T.C.

ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN

HAMAS AND IRAN AFTER THE SYRIAN UPRISING

THESIS

KHALED F. M. KRAIZIM

Political Science and International Relations

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Thesis Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Gökhan DUMAN

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Enstitümüz Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Ana Bilim Dalı Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler İngilizce Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı Y1312.110033 numaralı öğrencisi **Khaled F. M. KRAIZIM'ın "THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HAMAS AND IRAN AFTER THE SYRIAN UPRISING"** adlı tez çalışması Enstitümüz Yönetim Kurulunun 28.06.2016 tarih ve 2016/14 sayılı kararıyla oluşturulan jüri tarafından .... ile Tezli Yüksek Lisans tezi olarak ....edilmiştir.

<u>Öğretim Üyesi Adı Soyadı</u>   <u>İmzası</u>

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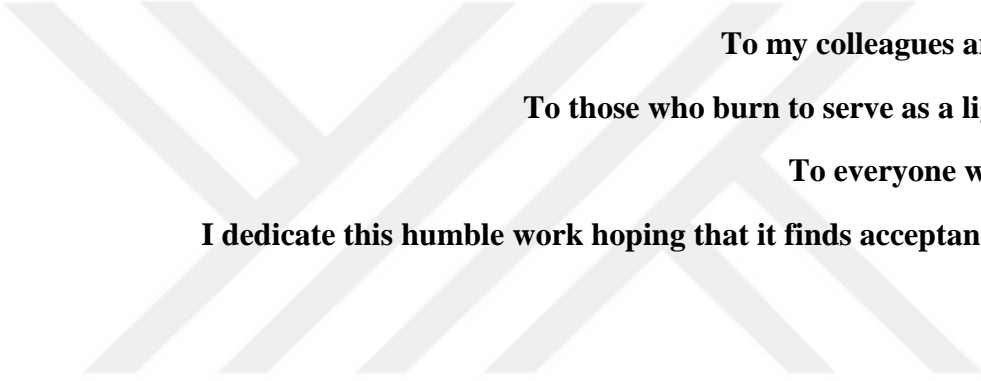
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To my Mom and Dad,

To my family and my people,

To my teachers,

To my colleagues and classmates,

To those who burn to serve as a light for others,

To everyone who taught me,

I dedicate this humble work hoping that it finds acceptance and success

FOREWORD

25 years ago, the relations between the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas and Iran started, and it took a formal and official path after 1990, after a Hamas delegation participated in a conference to support the first Palestinian Uprising in Tehran in November 1991. Iran then asked Hamas to appoint a representative to the movement in Tehran.

At that time, Hamas' relations with Hezbollah has enhanced as well, especially after deporting a big number of Hamas' officials to Marj Alzohor in Lebanon at the end of 1992, which contributed to strengthening the relations between both parties. This relationship was based on involvement in the resistance project, and Hamas' need to establish a strategic support network to further strengthen this path.

This relationship was based on Hamas' vision of collaborating with regional powers and countries to serve the Palestinian cause, based on balance without aliening with any local or regional power, and without intervening in the internal affairs of these countries and powers.

This was confirmed by the six-day visit the founder of Hamas, Ahmed Yassin, made to Tehran in 1998, after he visited Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and later United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait. Yassin drew the path for Hamas's enhancing relations with Tehran, and the balance in Hamas' relationships with other powers, the thing that Hamas' leaders are still committed to until today.

Hamas made a strategic shift after winning the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in 2006 and forming the Palestinian government, which greatly contributed to supporting the government of Ismail Hanyiah in facing the siege imposed on it, which reached its peak during the three-week offensive on Gaza in 2008-2009.

The policies of both parties did not work out always, yet they managed their difference with a great deal of success, and a strategic consensus between them was formed. This relationship became cold after what was called "the Arab Spring" and due to the major differences between them over the Syrian crisis, especially after Hamas leaders left Damascus at the beginning of 2012, and Hamas' support for the popular revolution in Syria.

