

# The Hidden Confrontation between the United States and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood

Mohamed Chami Mkouboi <sup>1+</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of International Cooperation, Security and Safety, Kyushu University

**Abstract.** The controversial position of the United States' official position toward the overthrow of the democratically elected Egyptian president on July 3, 2013 is the driven force of this paper. As Muhammad Morsi was the candidate of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, the study found logic for the US' indulgence vis-à-vis the coup d'état in Egypt. Based on a historical legacy, the author found that the US and the EMB are in hidden confrontation due to mainly four conflicting elements connected to the Israeli-Palestinian Crisis: 1) the Settlement of the Palestinian Refugees, 2) the Nature of the Palestinian State, 3) the Huge US Military and Economic Support to Israel and finally 4) the conflict over Jerusalem. In the end of the study, the author concluded that the US seems comfortable for the overthrowing of the democratically elected president, Morsi from power, but in hidden status due to its full support in democracy.

**Keywords:** Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Israeli-Palestinian Crisis, Jerusalem, Palestinian State, Political Islam, Right of Return, United States' Government.

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to highlight the main factor and reason behind the hidden confrontation between the United States' Middle East Policy and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (EMB). Based on a previous research, the author listed number of conflicting issues between the US successive governments and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Accordingly, scholars of 'Political Islam' predominantly cite the following issues against the EMB's attempt to power: the female's participation, Copts' political and social rights on the new Egypt, the interpretation of *Sharia*, MB's vision towards democracy and its approach towards the existing Peace Treaty between the Egyptian and the Israeli authorities made in 1979. In addition to the above controversies, 'Mitchell briefly states the historical image of the EMB toward the US as follows: "American imperialism shared with the Russian variety the charge of having been responsible for the outcome of the Palestine question. Palestine was the beginning of the identification of the United States with political imperialism: 'After Roosevelt', the United States joined 'the ranks of the imperialists with the creation of Israel', and began to support imperialism 'wherever Muslims were occupied. 'Truman', four million votes', 'Zionist pressure', and 'Jewish gold and Zionist influence'- these were the explanations for American support of Israel. America, which 'theoretically' believed in the 'rights of man', 'social justice', and the United Nations Charter, belied her principles by joining England in support of the 'Zionist aggressors', and 'gave Palestine to the Jews'. And those things which most inflamed opinion were the effect of the American 'Zionist-dominated' press, radio, and films in destroying 'the reputation and honour' of everything 'Muslim and Eastern' in the campaign to win Palestine, and the related Zionist fund-raising drives, which at one point allegedly featured the slogan 'Pay a dollar and kill an Arab' " (Mitchell, 1969 p. 227-228) .

However, the above conflicting elements are secondary comparing to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Accordingly, for the sake of the limitation of this short paper, the results of the study only covered the Settlement of the Palestinian Refugees, a summary of the nature of the Palestinian State both U.S and the EMB aim to establish as a final resolution, the huge US Military and Economic Supports to Israel, the Conflict of the Sacred City: Jerusalem and finally the conclusion.

## 2. Background

The US is the main supporter of Israel among other Western counterparts, even Israel security has been described as important as the US security itself by many American political leaders, including the current

---

<sup>+</sup> Corresponding author. Tel.: +00819094917451.  
E-mail address: chami63@hotmail.com

President, Barack Obama. In this regard, Henriksen states, “one can argue that the security challenges of Israel are the security concerns of the United States writ small” (Henriksen 2007). On the other hand, the Muslim Brotherhood’s ideologists in general and the EMB in particular have the most significant support over the Palestinian side based on Hamas’ agenda. Mitchell refers to the EMB’s involvement in the Israel-Palestinian Crisis stating that “by fighting and dying in the name of Islam in the Canal Zone, in Palestine, or on the gallows in Egypt, the ‘Brother’<sup>1</sup> was sure that his ‘noble’ death had elevated him to the ranks of the pious heroes of Islam” (Mitchell 1969). The EMB and US involved in this crisis as both of them consider their allies’ security within the Israeli-Palestinian Crisis as important as their own securities. Furthermore, since 1987, Hamas, the MB’s active actor on the ground has a strong influence over any final resolution may be carried out between the Palestinian Central Government led by the Palestinian Liberation organization (PLO), Fatah and its Israeli counterpart. These two actors, without Hamas, mean a possible resolution of this ‘Aporia’ from the US point of view. Therefore, to weaken the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood within the Egyptian politics is the right direction to the American-Israeli road map through the Palestinian central government, Fatah. Below, the study highlights the main conflicting elements between the US and the EMB.

