spokesman condemned the “barbaric attack,” in which fifteen Egyptian policemen were killed, and warned that this and similar attacks were aiming “at shattering the peace agreement” between the two countries, adding that they would continue to cooperate with Egypt “in order to preserve vital interest and ensure security and stability in the region.”⁴²⁸

As a result of the severe security challenges in the Sinai Peninsula, Israel made a tactical change in its policies and allowed Egypt to deploy more military power in the area, including troops, arms, and helicopters, which had been strictly forbidden by

⁴²⁵ Harriet Sherwood, “Israel extends new border fence but critics say it is a sign of weakness,” *The Guardian*, March 27, 2012, accessed October 5, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/mar/27/israel-extends-border-fence-critics>.

⁴²⁶ “Excerpts from PM Netanyahu's statement at the Knesset,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, December 28, 2011.

⁴²⁷ “PM Netanyahu to Cabinet on situation in south,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, March 11, 2012, accessed October 28, 2016, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2012/Pages/PM_Netanyahu_Cabinet_situation_south_11-Mar-2012.aspx.

⁴²⁸ “Israel expresses condolences to Egypt,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, August 6, 2012, accessed October 28, 2016, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2012/Pages/Condolences-to-Egypt-6-Aug-2012.aspx>.

the peace agreement;⁴²⁹ the Egyptian army then launched a major operation against Sinai terrorists.⁴³⁰ Regarding this, Defense Minister Ehud Barak explained this change:

Sometimes you have to subordinate strategic considerations to tactical needs. This is one such time. They will have helicopters and armored vehicles, but no tanks beyond the lone battalion already stationed there.⁴³¹

Given that the Sinai Peninsula was a battlefield in the Israeli-Egyptian wars, any troop movement in the area leads to suspicion. Therefore, the new Egyptian deployment generated a threat perception on the Israeli side. Here, however, Barak clarified that Israel's long-term strategic concerns were always protected. Additionally, he mentioned that one duty of these troops as "to restore order and protect the gas pipeline to Israel."⁴³² It is understood that Israel took new responsibilities on its border with Egypt as a result of the new security challenges in this region.

As a result of the increasing presence of the Egyptian military in the Sinai, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman warned Netanyahu that Israel should be prepared for all possibilities as Israel would become a natural target for Egypt, especially if Egypt canceled the peace treaty.⁴³³ In response to this harsh criticism, Tantawi threatened Israel, stating that:

Our borders are constantly burning, but we do not attack any neighboring country but only protect our borders. If anyone comes close to Egypt's

⁴²⁹ Ronen, "The escalating jihadist terror in the Sinai Peninsula," 313.

⁴³⁰ Anshel Pfeffer, "Barak: Israel Won't Let Egypt Deploy More Troops in Sinai at the Present," *Haaretz*, August 28, 2011, accessed September 21, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/barak-israel-won-t-let-egypt-deploy-more-troops-in-sinai-at-the-present-1.381064>.

⁴³¹ "Springtime in Sinai," *The Economist*, August 27, 2011, accessed October 30, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/node/21526921>.

⁴³² Pfeffer, "Barak: Israel Won't Let Egypt."

⁴³³ Gedalyahu, "Lieberman Warns Netanyahu."

border, we will break their leg. Therefore, our forces must be in a perpetual state of alert.⁴³⁴

Neither Lieberman's claim nor further attacks led Israel to use coercive means against Egypt. Even when an IDF soldier was killed by a terrorist attack on the border between Israel and Egypt in September of 2012, Israel stuck to its defensive policies. In this context, Netanyahu just gave a reference to the "security fence on the border with Sinai," in addition to praising the soldiers.⁴³⁵ On the other hand, Ya'alon accused Egypt of not doing enough to contain terrorism in the peninsula:

I can't say we are satisfied [with Egyptian activity in Sinai] yet. Sinai has become lawless territory. It's a question of Egypt deciding to assert its sovereignty the way it should and acting resolutely against terrorists. I hope that's what will happen. It hasn't happened yet.⁴³⁶

Security threats and defensive measures added another topic to the Knesset's agenda, namely the defense budget. The budget increased at the beginning of 2012,⁴³⁷ but discussions remained in the Knesset. In a meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, the Deputy Chief of Staff Major General Yair Naveh raised the issue of security threats in this region, and announced his position against budget cuts on defense projects, including the construction of the border fence.⁴³⁸ Some analysts similarly believe that "the whole defense establishment will now ask for bigger budgets" because Egypt is no longer "the cooperative partner."⁴³⁹ In discussing the

⁴³⁴ Elhanan Miller, "Egypt's military leader responds to Lieberman with threat of violence," *The Times of Israel*, April 23, 2012, accessed October 31, 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/egyptian-foreign-ministry-seeks-clarifications-for-lieberman-statements/>.

⁴³⁵ "Cabinet communique," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, September 23, 2012, accessed October 28, 2016, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2012/Pages/Cabinet-communique-23-Sep-2012.aspx>.

⁴³⁶ "Egypt's Sinai has become lawless territory, Israeli official says," *Al Arabiya News*, October 25, 2012, accessed September 21, 2016, <https://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/25/245923.html>.

⁴³⁷ "Israel to increase defense budget by \$700m," *Al Jazeera*, January 9, 2012, accessed October 5, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/01/20121961921721933.html>.

⁴³⁸ "Deputy Chief of Staff: Israel facing many security challenges," *The IDF website*, February 13, 2012, accessed October 30, 2016, <http://www.idf.il/1283-14884-EN/Dover.aspx>.

⁴³⁹ Vick, "As Egypt's Crisis Grows."

worst-case scenario with Mubarak's fall, General Amos Yadin also called for a new budget plan for military.⁴⁴⁰ Actually, Israel's security measures, including "the use of drones to monitor what's happening in Sinai" and the transfer of "elite forces to the border to monitor for sudden attacks,"⁴⁴¹ required a larger budget. A larger budget was not for an invalid investment as, thanks to its precautionary measures, Israel did have to block many attacks from the Sinai, even if it could not eliminate them entirely.

4.1.6. Economic and energy issues

As mentioned in the previous chapters, Israel is an energy-dependent country. It supplies forty percent of its natural gas needs from Egyptian sources. Israel feared that instability and insecurity following the regime change in Egypt would alter the nature of economic relations and progressively deteriorate the Israeli energy sector.

Basically, attacks on gas pipelines in the Sinai were a concrete source of anxiety in terms of the natural gas supply to Israel as much as they were also a security concern. Moreover, political cuts to natural gas through repealing the energy agreements were another concern for Israel. For instance, in April 2012, Egypt announced that they had abolished the gas agreement with Israel.⁴⁴² The new Egyptian authorities and public also expressed their belief that the gas deal with Israel under Mubarak was "hurting the country's interests."⁴⁴³ This announcement surprised Israel, and the country's former ambassador to Egypt, Zvi Mazel said:

It's completely political. If there are some problems between the partners they should try to solve it by dialogue. But they have not done it. The

⁴⁴⁰ Al-Ghamri, "Some Israelis Mourn Mubarak."

⁴⁴¹ Tarek Fahmi, "Israeli-Egyptian relations after the June 30 revolution," *Al Arabiya English*, August 13, 2013, accessed December 3, 2016, <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/alarabiya-studies/2013/08/13/Israeli-Egyptian-relations-after-the-June-30-revolution.html>.

⁴⁴² Sherwood, "Egypt cancels Israeli gas contract," *The Guardian*, April 23, 2012, accessed October 30, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/23/egypt-cancels-israeli-gas-contract>.

⁴⁴³ Neil MacFarquhar, "Mubarak Faces More Questioning on Gas Deal with Israel," *The New York Times*, April 22, 2011, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/23/world/middleeast/23egypt.html>.

Egyptians just announced in a kind of surprise to us that they are nullifying the [gas] agreement.⁴⁴⁴

On the other hand, both Netanyahu and the Egyptian officials opposed this idea and claim that the issue had nothing to do with political developments; rather, it was argued that the issue was a disagreement over higher prices.⁴⁴⁵ Be that as it may, it is known that Mubarak was selling gas to Israel with favorable rates for Israel. From this perspective, Israel's concern over economy and energy is understandable. Israel remained silent despite the negative economic influences of the Egyptian revolution since it did not want to take the risk of losing the benefits of economic cooperation with Egypt, such as having a natural gas supplier and one of the rare economic partner in the region.