October 2016   **Khaled F. M. KRAIZIM**

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Bu çalışma 2006 -2013 yılları boyunca İran'ın Hamas'a karşı uyguladığı dış politikayı değerlendirmektedir. 2006'da Filistin'de parlamento seçimlerini kazanan Hamas ve kurulan hükümeti, İran İslam Cumhuriyeti gibi bazı müslüman ülkeler dışında bölgesel ve uluslararası alanda tanınmadı. İran'ın, seçilen Filistinli hükümet için desteğini hemen ilan etmesiyle, İran ile Hamas arasındaki ilişkiler gelişmeye başladı fakat sonrasında bazı olaylar taraflar arasındaki ilişkileri zedeledi.

2013 yılı Hamas kontrolündeki Gazze Şeridi için önemli bir sene oldu.Hamas zaferini gören ve onun manevi babası kabul edilen Mısır Cumhurbaşkanı Muhhamed Mursi ve Müslüman Kardeşler ülkeden izole edildi.

Bu çalışma tanımlayıcı, analitik, tarihi bazı araştırmalara, dış politika görüşlerine ve genişletilen analizlere dayanmaktadır. Ayrıca , araştırma aracı olarak uzmanların ve resmi görevlilerin fikirlerine de yer verilmistir.Çalışma dört bölüme ayrılmaktadır. Bunlar; İran'n dış politikasının dinamikleriyle mücadele, İran ve Hamas arasındaki ilişkiler , ilişkilerin Filistin'e ve İran'ın Hamasa karşı uyguladığı politikaya etkisi, ayrıca bu siyasette Arap baharının oynadığı rol incelenmektedir. Çalışma taraflar arasındaki ilişkilerle alakalı olarak bölgesel ve uluslararası olası seneryoları vererek sonlanmaktadır.

Çalışmada farkedilmiştir ki Suriye krizindeki farklı pozisyonlarına rağmen ; İran'da Filistin meselesi siyasi karar alımında ana kaygılardan biridir ve Filistin direnişini desteklemek için İsrail ile karşı karşıya gelmek gereklidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Hamas, İran, Dış Politikası, Arab baharı, Suriye*

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN

HAMAS AND IRAN AFTER THE SYRIAN UPRISING

ABSTRACT

This study examines the Iranian foreign policy towards the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) during the period (2006-2013), which saw the movement's victory in the parliamentary elections in 2006, and the formation of its government, which was boycotted regionally and internationally except for some Islamic countries such as the Islamic Republic of Iran which announced from the first moment its support for the elected Palestinian government, boosting the relationship between Iran and Hamas, yet some events led to the decline in this relationship between the two parties.

The year 2013 represents a crucial year in Hamas' rule of the Gaza Strip, when Mohammed Morsi, the Egyptian president was isolated as well as the Muslim Brotherhood, which is the spiritual father of the Hamas Movement.

 The study relied on several research approaches, including the descriptive, analytical, historical approaches and the analysis of strengths and foreign policy approaches. In addition, the researcher used interviews with specialists and officials as a research tool.
This study falls in four chapters, which deals with the elements of Iran's foreign policy, which touches on the relationship between Iran and Hamas. It also addressed the impact of these changes on the Palestinian arena during that period on Iran's foreign policy towards Hamas, and the impact of the Arab revolutions on this policy. The study concluded by presenting a review of the possible future scenarios between the two parties at the regional and international levels.

The study found that the Palestinian issue is of major concern to the political decision-maker in Iran, and to support the Palestinian resistance is necessary to confront Israel despite the different positions on the Syrian crisis.

Keywords: *Hamas, Iran, Foreign policy, Arab spring, Syria*

1. INTRODUCTION

The political map of the world has recently witnessed fundamental changes, which has significant impact on the world order. These changes led to establishing international relations, blocks, and new coalitions and made international circumstances suitable for expansion and control. It also strengthened mutual interest equation as one of the most important standards, which governs relationships in the current world order. With these changes, states seek to improve its regional and international position by utilizing power means or by establishing relationships and inking agreements, based on its strategic vision, which attempts to achieve by using foreign policy structured by its internal attitudes.

Iran is considered as a major regional power in the Middle East. Due to its large economic, military and human capital, Iran was successful at different stages in playing various roles to reshape the region. Yet, Iran's role was never highlighted as it was after the success of the Islamic revolution, which brought Iran's Rida Shah Bahlawi down in 1979 (Behrooz 2012).