### **2.1. The Settlement of the Palestinian Refugees on the Eyes of US & EMB**

The First conflicting issue between MB’s ideologists in general and the US’s successive governments is the settlement of the Palestinian refugees. This issue is getting complicated day after day. Yet, the excessive demands for the ‘Right of Return’ (ROR) by descendants of Palestinian refugees to the current Israeli territories has remained a core issue of the Palestinian view since 1948. Hamas in Gaza considers the (ROR) as non-negotiable pillar of any final resolution. Joseph Alpher and Khalil Shikaki suggested that “It is one of the issues that the Declaration of Principles in the Oslo Accords<sup>2</sup>, signed by the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in September 1993, deferred to the final-status negotiations, on the assumption that by that time mutual trust would have developed sufficiently to enable the parties to resolve it” (Alpher et Shikaki 1998). The deadlock is that the Palestinian refugee population of about 5 million is very sensitive issue *vis à vis* the Israeli dominant strategy because it may create a political and a social imbalance in terms of demographical dimension. The Palestinian and Jew citizens inside the Palestinian and the Israeli territories are in total more than 10 million: 5 million Palestinians (including those who live inside Israel), and 5 million Jews. Therefore, if the 5 million refugees returned to the Palestinian territory, the Palestinian population will double that of the Israeli’s. The more than 5 million Palestinian refugees outside the country is one of the problematic issues between the Palestinian and the Israeli authorities. The demographic cause continuously raises high tension. So far, the Israeli authorities never accepted any refugees’ return negotiations with the Palestinian side. In contrast, Israel continues its pressure against the Arab 48 inside Israel, at the same time, building new residences to encourage Jews outside the country to return to Israel. This phenomenon is considered as a US blind eye by mainly the EMB. Consequently, a mistrust between these main actors lead to under-ground fighting. The next section highlighted the nature of the Palestinian State.

### **2.2. The Nature of the Palestinian State**

The Second main issue of the conflict is whether Palestine should establish its normal state like any other member countries of the United Nations or a country under the Israeli conditions. According to the Palestinian vision, a normal country means an independent country that can make any kind of agreements they may demand, including military agreements with other countries. However, the Israeli authorities are suspicious and worry of allowing the Palestinians to have a normal state because it may be a danger for its existence, especially with the presence of Hamas in the political scene. The Israeli authorities in parallel with the US, tried to marginalize the MB’s arm, Hamas from the Palestinian crisis negotiation through the Oslo Accords due to its inflexible position anti-Israel. Hamas does not recognize the state of Israel though. The nature of the Palestinian state itself is sensitive for the Israeli governments due to the Israeli doubtful

---

<sup>1</sup> “Brother” refers to “the member of the Muslim Brotherhood’s Organization”.

<sup>2</sup> “Oslo Accord” under Bill Clinton Administration, recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian negotiation and allowed Yasser Arafat to live in Palestine. More importantly, this accord signed by the Russian, Israeli, Palestinian and the US foreign ministers opened the door to an imaginary permanent resolution of the conflicting elements: Jerusalem, Palestinian Refugees, Israeli settlements, security and borders. The Arm of the MB, Hamas, has been completely marginalized from this Accord.

addiction toward the Palestinians. According to the Israeli's fear, Palestine may rapidly develop a military capability in any time. Strong Palestine, under Hamas' influence means endless war on the eyes of the US and the Israeli governments. Hamas is strongly demanding a complete and a normal state like other countries unconditionally. This unconditional state is observed as extremism by the US, while the EMB considers it as full right of the Palestinians. The next section is discussing the continuous American support to Israel.

### **2.3. The Huge US Military and Economic Support to Israel**

The Third sensitive issue connected to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis is the US military and economic supports to the Israeli successive governments. Nevertheless, the EMB looks at the US governments as the backbone of the Israeli's continuous aggressive behavior against the Palestinians due to the existing Israeli military power. The American military equipment and economic supports are the principal conflicting elements between the US and the 'Political Islam' in general. According to many Islamist leaders, regardless of their various ideologies, this US governments' military support to Israel is the principal cause of the violent Political Islam embodied by Al-Qaida and other violent groups who also consider Jerusalem a red line for fight. According to Mitchell, "the Palestine question became the starting-point for attacks on the United States" (Mitchell 1969). Next section highlights the conflict related to Jerusalem.

### **2.4. The Conflict over the Sacred City: Jerusalem**

It is essential to notice that whenever we hear about negotiations between the Israeli and the Palestinian authorities, neither side raises the complicated issue of the sacred city of "Jerusalem". This is might be the most sensitive issue because it is a dispute of faith: The Israeli governments consistently claim the ownership of the area while the Palestinian Muslims declare that it is the third sacred place after the Mosques in Mecca and the other in Medina (Both cities are located in Saudi Arabia). Christians mainly in Palestine are also involved in this dispute as they reflect Jerusalem as a special land for Christianity too. In sum, Jerusalem known as the conflicting sacred place of the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam is a conflicting point that particularly involves the International Community. For the sake of the road map to peace in the Middle East, the Israeli governments show readiness to allow Jerusalem to the Palestinians both Christians and Muslims, but only under its administration. Contrary to the Israeli ambition, the Palestinians repeatedly claim that Jerusalem is inside of their territory according to the 1967 Accords. In addition, the Palestinians claim Jerusalem as the capital city of the desired Palestinian state, a claim that has been rejected by the successive Israeli authorities. As a neutral mediator of this crisis, the United Nations (UN) hopes to keep the sacred Jerusalem under a UN arbitrary status, allowing all conflicting actors to be part of it. For Hamas and the EMB, the issue of recognizing Israel should be the last point, after the Settlement of the Palestinian Refugees, establishing the Palestinian State under Jerusalem as its capital city.