It is worth mentioning that since Israel's total industry export with Arab countries is only a small percentage, Israel silently searched for new trade partners and energy allies to ensure its political economic future instead of shelling out rhetorical reaction and harsh criticism against the developments and the new Islamist powers. Even though the scope of bilateral economic relations between Egypt and Israel is not large in terms of their overall foreign trade, foreign sector in these countries could be affected. Depending on whether instability erupts in the region if the peace treaty is cancelled, foreign investment could leave the Middle East and the US would cut a billion dollars of aid, as stated by Eli Shaked.⁴⁴⁶

Another issue that could affect the Israeli economy regarding the threats in the region was that Israel had to invest in defense outlays. As mentioned by military leaders, the defense budget was one of the topics under discussion concerning the Israeli economy.

⁴⁴⁴ Sheera Frenkel, "For Israel and Egypt, A Relationship under Strain," *npr*, April 27, 2012, accessed October 30, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/2012/04/29/151552657/for-israel-and-egypt-a-relationship-under-strain>.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ "Israel Jittery."

4.2. Sisi as a Partner: Reduced Anxiety

Following Morsi's overthrow through a coup d'état on July 3, 2013, the Egyptian military restored its power, and Sisi was then elected as a president. Following the coup, the trajectory of relations between Israel and Egypt did a U-turn. Israel regarded this development in Egypt as a signal of change in the regional balances in favor of Israel on the issues of the adhesion to the peace treaty, the Sinai security, relations with Hamas, and economic concerns. Correspondingly, Israel appraised these development by supporting the new regime "unequivocally,"⁴⁴⁷ and also urged Western countries to back the new balance of political powers in Egypt.⁴⁴⁸ As the election of Sisi as president of Egypt was welcomed by Israel, Peres and Netanyahu congratulated Sisi, emphasizing the importance of cooperation between the countries.⁴⁴⁹

Thanks to the new Egyptian regime, Israel's aforementioned threat perceptions and strategic concerns have started to decline, even if they have not been eradicated. This is because security interests of both countries are in juxtaposition, which serves Israel's foreign policy objectives regarding Egypt and the region. Like previous periods, the two countries re-established a high level of security cooperation and maintenance of Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai, dismantling of the Gaza tunnels, and intelligence sharing. Thus, Israel once again started to feel there was peace on its borders. It is not exaggeration to say that the bilateral relations reached "unprecedented growth" with the Sisi government.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁷ Mohamed Soliman, "Sisi's New Approach to Egypt-Israel Relations," *The Washington Institute*, accessed December 15, 2016, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/sisis-new-approach-to-egypt-israel-relations>.

⁴⁴⁸ "Israel lobbying U.S., EU to support Egypt's military government," *JTA*, August 19, 2013, accessed May 26, 2016, <http://www.jta.org/2013/08/19/news-opinion/israel-middle-east/israel-lobbying-u-s-e-uto-support-egypts-military-government>.

⁴⁴⁹ "President Peres and PM Netanyahu congratulate Egyptian President-elect al-Sisi," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, June 6, 2014, accessed December 14, 2016, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2014/Pages/President-Peres-and-PM-Netanyahu-congratulate--Egyptian-President-elect-al-Sisi-6-Jun-2014.aspx>.

⁴⁵⁰ Soliman, "Sisi's New Approach to Egypt-Israel Relations."

Meanwhile, when former Israeli Ambassador to Egypt Zvi Mazel frankly expressed his country's positive perception about Sisi, he also called upon fellow Israelis to exercise prudence:

Abdul Fattah El-Sisi is Egypt's strong man right now and has been fighting against radical Islam and against the Muslim Brothers (members of the Muslim Brotherhood). This is very positive both for Egypt, but also for Israel and the entire Middle East... We shouldn't go out on the roofs and cry out in favor of El-Sisi. But what is going on in Egypt is positive for Israel, and you cannot deny it.⁴⁵¹

Sisi substantially changed Egypt's position not only on the MB, but also on Hamas. Taking Israel's anxiety about the Gaza issue into account, Fahmi evaluated the ouster of Morsi in his relation to the Hamas issue, and rightly alleged that "Israel will use the fall of the Brotherhood to curb Hamas."⁴⁵² This became easier with the emergence of Sisi as, thanks to him, Egypt turned back to its former narrative, which was that Hamas is a common regional foe for Egypt and Israel. For their affiliation with the MB, Hamas was also labeled as a terrorist organization. Based on this, Egypt ceased the trafficking of materials by closing the Rafah border and damaging tunnels.⁴⁵³ Moreover, the country's military leaders called for harsh criticism against Hamas via media, for a military strike on Hamas, or for a campaign to delegitimize Hamas.⁴⁵⁴ Furthermore, during the Gaza War in 2014, Egypt sided with Israel.⁴⁵⁵ Within this

⁴⁵¹ Alex Traiman, "What would an El-Sisi presidency in Egypt mean for Israel?" *JNS.org*, January 31, 2014, accessed December 16, 2016, <http://www.jns.org/latest-articles/2014/1/31/what-would-an-el-sisi-presidency-in-egypt-mean-for-israel#.WFOyiYE8XqA>.

⁴⁵² Al-Masry Al-Youm, "Interview: Tarek Fahmy on the Egyptian crisis from Israel's perspective," *Egypt Independent*, August 8, 2013, accessed December 15, 2016, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/interview-tarek-fahmy-egyptian-crisis-israel-s-perspective>.

⁴⁵³ Edyt Dickstein, "A New Role for Egypt: Sisi's Government and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *Harvard International Review* 36:2 (2015), accessed August 18, 2016, <http://hir.harvard.edu/a-new-role-for-egypt-sisis-government-and-the-arab-israeli-conflict/>.

⁴⁵⁴ Yaari, "The New Triangle."

⁴⁵⁵ Patrick Kingsley, "Egypt's decision to side with Israel has cost Gaza dear," *The Guardian*, July 30, 2014, accessed December 16, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jul/30/egypt-siding-israel-cost-gaza-dear>.

environment, some claimed that Egypt was stricter towards Hamas than Israel.⁴⁵⁶ Such pressure, isolation, and the blocking of tunnels to the Sinai “would also loosen Hamas’s grip on Gaza.”⁴⁵⁷ By extension, it can be concluded that the coup in Egypt was for the benefit of Israel regarding the Palestinian issue, and particularly concerning Hamas. In other words, Egyptian foreign policy towards the Palestinian cause as adopted by Sisi has been seen by certain analysts as “a ‘miracle’ for Israel but a disaster for Palestine.”⁴⁵⁸

Whereas Israel considered the new regime as able to buffer Egyptian public’s expectations concerning a solution to the Palestinian cause, it continued to take precautionary measures regarding Egypt’s role in the Palestinian issue and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. For instance, Israel gave “Jordan a greater voice” with the aim of “replacing Egypt’s leading role in the peace process.”⁴⁵⁹

On the other hand, Israel persisted in pursuing upholding of the peace treaty when Sisi came to power. At the very first opportunity, Peres voiced that: “Israel is committed to maintain the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt and to strengthening the cooperation between our nations.”⁴⁶⁰ Netanyahu also talked to Sisi on phone and, in similar words, noted that “the strategic importance of the ties between the states and of upholding the peace agreement.”⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁶ Smadar Perry, “Al-Sisi is not Israel’s Friend, He’s a Partner,” *Ynet news*, August 13, 2014, accessed May 15, 2016, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4557901,00.html>.

⁴⁵⁷ Yaari, “The New Triangle.”

⁴⁵⁸ Hanine Hassan, “Sisi’s foreign policy: A ‘miracle’ for Israel but a disaster for Palestine,” *Middle East Eye*, November 5, 2015, accessed December 16, 2016, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/sisi-s-foreign-policy-miracle-israel-disaster-palestine-1732786166>.

⁴⁵⁹ Al-Youm, “Interview: Tarek Fahmy.”