Since there, it seemed that a fundamental change has occurred in relation to Iran's regional policy and its tools. Iran has adopted a constant position that is supportive to the Palestinian issue. It has become one of the pillars of its foreign policy by establishing relationships with the Fatah Movement and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and other Palestinian factions. Yet, due to the changes that have occurred in relation to the Palestinian issue, this relationship got weakened, especially with the PLO which is led by Fatah, due to the latter's acceptance of settlement projects with Israel, which Iran considers the beginning of giving up the Palestinian issue, at the expense of Iran's

relationships with Palestinian resistance movements such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other Palestinian factions (Surour 2010).

The relationship between Iran and the Hamas movement has started after the conference held in Tehran in 1992, in which Arab and Islamic leaders have participated, to respond to the peace conference held in the Spanish Capital Madrid in 1991, yet this relationship was still low until 2006 (Struwe1998,pp.18-21).

After the electoral success of Hamas in the legislative council, and the change of the direction of this relationship, every party realized its need to the other. Hamas needs Iran to obtain financial support and to meet financial, military, logistic needs to protect its institutions and to continue resisting Israel. As for Iran, it has adopted a supportive position to the movement, and provided it with all forms of support, based on Iran's understanding that one of its mains threats is Israel, which means supporting Hamas' militarily and financially is the means to confront it, and other means will not work, such as peaceful settlement, thus Iran adopted a position of supporting armed Palestinian resistance movement in the Gaza Strip in particular (Struwe1998, pp. 22,43, 49).

Changes in the region (Arab uprisings) affected Iran's alignments, particularly, the Syrian crisis. Hamas' position regarding the Syrian uprising has led to setback in the relationship between both, Iran and Hamas. Despite this, none of them cut off its relationship with the other completely. Therefore, this study examines the reasons why both parties still committed to each other despite fundamental differences between them (Fahmy & Al-Mughrabi 2012).

There is a contradiction between the Iranian support to resistance movements and its goals behind this support, especially when it comes to resistance movements in Palestine, particularly; support given to the Hamas movement, which Iran claims comes in the same line with its interest in resisting Israel within the axis of resistance in the region. On the other hand, the methods and conditions utilized by Iran in implementing this approach, which does not come in line with the ideology of Hamas.

The Iranian policy towards the Palestinian issue is moving strongly through the Palestinian Islamic movements, in accordance with common interests, but with conditions and long-term goals, in return; these movements welcome the Iranian support, but without the dictates and conditions that do not conform with its principles, especially with the Iranian motives and interests in the region; like exporting the Iranian revolution.

This study aims to answer about the position of Iran's foreign policy towards Hamas, and Shed a light on the changes in Iran's foreign policy after the Arab uprisings with limitation of (2006-2013), as well as trying to analyze the future of the relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Hamas movement, and the Iranian role in the region.

This study consists of three chapters: the first chapter addresses major variables in Iran's foreign policy, its goals and its principles and factors that govern decision-making in Iran, and how Iran is affected by the regional developments. The second chapter discusses Iran's foreign policy determinants on Hamas, and the position of Iran regarding the Palestinian cause and other resistance movement, in addition to Iran's various forms of support for Hamas, the third and last chapter highlights the impact of Arab uprisings on Iran's foreign policy towards Hamas and future of relationship between both parties.

1.1 Hypothesis

The main hypothesis of this study is that Iran would not give up its role and presence in Palestine, but it will change its tools and allies, and establish forces and parallel entities in Palestine. As for Hamas, in spite of ideological differences, the weight of Iran and its political role is important to the movement. Hamas does not plan to cut its relationship with Iran, but it tries to re-define, develop and make use of the current circumstances.

Under this hypothesis, the researcher suggests that relationship with Iran will be redefined by the Palestinian resistance movements, Islamic parties, which means that

resistance will go out of the frameworks of equations of political axes in the region (axis of resistance), and will be placed outside polarization.

It could be argued that the lack of a change example in the Arab World that guarantees supporting Palestinian resistance was why Hamas to seek Iran's help in order to reproduce relations based on solving the conflict with Israel in a language that supports the principles of the Iranian Revolution.

Yet, this vision is blocked by the sectarian differences between Iran, the Shiite, and Hamas, the Sunni; in addition to the changing political situation in the region after the Arb Spring revolutions, which made Iran's notion of supporting or fighting one regime over the other clearer, which shook the moto of defending the Palestinian cause from the point of view of Hamas.