## **3. Conclusion**

The study assumes that there is an active hidden confrontation underground between the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the United States Middle East Policy. The main conflicting point is the Israeli-Palestinian Crisis. Specifically, the study covered the settlement of the Palestinian Refugees, the Nature of the Palestinian State wanted by both the U.S and the EMB, the huge military and economic support to Israel and finally the Conflict of the Sacred City: JERUSALEM. The above conflicting elements led both actors into a hidden confrontation that positions the US government today in a hidden comfort of the *coup d'état* against the EMB democratically elected, Mr. Morsi.

## **4. Acknowledgements**

First, I offer my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Doctor Yamao Dai, who has supported me throughout my PhD research with his patience and knowledge, whilst allowing me the room to work in my own way. One simply could not wish for a better or friendlier supervisor.

Secondly, I would like to offer my greatest thanks to my wife, Atin Supartini, who has provided me technical support covered in this paper, with consistent quality. My dear friend and wife has offered much advice and insight throughout this work.

## 5. References

- [1] Abdl Al Munim Al hafani. *The Sects and the Groups* (Arabic). Madbuli library. Cairo. 1995.
- [2] Abdullah Ibrahim Al Dala. 2007. *The Islamists and the Mirage of Democracy* (Arabic). Madbuli Library. Cairo. Retrieved from [http://www. Madboulybooks.cominfo@madboulybooks.com](http://www.Madboulybooks.cominfo@madboulybooks.com)
- [3] Adnan Saad Al Din. 2010. *The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria* (Arabic). Mabouly Library. Retrieved from <http://www. Madboulybooks.com>. Cairo.
- [4] Alpher, Joseph and Shikaki, Khalil. 1998. *The Palestinian Refugee Problem and the Right of Return*. Weatherhead Center for International Affairs Harvard University. Retrieved from [http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/WCFIA\\_98-07.pdf](http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/WCFIA_98-07.pdf) (accessed August 4, 2012).
- [5] Bourgat, Francois. *Face to face with political Islam*. Brussels: Center for European Policy Studies. 2003.
- [6] Dalacoura, Katerina. *US Democracy Promotion in the Arab Middle East since 11 September 2001: A Critique*. *International Affairs*, 81: 963-979, 2005. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2346.2005.00497.x.
- [7] Dessouki, Ali. *The New Arab Political Order: Implications for the 1980s*. In Malcom H. Kerr and Sayed el-Yassin, eds, *Rich and Poor States in the Middle East* Boulder: Westview Press, 1982.
- [8] Dumper, Michael. *Politics of the Sacred Space: The Old City of Jerusalem in the Middle East Conflict*. Paperback edition publishers in the United States of America in 2003 by Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. Boulder, Colorado, 2003.
- [9] Henriksen, Thomas H. 2007. *The Israeli Approach to Irregular Warfare and Implications for the United States*. The JSOU Press, Hurlburt Field, Florida. Retrieved from <http://www.dtic.mil/cgibin/GetTRDoc?Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf&AD=ADA495467> (accessed August 4, 2012).
- [10] Lewis, B. *The roots of Muslim rage. The Atlantic September. What Went Wrong?* Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- [11] Mahmud Abd lhalim. *The Muslim Brotherhood*, first, second and third volumes (Arabic). Dar al- Dawah press. Volume 1-3. 2004.
- [12] Mitchell, P. Richard. *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*. Oxford University Press, Inc. New York, 1969.
- [13] Mohamed Salim Al Awwa. *The Case of the Muslim Brotherhood*, Daru Al Shuruk Publication, 2005. ISBN 978-977-09-3098-4. Cairo (Arabic).
- [14] Muhammad Al Baz. *Memoir of the Preaching and Preacher*. Kunuz Publication, Cairo (Arabic), 2010.
- [15] Muhsin Muhammad. *Who Killed Hassan Al-Banna*, Cairo(Arabic), 1987. Retrieved from <http://www. Shorouk.com>.
- [16] Mushir Omar Al Misri. 2006. *The Political Life* (Arabic). Dar al- Kalimat Press. Street Thaurat, al- Sikat al- Gadidah, Mansurah. Cairo.
- [17] Ramadan, T. *L'Islam et le Reveil Arabe*. Imprime en Francais, N. d'impression: 80989, Depot legal. Lyon: Presses du Chatelet (French), 2011.
- [18] Pargeter, Alison. 2010. *The Muslim Brotherhood: the Burden of Tradition*. India: Thomson Press. Retrieved from <http://www. Saqibooks.com>.
- [19] Pipes, Daniel. 2002. *Militant Islam Reaches America*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, N. Y. Retrieved from <http://www.wwnorton.com>.
- [20] Said, Edward. *Covering Islam. Ed. Revue*. New York: Vintage, 1997.
- [21] Salah Al Din Hassan. 2011. *Group in Crisis* (Arabic), Madbouli Library, Cairo. Retrieved from <http://www.madboulybooks.com>.