⁴⁶⁰ “Netanyahu, Peres Congratulate Egypt’s President Elect Sisi,” *Arutz Sheva*, June 6, 2014, accessed December 16, 2016, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/181448>.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

When Sisi captured power as de facto leader, terrorism in the Sinai was the first challenge he tackled in the country. To deal with it, he immediately sought an Israeli partnership. Through coordination with Israel, the Egyptian army established a new configuration in the Sinai, and thereby the army isolated and largely cleared the populated northeastern Sinai and “put many terrorist factions on the defensive, most notably Ansar Beit al-Maqdis.”⁴⁶² As a result, it gained the upper hand in fighting against Sinai terrorism. This dramatic improve in Egyptian-Israeli security cooperation brought about “a new geopolitical configuration in the peninsula,” which provided stability and removed danger of terrorism “that threaten both Egyptian-Israeli relations and the safety of shipping through the Suez Canal and its connecting sea lanes.”⁴⁶³ Consequently, Israel’s fear of the Sinai’s “Somalization”⁴⁶⁴ melted with the new military regime in Egypt.

Even though Sisi’s rise changed the equation of relations in economy and energy, Israel continued to seek for new partners and new opportunities in these areas. As a part of its defensive policies, Israel wanted to keep regional balance in favor of itself and guarantee its energy security regardless of the regional situation. In this context, Netanyahu explained that the country’s natural gas fields are closely related to its security and foreign relations:

Today the Security Cabinet unanimously approved accelerating the development and expansion of the natural gas fields that have been discovered off Israel’s coasts. This was in consideration of the State of Israel’s security needs and its foreign relations.⁴⁶⁵

In short, while it has seen reduced anxiety during the period of military administration, Israel has retained its policies of ‘strategic silence’ and ‘non-

⁴⁶² Yaari, “The New Triangle.”

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ The term used by Efraim Inbar in “Israel’s national security,” 67.

⁴⁶⁵ “PM Netanyahu on Iran and natural gas,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Press Room, June 25, 2015, accessed December 14, 2016, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2015/Pages/PM-Netanyahu-on-Iran-and-natural-gas-25-Jun-2015.aspx>.

engagement,' which have best served the country's interests. Israel has assumed that Egypt is a basis of regional stability. Even though it was not expected that Egypt would witness full stability in the short term, Israel had an interest to "maintain good relations with the Egyptian army since it alone maintains political stability in the country."⁴⁶⁶ Therefore, Israel preferred to refrain from any positive or negative comments, although it provided support via "private back channels."⁴⁶⁷ Parallel with the Israeli position, some analysts on Israeli politics, such as Tarek Fahmi warned Israel not to interfere in "how events develop and resorting to indirect support for the relevant movements," but to continue the 'wait and see' policy until a solution to the crisis appears; to keep calm; to "pressure Egypt to control the Gaza Strip and defend the Sinai security;" and to be prepared for the worst.⁴⁶⁸

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Israel has not commented much on Egyptian developments since 2013. This was not only because Israel's level of anxiety declined. Additionally, 'basic security' concerns intensified. Israel was occupied with the Iranian nuclear threat, which escalated when the P5+1 negotiations between the West and Iran commenced in October 2013. Moreover, Israel engaged in a war with Hamas-ruled Gaza in the summer of 2014. Therefore, Israeli leaders focused on these questions instead of the question of power in Egypt. Israel did not want to offend Egypt and add another item to its agenda.

4.3. Conclusion

This chapter presents Israeli perceptions, objectives, and policies as they have been expressed by the country's political and military leaders regarding the post-Mubarak era. It also investigates what has been reported by experts in Israel and the Middle Eastern affairs at academic institutions and research centers. The chapter examines Israel's anxiety at the outbreak of the Egyptian revolution and the fall of Mubarak, their motives for continuing relations with Egypt on the basis of the peace treaty, and

⁴⁶⁶ Fahmi, "Israeli-Egyptian relations."

⁴⁶⁷ Yegin, "Turkey's Reaction to the Coup in Egypt," 8.

⁴⁶⁸ Fahmi, "Israeli-Egyptian relations."

their reasons for adopting a defensive position toward post-Mubarak Egypt. The chapter also anticipates the political, strategic, military and economic influences of the revolution on Israel, as expressed in discourses of Israeli leadership. Israel's threat perceptions were analyzed in detail in the previous chapters, and here proved through statements from the country's political and military leaders. Even though certain positive statements were made, analysis of discourse finds that the overall perception of Israel regarding the developments in Egypt was negative, which led to anxiety among Israeli leadership.

In terms of Israel's objectives, this analysis ascertains that the country's main objectives in the face of Egyptian developments can be summarized as ensuring security along its borders and preserving its strategic interests. Therefore, Israel put forth an effort "to maintain good relations with the Egyptian army," only power could ensure security and stability from the Israeli viewpoint.⁴⁶⁹ Based on Israel's evaluations, it would be a wise choice not to interfere in Egyptian affairs but rather to entrench its strategic silence, while at the same time keeping good relations with the Egyptian security forces in pursuit of preserving security interests regarding the Sinai and Gaza. With these objectives, Israel tried not to damage relations with Egypt in the post-Mubarak period despite its anxiety amidst the days of uncertainty and during the MB administration.

Regarding the policies of Israel, this analysis reveals that Israeli reaction to the post-Mubarak Egypt was defensive and reliant on diplomatic instruments. Even though the process starting with the Egyptian revolution worked against Israel's interests and the period following the military coup supported those interests, the leadership of the country preferred to remain silent since any Israeli reaction or declaration of preference could lead to an accusation of interference in Egyptian affairs or create contradiction in the Middle East. In this respect, Israel retained its position as an outlier that avoided any expression of preference, meddling internal affairs, or use of coercive means.

⁴⁶⁹ Fahmi, "Israeli-Egyptian relations."

Explaining the main justifications and reasons of Israel's silence and policies might provide significant clues to understanding Israel's overall foreign policy reflections as well. In this regard, this chapter is very useful in understanding Israeli approach to the issues in the region in that it presents the statements of the decision-makers and analyzes their discourses. This chapter adds an original element to the study by examining the facts on the ground, theory, and discourse in conjecture.



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this study, Israel's reaction to post-Mubarak Egypt is examined through the defensive realist perspective. This study endeavored to explain Israel's strategic silence in conjuncture with its changing threat perceptions and, by extension, its seemingly fluctuating levels of anxiety.

As discussed above, there are several different approaches that could explain Israeli policies towards Egypt in the post-Mubarak era. As the most common approach, discussions on democratization in the Middle East reveal that democratic revolts at the beginning eventually led to another authoritarian administration under the control of political Islamist groups, an outcome which was considered as a basic threat to Israel in various aspects. The realist perspective mainly focuses on Israel's repositioning in the face of the reshaping of the regional balance of power. Social constructivism also offers an important perspective for understanding Israeli silence on the developments in Egypt, as the historical relations between the two states have tremendous impact on the constructions of current relations. Finally, in demonstrating the interconnectedness of international and domestic affairs, linkage politics explains why Israel applied a non-engagement policy towards the developments in the region and Egypt. All of them are quite instructive in explaining Israel's perceptions and policies towards the Egyptian revolution and its aftermath - to a certain extent. However, considering the perceptions, objectives, and policies of Israel to a greater extent within the environment of uncertainty and the country's fluctuating anxiety, it can be concluded that the defensive realism perspective in international relations theories gives a better – and perhaps the best - explanation.

Holding a contextual knowledge of the historical relations between Israel and Egypt from the establishment of the State of Israel to present is crucial for analyzing Israel's reactions to the developments in Egypt. In order to understand why Egypt has been so critical for Israel's strategic interests, what kind of connection exists between Israel's strategic objectives and the developments in Egypt, and which reasons led Israel to adopt certain policies, examining the history of relations before the Egyptian revolution is important.

During the thirty years between Israel's formation and the 1979 peace treaty, Egypt was Israel's most formidable enemy. Israel experienced devastating wars with the Arab states, headed by Egypt. In general, Nasser's nationalist policies served as a catalyst to these wars; notably, the nationalization of the Straits of Tiran and the Suez Canal ignited the wars in 1956 and 1967. With Sadat's leadership takeover, reorientation was seen in Egypt's foreign policy in general and towards Israel in particular. This change opened a route to peace, which started with the Camp David Accords in 1978 and was crowned with the 1979 Peace Treaty.

Over the following thirty years under Mubarak's leadership, Israel regarded Egypt as a key actor upholding regional peace due to the role it played among Arab countries. Both countries honored the principle commitments stated in the treaty, including diplomatic ties and the security arrangements in the Sinai Peninsula, though this was a cold peace in terms of cultural relations. The two states were able to abide by the peace treaty due to the Mubarak regime and Israel's common desire to maintain the regional status-quo. Based on this examination, it can be concluded that the foundational pieces of the relationship were curbing the political Islamist threat and Hamas, upholding the peace treaty, providing security in the Sinai Peninsula, and cooperating on economic issues.