Hamas claims that its central goal is to liberate Palestine from the Israeli occupation without adopting any other agendas. While Iran asks for much more such as supporting the Syrian regime and Bashar Alassad, and collaborating with Hezbollah, which might mean fighting in Syria at a later stage. Hamas considers fighting in Syria is a far-fetched request and going away from its role and resistance, which it says, is limited to the boundaries of Palestine.

1.2 Research Methodology

Research methodology utilizes a qualitative method through analysis and comparison between the two parties.

News, articles and official statements issued by all involved parties will be gathered, main sources like papers, books and studies related to the subject will be studied and ordered in accordance with the development of the subject.

After processing the mentioned materials, the researcher will try to relate/enforce his argument by some theories related to the field.

The researcher will use interviews as a tool to assist, supported by some information.

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This will include interviewing a number of politicians and academics to anticipate the future of the relationship between Hamas and Iran to focus more on what is more important and to exclude the non-essential information, by preparing pre-structured interviews since the researcher is residing in another country.

The study depends on analysis of power approach, through studying the effective factors in Iran's power by relying on foreign relations, in addition to analyzing the contents of media discourse and the Iranian statements towards Hamas.

Power of the state is one of the factors which has a special importance in the field of IR based on the fact that this power is behind drawing the aspects of this role played by the state within the international community and within the umbrella of state relations with external powers in the international environment(Miglid 1987).

The concept of power has gone beyond the military aspect which has a broader meaning to include the political, economic, social, cultural and technical power. Whatever the source of power is, it does not gain any strength or influence just by merely existing, but it has to do with the ability to intervene consciously to transform the available resources of power to influential power and effective weapon. Strength is about obtaining the sources of power such as economic capabilities and military and population and others. Power functions as the possibility of transforming these resources, which Iran attempts to apply when dealing with Hamas.

There are three trends to define power: First, it defines power as the ability to influence others and the ability to push others to act in a way that contributes to the interest of power owner. Second: it defines power as effective participation in important decisions in the society. Third: it tries to have both opinions. Power is about control and takeover directly or indirectly of issues related to certain people or groups and what it entails of distributing values and the ability of the power owner (Laider 1983).

The American College of War defines a state national power in relation to things used by a state to reach their goal. Power is the functioning device of power controls and

takes over the actions of other people (Rabee and Miglid 1993). One of the concepts related to power is the political influence through which means of attraction or fear and convincing, control and force appears with deterrence (Bartholomees 1992)

Diplomacy and war are two means of convincing the other party to submit to the will of the state. This interprets many phenomena such as the participation of military people and diplomats in national security councils and its political formation. This led to the emergence of military diplomacy or power diplomacy (Hans 1993).

1.3 Previous Studies

Thomson addresses in his study The ties that bind Iran and Hamas principal - agent relationship the following questions: What are the cost and benefit arising from the relationship for each of the actors-the Islamic Republic of Iran and Hamas; how has the relative weight of those costs and benefits changed over the course of the relationship; and why have they changed? The purpose of these questions is to develop further a little-studied area of both Iran and Hamas' IR and bring a new perspective to the study of Violent-None-State Actor relations. To do this Principal Agent analysis was used. The answers were the following:

Iran's benefits included expertise, credible commitments, plausible deniability, as well as domestic and foreign legitimacy. Costs were a mixture of adverse selection and slack. On the other hand, benefits of Hamas were training and funding from Iran, both of which are crucial, but the costs were also considerable. The benefit and cost changed frequently due to changes in the external environment these changes have affected both Iran's ability to cooperate with other states, and Hamas autonomy vis-à-vis external sponsors. In this respect, the Oslo Accords, the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, the backlash from al-Qaeda's attack of September 11, 2001, the 2003 Iraq war, the 2006 Palestinian elections, and the 2011 Arab spring have been key event. (Thomson 2012).

Corro examines the recent Arab uprisings, tracing the growth of the Shiite Crescent from its initial beginning until its present day involvement in the conflict in Syria. It will

establish that while the Shiite Crescent has purported a focus on Islam and ending oppression, its current support for Bashar al-Assad's murderous regime has revealed this group's true objective geopolitical survival and growth. It concluded that the Arab uprisings have exposed hypocrisy among Shiite Crescent, a group of entities who have vowed to struggle relentlessly for the deprived. The alliance of resistance has been unjust, un-Islamic, inhumane, and fraudulent (Corro 2013).

Mirault analyzes the evolution of Hamas particularly since its victory in the Palestinian legislative elections of January 2006. In addition, to wonder why a group listed as terrorist organization, which is supported by a majority of Palestinians, is completely excluded from the negotiations and thus does not take part in the research of solution to the Israel/Palestine equation? It concluded that Hamas by affiliating armed struggle and religion has known how to ensure its military and financial sources by developing a strong network among important persons as by being close with the poorest classes that are the first victim of the guerrilla. Besides, many unofficial relations are maintained between Europe and Hamas or the United State and its new president Obama, who remained very quiet during last Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip, seem willingness to start a dialog, which could be the best thing for the Hamas and the Palestine (Mirault 2010).

McDonnell discusses the external relations of Hamas to recognize it as pragmatic organization oscillating between political Islamism and militant Islamism as circumstances dictate. This will do through analyzing the constraints under which it reacts and the advantages it gains from these associations. It concluded that Hamas seems to take the trend of pragmatism which has continued throughout the history of Hamas and even when they took office in the PLC their actions and legislation echoed pragmatism, instituting programs focused on security and deemphasizing Islamism (McDonnell 2010).

Ehteshami and Hinnebusch 2002 examines the Syrian-Iranian relations and their foreign policy, and their struggle in the Middle East, and their position on Israel and peace with it being from the axis of resistance, and that their alliance was part of power balance in

the Middle East and was an attempt to contain the western influence in the region, and they lead a wise diplomatic line without using power to increased their influence (Ehteshami and Hinnebusch 2002).

Al-Kariri defined the popular diplomacy or the informal diplomacy that has been followed by Hamas movement and how this diplomacy led to reinforcing Hamas regional and international status, and coincided with the role of Hamas as one of the non-state actors in which its role extended beyond the Palestinian borders and commensurate with situation of siege imposed on Gaza. It discussed the changes took place in the Arabic and Palestinian region and how these changes brought a vivid change in the role and resistance approach of Hamas. The study concluded that Hamas has to develop its media performance to be able to make a clear change that is necessary to this era and preserving the constants that cannot be waived or Hamas will lose a real source of strength for its popularity (Al-Kariri 2014).

Kassab analyzes the experience of Hamas movement in governance and its reflections on the liberation strategies for the Palestinian resistance. The most prominent outcomes of the study are: the factors that contributed to the success of Hamas movement in the second legislative election 2006 can be divided to two dimensions; the first in subjective (cohesion, in self-regulatory subject), cohesion, resistance strategy, electoral program, and the success of the selection of candidates), the second represents the objective factors corruption of the previous governments, weak organizational structure of Fatah, Authority's security coordination and the nature of the electoral system). The success of Hamas leadership was weak according to the study sample due to the newest of the Hamas movement in the government, and the state of political and economic siege imposed on Gaza (Kassab 2014).

Al-Smadi discussed new dimensions of the relationship between Iran and the two key Islamic resistance movements in Palestine, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, in light of several factors. Foremost of these factors are Syrian uprising, Iran's negotiations with the West on the nuclear agreement, Iran's role in the MENA region and Iran-Saudi rivalry. It also

seeks to examine the relevant actors' positions regarding the future of this relationship. It concluded that the two movements' relations with the Islamic Republic, as well as the Iranian role to the Palestinian issue, have entered a new stage (Al-Smadi 2015).

In the light of having multiple sides of Iran's foreign policy towards Hamas, and with the existence of variety of challenges imposed on Hamas movement, it becomes necessary to analyses the conflict between Iran's attempts to support Hamas as a resistance movements and its goals behind this support. After the nuclear deal, Iran will seek to impose a new equation that would preserve the Islamic Republic as a key player in the Palestinian cause, while simultaneously pursing its own interest related to domestic and other regional issues (Al-Smadi 2015). In addition, it is obvious that Iran-Hamas relationship witness ascending and slump along to various events regionally and internationally. Utilizing VNS expertise, credible commitments, plausible deniability, as well as domestic and foreign legitimacy are all benefits for Iran but the costs were adverse selection and slack. Meanwhile, training, funding and shelters were the benefits of Hamas; however, the costs were also considerable (Thomson 2012) . All these asserted on the tension in the relationship of the two parties which lead the researcher to carry on this study.