In respect to these balances, any change in Egyptian regime would alter the balance of power in the region, as well as have fundamental effects on nature of the relations. Therefore, Israel became anxious when the parameters started to change in conjuncture with the Arab uprisings at the end of 2010. Bearing in mind Egypt's

strategic importance, it is evidently seen that the Egyptian revolution and Mubarak's fall exacerbated Israel's anxiety.

On January 25, 2011, the protests in Egypt actually started with demands for 'freedom, equality, and dignity.' Different groups, from Islamists to socialists, participated in these protests to call for democratic rights and values. Indeed, as stated by Netanyahu, Israel was aware that a more peaceful and stable region was more likely with democratic neighbors. Nonetheless, Israeli leadership stuck behind Egypt's autocratic Mubarak regime instead of supporting the revolution, as Israel was able to negotiate with the former regimes without the influence of popular anti-Israeli sentiment. As seen in statements by main statesmen at the time, they were extremely skeptical as to whether these developments would evolve into a democratic process and very cautious concerning potential repercussions for Israel.

Israel's concern that the power vacuum left by previous regimes would be filled by Islamist movements who hold antagonist feelings towards Israel was later realized. About this outcome, both Israel and other segments of the Egyptian society claimed that 'Islamists hijacked the revolution.' Israel believed that an escalation of political Islamist groups, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, would damage its strategic, military, economic and societal relations with both Egypt and neighboring countries. Moreover, Islamists' empowerment could change the balances of the Palestinian issue in several aspects. Israel witnessed Egyptian public's pro-Palestinian slogans and the Morsi administration's declarations supporting the Palestinians. Furthermore, since Hamas is the Gazan brethren of the MB, Israel worried that the developments in Egypt would influence the Gaza problem to the detriment of Israel. Israel's worries were proved right when leaders of the MB criticized Israel's siege on Gaza and their announcement that they were opening the Rafah border in 2011.

Another of Israel's immediate concerns was over the long-term durability of the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty of 1979 with the ascent to power of the Islamist MB. Although it was a 'cold peace,' Israel viewed the treaty as pillar of its national security. This is why the peace treaty was instantly mentioned in Israeli discourse.

On the contrary, the MB government viewed the treaty as open to discussion. As it was related to the stipulations of the treaty, the configuration of Egyptian troops in the Sinai Peninsula came under question. As Israel had worried, the security vacuum in the Sinai posed security threats for Israel in terms of bolstered terrorist groups, increased arm-smuggling, disrupted gas supply to Israel, and an influx of migrants flowing into the area. Israel's concerns were heightened by terrorist attacks in the Sinai. Consequently, Israel's relationship with Egypt and its strategic position in the region reached a particular low point. Finally, related to losing its one of the regional partner and the MB's economic mindset, Israel experienced deterioration of the economic relations with Egypt.

During this period, especially after the MB's rise to the power, the Egyptian side made comments that were very worrisome to Israel. These comments were made to satisfy the Egyptian population in terms of the Palestinian cause and to gain leverage on the peace treaty and energy issue vis-à-vis Israel. The MB's posture and intentions respectively engendered uncertainty and a security dilemma on the Israeli side. This uncertainty led Israel to adopt a defensive realist posture.

As a part of its defensive strategy, in spite of all these challenges, Israel preferred to distance itself from the tumult of the region. Instead of involving itself in events, Israeli officials tried to understand which way the events would evolve through gathering information on the ground. The general Israeli approach can be summed up in this one sentence: "all we can do is to sit back and watch how the events unfold."⁴⁷⁰ Whereas Israel preferred to 'watch' the events in this hostile environment, at the same time it prepared itself for every consequence. The worst-case scenario for Israel, as found in the leadership's discourse, was the fall of its reliable partner, if not a friend. Israel made strategic assessments based on this scenario. Accordingly, Israel increased its defense budget, created more defensible borders, and forged strategic allegiances with Greece and Cyprus. Nevertheless, Israel pursued these policies in silence, and never engaged in confrontation with any Arab states, including Egypt.

⁴⁷⁰ Rabi, "Egypt's 'Second Revolution.'"

In addition, during the year the MB government was in power, certain Egyptian groups were also displeased with the ongoing situation in the country because they believed that the Morsi administration was trying to first consolidate their power and prioritized the Palestinian cause instead of focusing on solving the deep-rooted structural problems in their own country. Unfulfilled expectations of the masses in terms of social, demographic, and economic problems along with a new wave of protests led to the military coup in Egypt on July 3, 2013.

Israel again did not use pro-democratic rhetoric following the coup, unlike its Western and regional counterparts. Whereas Israel was extremely anxious in regards to its strategic interests and objectives during the Egyptian revolution, it shed this anxiety with the military intervention and Morsi's ousting. Moreover, Israel was more than assured by the end of events. The two countries resumed their cooperation in fighting Hamas and terrorism in the Sinai Peninsula and in energy issues. Notwithstanding, Israeli leadership was "conspicuously silent" during these times of intense and reduced anxiety.⁴⁷¹ It should be noted that the Israeli policies of 'strategic silence' and 'non-engagement' cannot be evaluated as indifference; rather, these were determined by the country's strategic objectives.

Based on these solid facts on the ground, in analyzing the discourse of Israeli leadership on Egypt in the post-Mubarak Egypt, it is revealed that Israel perceived the events in Egypt negatively. At the same time, considering the country's objective of maintaining national security and strategic interests, Israel preferred the policy of silence during the period of the Egyptian revolution and its aftermath.

To look at their statements more specifically, it can be easily understood that, for Israel, the process of the Egyptian revolution was full of uncertainty regarding Egypt's future and its implications on the region. Amidst such uncertainty, Israel adopted extreme caution. As explained above, the defensive realist perspective claims

⁴⁷¹ Magen, "Comparative Assessment" 127.

that states respond with restraint if there is no direct or 'basic security' threat. In this way, Israel could also ensure continuation of the regional status-quo without losing its resources or provoking Egypt and the larger Arab World. It did not engage in Egyptian affairs, but focused on compatible security requirements.

With this aim, Israel preferred to be very "careful in its statements" during the turmoil in Egypt, as these could have direct impact on the country's foreign policy.⁴⁷² Government officials, including the government spokesman, did not comment even when they were posed very specific questions. Particularly after the establishment of the Morsi government, Israeli officials were more than careful regarding their criticism of Egypt as they did not want to damage already strained relations. Throughout the entire process from the revolution to the coup, Israel underwent difficult times, but it did not express its negative reactions harshly in official statements nor did it become involved militarily, even in the Sinai Peninsula. This attitude indicates Israel's "avoidance of rhetorical action" and "willingness to deploy coercive means."⁴⁷³ Additionally, Israeli leadership's back-door efforts in convincing the West and particularly the US both to back Mubarak's prolongation and support for Sisi demonstrates Israel's position and its reliance on diplomatic instruments.

In sum, Israel's first choice was "to keep a low profile" in public reactions and to be "minimalist" in its political goals.⁴⁷⁴ Israel mainly focused on the maintenance of its security and strategic interests, specifically the preservation of the peace treaty. There were three reasons behind this choice of adopting a defensive realist approach. First, there was an extensive uncertainty about the future of Egypt in several manners and intentions of its new governors. Israel was aware of the fact that Egypt holds the power to change regional balances, whereas Israel itself was unpopular in the region. Therefore, any rhetoric or action against Egyptian affairs could have led to a reprisal between the two countries and in the region. Secondly, Israel policies were shaped

⁴⁷² Voller, "Israel and the New Middle East," 62.

⁴⁷³ Magen, "Comparative Assessment" 125.

⁴⁷⁴ Berti, "Israel and Arab Spring," 144.

not only by its perceptions, but also by its strategic objectives concerning the regional balances and national security. Last but not least, Israel evaluated the threats posed after Mubarak within the realm of ‘day-to day security’ concerns.

All in all, this study draws upon the theoretical tradition of defensive realism pertaining to state action in international politics in an effort to explain Israel’s responses to the changing dynamics starting with the Egyptian revolution.

This study is significant in certain aspects. First of all, this study contributes to our understanding of Israel’s threat perceptions, strategic objectives, and defensive policies during the process starting with the Egyptian revolution. It should be noted that examining the Israel-Egypt relations and Israeli discourse on post-Mubarak Egypt is critical to understanding an extent of the regional balance of power, rather than assuming this is simply concerned with the two states’ relations.

Additionally, the issue at stake has significant implications on both theory and policy. Theoretically, this study suggests on how we can explain a state’s policies in the face of a security dilemma posed by environment of uncertainty in international politics. With regard to policy, the arguments of this study offer an analytical framework that may be adopted under similar conditions.

For further study, this study may shed light on Israel’s perceptions, objectives, and policies in the upcoming period regarding the Middle East. Despite the negative spin-offs of the Egyptian revolution, Israel had suffered no major political damage by the military coup in June 2013. The consolidation of the Islamists in the power was not realized, nor were there massive uprisings in the West Bank or empowerment of Hamas, and nor did the peace treaty undergo change. Thus, it can be said that there has not been a fundamental change in Israel’s strategic calculations regarding Egypt. Meantime, the trajectory of change in the region still remains uncertain.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁵ For example, in fighting ISIS in the Sinai, Egypt gave Hamas a chance in 2016, and this attempt may change the role of Egypt in Israel-Hamas relations. See: Zvi Bar’el, “With hopes of battling ISIS in Sinai, Egypt gives Hamas another chance,” *Haaretz*, April 22, 2016, accessed April 22, 2016,

Considering this uncertainty, this study can be considered as paving the way for related studies.

Moreover, 'strategic silence' is a meaningful policy indicator that is worthy of further study. The current preliminary investigation on this policy allows us to draw Israel's response to post-Mubarak Egypt as a specific case. It says very little about this policy's role in overall Israeli foreign policy. Future explorations can improve on this study by offering a more nuanced look at different cases and situations.



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APPENDICES

Appendix A: TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

‘Arap Baharı’ olarak adlandırılan gelişmeler sonrasında Ortadoęu’da meydana gelen deęişimler sadece bu olayları yaşayan lkeleri deęil tm blge dengelerini etkilemiştir. Ayrıca blgenin Arap olmayan lkeleri de bu olaylardan etkilenmiştir. Bu lkelerden biri olan İsrail, yaşanan olayları blgesel bir gelişme olarak tanımlamaktan çekinmiştir. Bunun yerine blgenin en nemli lkelerinden ve İsrail’in yakın komşularından olan Mısır’a odaklanmıştır. Tarihsel olarak bakıldığında İsrail’in en tehlikeli dşmanlarından birinin Mısır olduęu grlr. Nitekim 1948, 1956, 1967 ve 1973 yıllarında blgede İsrail’e karşı gerekleşen savařlarda Mısır her zaman başı çekmiştir. 1979 Barış Antlaşması ile bu savař hali sona ererek yeni bir dnem başlamış ve Mısır Bařkanı Hsn Mbarek’in 11 řubat 2011 tarihinde istifa etmesine kadar bu işbirlięi dnemi devam etmiştir. 2011’de yaşanan ‘Mısır Devrimi’ ile sadece ikili ilişkiler deęil blge dinamikleri de deęişmiş ve bu durum İsrail içinde ciddi endişelere yol açmıştır. Ancak bu endişeler 3 Temmuz 2013 tarihinde Mısır’da meydana gelen darbe ile azalmaya başlamış ve Abdul Fettah Sisi’nin Mısır’ın başına geip İsrail ile eski işbirlięi alanlarına geri dnş yapması ile son bulmuřtur. Mbarek sonrasında yaşanan bu iki farklı dnemde, birbirinden tamamen farklı seviyelerde endişe duyulmasına raęmen İsrail’in Mısır’a karşı izledięi politikalarda belirgin bir deęişiklik olmadığı grlr. Bu alışma uluslararası ilişkiler teorileri ve kavramlarıyla bu durumu aıklamaya alışır.

Bu alışma Mısır Devrimi ile başlayan Mbarek sonrası dnem rneklemi zerinden İsrail’in bu dnemde deęişen tehdit algılarına ve buna baęlı olarak farklı seviyeler gsteren endişelerine raęmen stratejik sessizlik politikası izlemesini savunmacı

realist bakış açısıyla ele alır. İsraili liderlerin açıklamalarının söylem analizini yapan bu çalışma aynı zamanda, İsrail'in Mısır'daki gelişmeler karşısında duyduğu tehdit algısının ve geliştirdiği stratejik hedeflerinin doğrultusunda izlediği politikaları anlamaya çalışır. Bu çalışmada Ocak 2011 ve Haziran 2015 tarihleri arasındaki gelişmeleri ve açıklamaları kapsamaktadır. 2011 yılının Ocak ayında patlak veren Mısır Devrimi 2013 yılının Temmuz ayında Müslüman Kardeşler (MK) yönetiminin askeri darbe ile yerinden edilmesi ile son bulmuştur. Eski rejimin yeniden kurulması ve 2015'in Haziran ayında karşılıklı büyükelçilerin atanmasıyla ikili ilişkilerde normalleşme sinyalleri verilmiştir.

Mübarek sonrası dönemde İsrail-Mısır ilişkileri hakkında yazılmış hâlihazırdaki akademik literatür, demokratikleşme teorisi, bölgesel güç dengesini merkeze alan realist bakış açısı, kültürel geçmişi temel alan sosyal yapısalcı bakış açısı ve yerel gelişmeler ile dış siyasetin birbirine etkisi olduğunu savunan yaklaşımlar ile bu konuya belli açıklamalar getirmişlerdir. Bu yaklaşımların genellikle, İsrail'in güvenlik endişelerinin sebepleri üzerinde durduğu görülür. Fakat bu endişeler sonucunda ülkenin hangi politikaları izlediği ile ilgili değerlendirmeler oldukça sınırlı kalmıştır. Hâlbuki bu alan da sistematik bir inceleme gerektirmektedir. Bahsedilen incelemeyi yapmayı amaçlayan bu çalışma, sadece İsrail'in politikalarını incelemekle kalmaz. Aynı zamanda bunu söylem analizi, alandaki siyasi gelişmeler ve uluslararası ilişkiler teorileri ile birleştirerek analiz eder.

Yukarıda bahsedilenler ışığında, bu çalışmanın araştırma sorusu şudur: Mübarek sonrası dönemde İsrail'in sürekli olarak değişen tehdit algılarına rağmen Mısır'a karşı 'stratejik sessizlik' politikası izlemesi nasıl açıklanabilir ve kavramsallaştırılabilir? Çalışmanın hipotezi ise Mübarek sonrası dönemde İsrail'in sürekli olarak değişen tehdit algılarına ve belirsizlik ortamının yarattığı endişelerine rağmen Mısır'a karşı 'stratejik sessizlik' politikası izlemesi savunmacı realist bakış açısı ile açıklanabilir.

Sonuç olarak, bu çalışmanın temel meselesi karşımıza şu şekilde çıkmaktadır: İsrail'in dış politika tercihlerini açıklamak için sadece algılar değil stratejik hedefler de hesaba katılmalıdır. Bu sebeple, farklı bakış açılarıyla İsrail'in stratejik sessizliğini

açıklamak mümkün olsa da en yerinde açıklayan yaklaşım savunmacı realizmdir. Çünkü bu yaklaşım sadece güvenlik arayanların algılarını ve stratejik çıkarlarını değil, aynı zamanda belirsizlik ortamının getirdiği güvenlik ikilemini de göz önünde bulundurur. Dolayısıyla, güvenlik arayanların politika tercihlerini *neden* yaptıklarını anlamaya çalışırken *nasıl* yaptıklarını da başarılı bir şekilde açıklar.

Bu çalışmanın araştırma sorusuna cevap bulmak için söylem analizi yöntemi kullanılmış ve ikincil kaynaklardan yararlanılmıştır. Bu çalışmada hem siyasi hem de askeri liderlerin söylemleri analiz edilmiştir. İsrail'in dış siyasetinin, güvenlik politikaları olmaksızın belirlenemeyeceği düşünüldüğünde askeri liderleri de analize dâhil etmenin gerekliliği anlaşılabacaktır. Bu çalışma, politika belirleyicilerin parlamento (Knesset) konuşmalarını, ulusal ve uluslararası konuşmalarını ve mülakatlarını içerir. Bu materyallere öncelikle İsrail Dışişleri Bakanlığı'nın resmi internet sayfasından ulaşılmıştır. Burada yer verilen binden fazla metin taranmış ve elli tanesi bu çalışmada incelenmiştir.