One of the theories that support the study's problem is the rational choice theory that focuses on cost-benefit approach (Thomson 2012). Another paper is based on the assumption stating that Iran would not abandon its role and its presence in the Palestinian arena, but it will change its tools and the list of allies (Al-Smadi 2015). Taking in consideration that this study will attempt to explore the effect extent of Arab uprisings on Iran's foreign policy towards Hamas, it involves shedding light on the argument of Shiite Crescent: Syria, Hezbollah, and Iran ideology behind their commitment to Bashar Al-Assad regime, as the Arab uprisings have exposed hypocrisy among the Shiite Crescent (Corro 2013). In addition, it is assumed that Hamas has never really implemented its policy although being elected democratically, meanwhile, Israel, Fatah, PLO, besides International community would not allow Hamas to really carry on

its mandate. Also, it is supposed that Hamas political involvement is failure, as it is still listed as terrorist organization (Mirault 2010), these assumptions are related to one of the current study which is to what extent did changes on the Palestinian stage (2006-2013) affect Iran's foreign policy towards Hamas. All these points are really related to study problem particularly to the main question about position of Iran's foreign policy towards Hamas.

2. PILLARS OF IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

2.1 What Is Foreign Policy?

The term "foreign policy" has many definitions due to many scholars, historians and diplomats who tackled it. Hence it is not easy to set a certain and inclusive definition for foreign policy according to its complicated environment .

In brief, the following definitions tackled the term foreign policy; Professor Gambari Ibrahim described foreign policy as a mixture of certain national political forces and the driving international political relations. Besides him professor Olajide Aluko who defined it as "an interaction between internal and external forces." However, for professor Osita Agbu, it can be defined as the state's behavior on external level (A., N &Ambe-Uva 2012).

For Professor F.S. Northege it is an outcome of internal and external environment factors. However Keith R. Legg and James Morrison look for foreign policy as combination of clear goals concerning global borders of certain social unit besides a group of strategies to achieve these objectives. Joseph Frankel states that foreign policy is a set of determined actions including perceptible relations among states. Professor Tunde Adeniran sees that foreign policy has three main factors which are general policy trend of a certain state regarding another, the goal behind the relationship with other states, and the tools of attaining the planned goal. For Professor George Obiozor foreign policy addresses the state's way and reason of choosing certain goals, instructions its own governmental policy making machinery, consuming its human resources to compete with other nations in the international arena (A., N &Ambe-Uva 2012).

Benko defined foreign policy as a structure of activities carried out by a nation within the international arena aiming to effect the international arena that fits the objectives of

the state's political activities that are all geared towards its interests. For Calvert it's the decisions and activities which relate to the states relations (Petric 2013).

James says that "Foreign policy means the authoritarian actions taken by governments or commit to take, either to maintain the desired aspects in the international environment or to change undesirable aspects" This definition mixes the physical reality and the scientific dimension of the phenomenon (James 1974).

Vukadinovic defines Foreign Policy as a State's planned activity to duplicates its values with regard to the operating states and subjects within the foreign environment. Crabb outlines it as national goal, means, and the interaction between them in the essence of statesmanship. Kaltefleiter understands foreign policy as a system of communication including different kinds of activities between diplomates at social gathering such as summit meetings and informal talks. Hill considers foreign policy as the State's official foreign relations at the international level. Smith, Hadfield, Dunne define foreign policy as the national government approach to achieve its aims regarding external relations (Petric 2013).

Mohammed Salim provides a definition takes into account the basic characteristics of the foreign policies process and the potential aspects for these policies, thus: "foreign policy means the public work program chosen by the official representatives of the State from a range of alternatives available in order to achieve specific goals in the ocean international (Salim 2001).

2.2 Foreign Policy's Goals of Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran, the same as other countries, set a number of declared goals for its foreign policy, which are summarized in section 10 of the constitution, which addresses foreign policy issues. It affirms the necessity of participating in defending Muslims' rights, exchanging peaceful relationship with non-warring countries as stated in Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, article 152 "It is prohibited to sign any

treaty which might lead to foreign control over natural resources, economy, culture, army, and other affairs of the country."