Ayrıca *Haaretz*, *the Jerusalem Post* ve *the Times of Israel* gibi İsrail gazetelerinden, *Al Jazeera* ve *Al Monitor* gibi Ortadoğu gazetelerinden ve *the New York Times* ve *the Guardian* gibi uluslararası gazetelerden İsrailli liderlerin konuşmaları toplanmıştır. Temel olarak konuşmaları incelenen liderlerin listesi şu şekildedir: İsrail Başbakanı Binyamin Netanyahu, Dışişleri Bakanı Avigdor Lieberman, Savunma Bakanı Ehud Barak ve Moşe Ya'alon ve Milli Güvenlik Konseyi Başkanı Yaakov Amidror. Bu isimler dışında Knesset Dışişleri ve Savunma Komitesi Başkanı Shaul Mofaz gibi konuşmalarına yer verilen başka liderler de vardır. Bu liderlerin konuşmaları her bir konu altında kronolojik sıraya göre analiz edilmiştir. Bu akış sayesinde, İsrail'in her konu ile ilgili zaman içinde artan endişesini ve politikalarını daha belirgin olarak görmenin mümkün olacağı düşünülmüştür.

Konunun detaylarına geçmeden önce, çalışmada yer alan teorik altyapıdan kısaca bahsedilebilir. Yapısalcı realizmin altında savunmacı realizmi temsil eden isimlerden Kenneth Waltz, Charles Glaser ve Robert Jervis, ülkelerin ulusal çıkarları için güçlerini maksimize etmek yerine yeterli miktarda güç edindiğini iddia ederler.

Güvenlik arayışı içindeki ülkeler, milli çıkarlarının bağlı olduğu statükonun değişmesini tercih etmedikleri için gereksiz çatışmalara girmekten kaçınır ve savunmacı politikalar izler. Benzer şekilde İsrail'in de bir yandan kendi stratejik çıkar ve hedefleri bir yandan da Mısır'ın bölgedeki rolünü hesaba katarak statükoyu korumak istemesi sonucunda savunmacı realist politikalar izlediği görülür. Aksi takdirde, İsrail ve Mısır arasında veya bölgede İsrail'e karşı bir misillemenin gelişmesi yüksek bir ihtimaldir.

Savunmacı realizmin dikkat çektiği ve Avi Shlaim'in de detaylı olarak tartıştığı bir konu da İsrail'deki 'temel güvenlik' ve 'gündelik güvenlik' anlayışları arasındaki farktır. Temel güvenlik tehditleri, düşman devletin veya koalisyonun ülke varlığını tehdit eden büyük çaplı saldırılarından oluşurken gündelik güvenlik tehditleri ise, provokasyonları ve ülke sınırlarına gelen saldırıları kapsar. Bu ayrıma göre Mısır'daki gelişmeler sonrasında İsrail'e karşı oluşan tehditleri gündelik güvenlik tehdidi olarak kategorize etmek mümkündür. Dolayısıyla bu tehditler karşısında saldırgan değil savunmacı politikalar izlenmesi öngörülür ve İsrail'in de o şekilde cevap verdiği anlaşılmaktadır.

Amichai Magen, İsrail'in Mübarek sonrası dönemde savunmacı realist yaklaşım sergilediğini ve bunun bölgedeki kargaşaya dahil olmamak, 1979 Barış Antlaşması gibi stratejik çıkarlarını korumak ve kaybettiği eski müttefiklerinin yerine yenilerini kazanmak gibi politika hedeflerine dayandığını savunmuştur. Bu konuyu aynı bakış açısıyla ele alan diğer bir çalışma da Clive Jones ve Beverley Milton-Edwards tarafından yapılmıştır. Onlar da İsrail'in güvenlik, bölgesel pozisyon, uluslararası saygınlık ve siyasal İslam'ın güçlenmesi ile ilgili endişelerini vurgulayarak ülkenin savunmacı politikalarını açıklamıştır. Bu çalışma, bahsedilen iki çalışmayla da bağlantılı olmakla birlikte önemli bir farklılık göstermektedir. Bu çalışmanın argümanında İsrail'in dış politikasının ancak ulusal güvenlik endişelerinden kaynaklanan kaygı faktörünün, ülkenin stratejik hedeflerinin ve komşu ülkelerin niyet ve motivasyonlarındaki belirsizlikten kaynaklanan yapısal baskıların birleşimi ile açıklanabileceği savunulur.

Bu çalışmanın ilk bölümünde, İsrail'in kuruluşundan itibaren 2011'de başlayan Mısır Devrimi'ne kadarki süreçte İsrail-Mısır ilişkilerinin tarihsel gelişimi kısa ve öz olarak tahlil edilmiştir. Bu süreçte iki ülke arasında dönem dönem hem savaş hem de işbirliği sebebi olan ve iki ülke için de stratejik öneme sahip konular bağlamsal olarak incelenmiştir. Örneğin; Süveyş Kanalı'nın ekonomideki ve enerji kaynaklarının transferindeki rolüne, Sina Yarımadası'nda güvenliğin sağlanmasına ilişkin konulara ve Hamas ile ilişkilere bakılmıştır. Daha sonra, 1979 Barış Antlaşması'nın iki ülkenin ilişkilerinde dönüm noktası oluşturmalarının akabinde Hüsnü Mübarek'in İsrail ile geliştirdiği benzersiz işbirliğinin, İsrail'in ulusal güvenliği ve stratejik çıkarları açısından ne kadar önemli olduğu anlatılmıştır. Bu yüzden İsrail'in, Mübarek rejimini İsrail açısından stratejik bir varlık olarak gördüğü açıklanmıştır.

Otuz yıl devam eden Mübarek yönetimi süresince İsrail sekiz başbakan değiştirmesine rağmen Mübarek'in devam eden bir aktör olması, Mübarek'i İsrail açısından yakından tanınan bir partner haline getirmiştir. Dolayısıyla, Mısır'da herhangi bir yönetim değişimi, İsrail için büyük bir endişe sebebidir. Ayrıca, İsrail karşıtı Mısır halkını dizginleyen bir yönetim her zaman için, özellikle de Filistin meselesi bağlamında, İsrail açısından önem taşımaktadır. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, Mısır'daki rejim değişimi sadece iki ülke ilişkilerini değil, bölgesel güç dengelerini etkileme kapasitesine de sahiptir. Özetle, İsrail-Mısır ilişkilerinin geçmişini incelemek Mısır Devrimi sonrasında İsrail'in tehdit algısını ve buna binaen geliştirdiği politikaları anlamak açısından kritik bir yer tutmaktadır.

Çalışmanın ikinci bölümünde Mısır Devrimi sonrası ülkede yaşanan gelişmeler ve bunların İsrail'e etkisi mercek altına alınmıştır. Bu dönemde Mübarek istifa etmiş, siyasal İslam güçlenmeye başlamış, hatta Müslüman Kardeşler, Muhammed Mursi liderliğinde ülkenin başına geçmiştir. Ülkenin yeni yöneticileri, Filistin meselesini öncelikli gündem maddeleri arasına almış, İsrail'in Gazze ablukasını eleştirmiş ve Refah kapısını açacaklarını duyurmuşlardır. Üstelik 1979 Barış Antlaşması'nın tartışılmaz olmadığını dile getirerek gerekirse değişikliğe gidilebileceğini ifade etmişlerdir. Bu belirsizlik sürecinde Mısır yönetiminin zayıflaması Sina'daki terör

gruplarının elini güçlendirmiş ve hem Mısır ve İsrail'in Sina sınırlarına hem de bu alandaki doğalgaz boru hatlarına saldırılar artmıştır.

Bütün bu gelişmeler, ikili ve bölgesel ilişkilerin geleceğinde belirsizliklere yol açmış ve İsrail'de yüksek oranda kaygı yaratmıştır. Bu çalışma, İsrail'in bu dönemdeki tehdit algılarını beş ana başlık altında toplamıştır. İsrail'in temel endişesinin Mübarek rejiminden boşalan koltuğun İslamcı gruplar, özellikle de MK tarafından doldurulması olduğu görülmektedir. Bu grubun ülke yönetimi ile ilgili tecrübesinin olmaması hem dış politika ve güvenlik konularında hem de İsrail karşıtı Mısır toplumunu frenleme konusunda yaşanabilecek ihtimaller açısından İsrail'i endişelendirmiştir. Buna bağlı olarak Hamas ile mücadelede MK ile birlikte Hamas'ın elinin güçlenmesi ve Sina'dan gelebilecek güvenlik tehditleri yeni soru işaretleri oluşturmuştur.

İkinci olarak İsrail, Mısır'daki gelişmelerin Filistinliler için örnek teşkil edip Batı Şeria'da İsrail'e karşı bir hareketlenmeye sebep olabileceğinden korkmuştur. Nitekim Filistinli gençlerin böyle bir potansiyele sahip olduğu söylenmiştir. Fakat Filistin'in kendi içindeki bölünmeden dolayı bu tarz bir gelişmenin meydana gelmesinin zor olduğu not edilmiştir. Ayrıca Mısır'da MK'nın güçlenmesi sonucunda, Fetih-Hamas dengesinde ibrenin Hamas'tan yana kayarak İsrail'in Filistin meselesinde, işini zorlaştırabilme ihtimali doğmuştur.

Üçüncü olarak, Barış Antlaşması'nın yeni yönetim tarafından feshedilmesi ihtimali İsrail'in başlıca konularından ve endişelerinde biri haline gelmiştir. Nitekim İsrail'in bölgedeki güvenlik angajmanlarının bu anlaşmaya bağlı olduğu bilinmektedir. Yeni yönetimin, bu konuyu halkın tartışmasına açmasının İsrail açısından olumsuz sonuç getireceği aşikardır. Çünkü Pew Araştırmalarına göre Mısır halkının yüzde elli biri bu anlaşmanın bozulmasından yanadır.

Barış Antlaşması'nın devamlılığına bağlı olarak Sina'daki güvenlik meselesi de İsrail'de gündeme gelmiştir. Çünkü bu alandaki güvenlik düzenlemeleri bu antlaşma ile belirlenmiştir. Buradaki terör gruplarına ek olarak, İran, Suriye, Hizbullah ve el-

Kaide tarafından alandaki bedevilerin devşirilmesi ihtimali de vardır. Doğalgaz boru hatlarına saldırılar ise, İsrail'in enerji kaynaklarına hasar vermektedir. Ayrıca bu dönemde, kaçak yollarla Sina üzerinden İsrail'e giren Afrikalı göçmenlerin oranının artması ihtimali de kaygı unsuru olarak bahsedilmiştir.

Son olarak, tüm bu istikrarsız siyasi alan iki ülke arasındaki ekonomik ilişkileri de olumsuz etkileme kapasitesine sahiptir. İsrail'in bu konudaki endişelerinden biri, enerji anlaşmalarının Mısır tarafından sona erdirilmesidir. Daha kötüsü İsrail, Mısır'ın eskiden olduğu gibi Süveyş Kanalı'nı ve Akabe Körfezi'ni İsrail gemilerine kapatmasından endişe etmiştir.

İsrail'in bu endişeleri 2013'ün Temmuz ayında gerçekleşen askeri darbeye kadar devam etmiştir. Sonrasında eski aktörlerin güçlerini yeniden konsolide etmesi ve seküler bir asker olarak bilinen Sisi'nin yeni başkan olarak seçilmesi ile birlikte İsrail'in endişeleri azalmıştır. Çünkü yeni yönetim eski işbirliklerine dönüş yapmıştır. Başta Sina Yarımadası'nda güvenliğin sağlanması konusunda yeniden askeri koordinasyonlar sağlanmıştır. Bunun dışında, Müslüman Kardeşler'i terörist ilan eden Sisi, onun Gazze uzantısı olan Hamas'ı da terörist olarak görmüş ve İsrail ile birlikte Hamas'a ve siyasal İslam'a karşı mücadeleye girmiştir. Hatta bu alanda, Mübarek'in bile önüne geçtiği söylenmektedir. Enerji konusunda da İsrail'in Akdeniz'deki doğalgaz kaynaklarından Mısırlı yatırımcılara doğalgaz tedarik edilmesi ile ilgili anlaşma sağlanmıştır. Sonuç olarak, İsrail'in bölgedeki jeopolitik hesaplarında değişiklik yapmasına gerek kalmamış ve Mübarek dönemindeki parlak günlerine geri dönmüştür.

Bu bölümde 2011-2015 arasında alanda yaşananları ve İsrail'in algıladığı tehditleri incelemek, İsrailli liderlerin söylemlerinin kaynağını anlamak açısından önem taşımaktadır. Ayrıca bu tehdit algılarının, ülkenin savunmacı realist politikalarını nasıl şekillendirdiğini görmek açısından da katkısı büyüktür.

Son bölümde, İsrailli liderlerin Mübarek sonrası dönemde Mısır hakkındaki söylemleri analiz edilmiştir. Aşağıda bahsedileceği gibi, her konu altında liderlerin

söylemleri kronolojik olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Bu konulara geçmeden önce, İsrail'in genel olarak Arap ayaklanmaları hakkındaki görüşlerine değinilmiştir. Özet olarak, Netanyahu'nun söylediği gibi, bu gelişmeler “istikrarsızlık ve belirsizlik” olarak tanımlanmıştır. Mısır'a gelindiğinde ise, buradaki gelişmelerin “deprem” etkisi oluşturarak hem bölgedeki diğer ülkeleri hem de Batı Şeria üzerinden Filistinlileri etkileyeceği fikri hâkim olmuştur. Ayrıca Netanyahu, Mısır'daki gelişmelerin geleceğindeki üç ihtimal olarak şunları öne sürmüştür: Ya askerin öncül rolü ile ülke seküler reformist bir model seçecek, ya İslamcılar başa gelip ülkeyi tam tersi bir noktaya götürecektir, ya da Mısır İran'ın yolundan gidecek. Bu inanç sebebiyle, İslamcı MK'nın başa geçmesi sonucunda İsrail'in endişeleri artmıştır. Ülkede artan endişeye rağmen Netanyahu, hükümet yetkililerini Mısır hakkında yorum yapmamaları konusunda uyarmıştır – ki bunu ‘stratejik sessizlik’ politikası olarak tanımlamak mümkündür. Yorum yapmak yerine Netanyahu, ‘dikkatli gözlerle’ alanda neler olduğunu ve olacağını izlemeleri gerektiğini vurgulamıştır.

İsrailli liderlerin konuşmalarının detaylarına bakıldığında stratejik çıkarları doğrultusunda yaptıkları tercihler hakkında fikir edinmek mümkündür. Özellikle Mübarek rejiminin devam etmesi konusunda defalarca uluslararası kamuoyuna çağrı yapmış ve bu konunun bölgesel barış ve istikrar açısından ne kadar önemli olduğunu anlatmaya çalışmıştır. Ancak bu çabalar sonuç vermemiş ve İsrail için “en kötü senaryo” olan Mübarek'in düşmesi gerçek olmuştur. Bundan sonra ne olacağı ise daha büyük bir soru işareti meydana getirmiştir. Efraim İnbar, eski diktatör rejimin yerine popülist ve İslamcı politikanın alternatif olarak geleceğini tahmin etmiş ve Müslüman Kardeşler'in seçimleri kazanması ile bu tahmin gerçek olmuştur. Bunun üzerine İsrail'den bu grubun barış ve demokrasi getiremeyeceği ile ilgili farklı açıklamalar gelmiştir. Üstelik bu grup, bölgedeki diğer İslamcı grup ve ülkelere benzetilerek meydana gelebilecek tehlikeler sürekli ortaya konmaya çalışılmıştır. Hatta Lieberman, Mısır'ın bu yönetimle İran'dan bile daha tehlikeli olduğunu söylemekten çekinmemiştir.

Tarihi olarak Filistin davasının savunucusu olarak bilinen Müslüman Kardeşler'in yönetime gelmesi ile birlikte Mısır'ın Filistinlileri desteklemek adına İsrail'e karşı

hareket etmesi büyük endişe sebebiydi. Nitekim Mısır, Refah kapısını açacağını söylemişti. Mısır'ın bu duyurusu karşısında bile İsrail, bu durumdan mutlu olmadığını yine de Mısır'ın Gazze'de neler olup bittiğini anlamak adına bunu yapmış olabileceği ihtimalini hesaba katarak 'bekle ve gör' politikası izlemeyi tercih etmiştir. Ayrıca İsrail Savunma Kuvvetleri'nin resmi internet sayfasında Filistinlilerin Mısır'dakine benzer bir ayaklanma yapması durumuna karşı Batı Şeria'yı yakından izledikleri belirtilmiştir. Gazze ile ilgili olarak ise daha büyük endişelerinin olduğu anlaşılmaktadır. Bu zamana kadar Mısır'a bakan yönüyle böyle bir destek bulamayan Hamas'ın bu dönem itibarıyla İsrail için büyük bir tehdit oluşturabileceği İsraili liderler tarafından ifade edilmiştir.

Bölgedeki ayaklanmaların Mısır'a sıçramasının ardından Netanyahu, temel politika hedeflerinin ülkenin, halkın ve barışın güvenliğinin sağlanması olduğunu belirtmiştir. Bu ise barış antlaşmasının devamı ile mümkün görülmüştür. Bu sebeple İsrail, barış antlaşmasının önemini birçok konuşmasında tekrar tekrar dile getirmiş ve bunun korunması adına mesajlar vermiştir. Hatta Netanyahu, antlaşmayı devam ettirecek yönetim kim olursa olsun, onunla çalışmaya istekli olduğunu söylemiştir. Üstelik, uluslararası kamuoyunu antlaşmayı devam ettirecek herhangi bir Mısır hükümetini desteklemeye davet etmiştir. İsrail'in bu konudaki hassasiyetinin aksine gelişen olaylara rağmen liderlerden sert tepkiler duyulmamış, bilakis İsrail var olan ilişkilerini koruma yönünde çaba sarf etmiştir.

Sina Yarımadası üzerinden silah kaçakçılığının artması konusunda İsrail, Kahire'deki hükümeti sorumlu tutmuştur. Aynı şekilde kaçak göçmenlerin ülkeye girişindeki artış karşısında İsrail'in yaşadığı problemleri dile getirmiştir. İsraili liderler, bununla mücadele etmek için ülkenin Sina sınırına tel örgü çektiklerini söylemişlerdir. Sina'dan gelen saldırılar karşısında sürekli 'alarm' durumunda olduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Bunların dışında İsrail, Mısır'ın alanda daha fazla asker, silah ve helikopter bulundurmasına izin vermiş; kendisi de dronlar ile alanı sürekli izlemiştir. Enerji konusunda da Mısır'a karşı çok sert açıklamalar yapmak yerine yeni partnerler aramayı tercih etmiştir. Öte yandan, tüm bu gelişmeler karşısında İsrail'in aldığı

savunmacı önlemler de ülke ekonomisindeki savunma bütçesi ile ilgili yeni tartışmaları gündeme getirmiştir.

3 Temmuz 2013 tarihinde, yeni Mısır hükümetine karşı yapılan askeri darbe ile Mursi'nin devrilmesi, askerin eski gücünü yeniden kurması ve Sisi'nin başkan seçilmesi ile ilişkilerde yeniden bir U-dönüşü yaşanmıştır. Askeri yönetim, barış antlaşmasının devamını garanti etmiş, Sina'da yeniden güvenlik işbirliğine girilmiş ve Hamas'a karşı ortak mücadele geliştirilmiştir. Bu ve benzeri gelişmeler, İsrail'deki endişeleri bertaraf etmiştir. Dönemin İsrail Cumhurbaşkanı Şimon Peres ve Başbakan Netanyahu, seçimleri kazanan Sisi'yi tebrik etmiş ve iki ülke arasındaki işbirliğinin önemini vurgulamışlardır. Öte yandan İsrail, Filistin konusunda Mısır'a karşı tedbirli davranmayı bırakmayarak barış görüşmelerinde Ürdün'e daha fazla söz hakkı vermiştir. İsrail, bu dönemde de aynı şekilde 'bekle ve gör' ve 'stratejik sessizlik' politikalarını elden bırakmamıştır. Şunu da not etmekte fayda var ki İsrail'in bu dönemde Mısır hakkında çok sınırlı sayıda açıklama yapmış olması sadece endişeleri azaldığı için değildir. 2013'te İran'ın Batı ülkeleri ile P5+1 görüşmelerine başlaması ve İsrail'in 2014'te Gazze Savaşı'na girmesi 'temel güvenlik' endişeleri meydana getirmiştir. Bu konulara odaklanan İsrail, Mısır'ı da gündemine eklemek istememiştir.

Bir önceki bölümde bahsedilen İsrail'in tehdit algıları, bu bölümde ülke liderlerinin açıklamaları ile doğrulanmıştır. Aynı zamanda ülkenin algıları, hedefleri ve politikaları bu söylemler üzerinden her konu altında analiz edilmiştir. İsrail'in siyasi ve askeri liderlerinin söylem analizi yapıldığında belirsizlik atmosferi içinde gelişen Mısır'daki olayları olumsuz şekilde algıladığı ortaya konmuştur. Bununla birlikte, ulusal güvenliğini ve stratejik çıkarlarını koruma hedeflerini göz önünde bulunduran İsrail'in, Mısır Devrimi sırasında ve sonrasında sessizlik politikası tercih ettiği anlaşılmaktadır. Bu amaçla İsrail, Mısır ile ilişkilerini bozmamaya gayret göstermiş, özellikle de Mısır ordusu ile iyi ilişkilerini devam ettirmeye çalışmıştır. Ülkenin algıları ve hedefleri temelinde belli politikalar benimsenmiştir. Bu kapsamda İsrail öncelikle, kendisini bölgedeki kargaşadan uzak tutmaya çalışmıştır. Mısır'daki gelişmelere de aynı şekilde dâhil olmamaya özen göstermiştir. Bunların yerine

olayların nereye evrileceğini anlamaya çalışmıştır. Uluslararası çabalarına bakıldığında daha çok diplomatik yollara başvurduğu görülmüştür.

Özetle İsrail, stratejik sessizlik politikası izlemiştir. Fakat bu yaklaşım, ilgisizlik anlamına gelmemektedir. Tam tersine, ülkenin stratejik çıkarları tarafından özenle belirlenmiş bir politikadır. Sisi geldiğinde de aynı şekilde İsrail, Mısır'daki gelişmelere müdahil olmamış ve yorum yapmamış, ortak güvenlik ihtiyaçlarına odaklamayı tercih etmiştir. Tüm bunlar savunmacı realizm bakış açısına tekabül etmektedir. Bu yaklaşımın tercih edilmesinin ardındaki nedeni üç başlık altında özetlemek mümkündür. İlk olarak, Mısır'ın geleceği ve yeni yöneticilerinin niyetleri ile ilgili çok büyük belirsizlik söz konusudur. İkinci olarak, İsrail'in politikalarını sadece algılar değil, bölgesel dengeler ve ulusal güvenlikle ilgili stratejik hedefler de belirlemektedir. Son olarak, Mübarek sonrası dönemde Mısır'daki gelişmelerin meydana getirdiği tehditler gündelik güvenlik tehdidi olarak değerlendirilmiştir.

Bu çalışma en başta, Mübarek sonrası dönemde İsrail'in tehdit algılarının, stratejik hedeflerinin ve savunmacı politikalarının anlaşılmasına katkı sağlar. Bu çalışma ile, İsrail-Mısır ilişkilerini ve İsrailli liderlerin söylemlerini incelemenin aslında sadece iki ülkenin ilişkilerini değerlendirmek değil bölgedeki güç dengelerinin bir boyutunu anlamak adına da kritik bir konu olduğu gösterilmiştir. Teorik açıdan bu çalışma, uluslararası politikadaki belirsizlik ortamından meydana gelen güvenlik ikileminde bir ülkenin politikalarının nasıl açıklanabileceği hakkında öneride bulunur. Politika bağlamında ise, bu çalışmadakine benzer koşullarda kullanılabilecek analitik bir çerçeve sunar. Bu çalışma aynı zamanda ileriki çalışmalara ışık tutabilir; nitekim bölgedeki belirsizlik hem İsrail açısından hem de diğer bölge ülkeleri açısından devam etmektedir. Ayrıca 'stratejik sessizlik' kavramından farklı örneklerde bir politika göstergesi olarak yararlanılabilir.

Appendix B: TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü

☐

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

☒

Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü

☐

Enformatik Enstitüsü

☐

Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü

☐

YAZARIN

Soyadı : Özgüler

Adı : Büşra N.

Bölümü : Orta Doğu Araştırmaları

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce) : ISRAEL'S POLICY RESPONSES TO EGYPT
IN THE POST-MUBARAK ERA

TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans

☒

Doktora

☐

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.

☐

2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.

☐

3. Tezimden bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz.

☒

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