This reaffirms what is stated in another article of maintaining complete independence and the unification of the country's lands. It is clear that Iran's foreign policy is being careful when it comes to dealing with foreigners which maintains a negative point of view regarding it, thus, affects Iran's relationships and its openness with the outside world, which negatively affects its foreign policy.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran considers the happiness of man in the human society a sacred issue. It considers independence and freedom and establishing just governance a right to all people all over the world. Thus, the Islamic Republic of Iran supports the legitimate struggle of all oppressed against the oppressors anywhere in the world, and at the same time, do not intervene in the internal affairs of peoples. (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, article 154).

Ali Larijani, the theorist of Iran's foreign policy, explains that one of the goals of the foreign policy of the country is to work on unifying the Muslim nation all over the world, as well as defending the lands and interest of Muslims in addition to preaching for Islam (Larijani 2015). Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, article 3 of the first chapter states the necessity of arranging the priorities of the country based on Islamic values which impose big commitments towards all Islamic issues and oppressed people.

Iran refuses to side by any oppressing country, as stated in its foreign policy. Iran calls for kicking colonizers out and refuses foreign presence or establishing relationships with warring countries. This concept also includes all countries which adopts a foreign policy that is different from that of Iran. Iran also seeks to strengthen the brotherhood ties among Muslim countries (Matter 2010).

Thus, the constitution of Iran, made it's a must for decision-makers to abide by its goals, as much as they could, and this has been evident during the time of President Ahmadi Najad, when Iran has decided to support the Palestinians by all possible means.

2.3 Principles of Iran's Foreign Policy

Iran's declared foreign policy goals, as stated in the constitution, is an ideological result of the Iranian revolution, which is based on Islamic heritage, that is rooted in the Shiite Jafari branch of Islam, that is based on the teachings of the twelve Shiite leaders. The revolution worked to revive and strengthen this doctrine of Islam to serve its interests (Mohammadi 2015).

In the same vein, these goals were based on the principles of the Islamic revolution, most importantly:

The principle of one Islamic nation: The unity of the Muslim nation has taken a large space in the thinking of the Islamic revolution, on the top of them the leader of the revolution, Ayatuallah Alkhumaini, who gave a helping hand to all people, east or west, to achieve unity among Muslims. He warned that ethnicity is a trap that Muslims should not fall into, which was introduced by colonizers.

The principle of nationhood is the basis from which Iran took the principles for its foreign policy, including what is related to defending the rights of Muslims and expanding and strengthening the brotherly relationship among Muslims, and setting the principles of foreign policy for the country on the basis of Islam and brotherhood towards all Muslims (Firooz- Abadi 2012).

Principle of Neutrality: Iran has classified the world's countries into two camps, oppressors and oppressed, supporting the latter to confront the countries of oppression. The term "oppressive countries" was not limited to big powers, but it included regional powers under its umbrella.

The notion of independence was adopted by Alkhumaini by saying: "the notion of independence means unifying the Muslim nation under one flag, and to liberate Muslim countries from the influence of great powers, and to be governed by Islam, not by the east, nor the west. (ALKhamini 1970).

The former Iranian president, Ali Akbar Hashimi Rafsanjani says: "one of the awful impacts of dividing countries into oppressor and oppressed, is that the oppressors are always a minority who expect obedience, yet this has no historical, Islamic or human basis." (FARS NEWS AGENCY 2015).

The principle of exporting revolution: exporting the revolution in the Iranian point of view is defined as "exporting the Iranian zeal to Islam, as wished by the Khumaini and the revolution regime, who asserted that exporting this zeal to the Muslim masses will make it stand up and get rid of all corrupt regimes." (Al-Sharqawi 1993)

Alkhumani has demanded since the beginning copying the revolution in Iran in other Muslim countries, as a step for unity with Iran, to face who he called the enemies of Islam in the east and the west Martin (2007,pp. 100-112).

He also connected exporting the revolution to facing imperialism and liberating Palestine and supporting oppressed people in the world (Meyssan 2014).

Iran also explained the notion of "exporting revolution" by saying: that "revolution is the light which we use to lighten our way and that we would not reach such level except by the virtue of our revolution thoughts, and if we lose them, we will become a normal state." (ALKhamini 2004).

The question is how these goals can be achieved in light of having another foreign policy goal for Iran, which is not intervening in the internal affairs of other countries and peoples. Alkhumaini tried to explain this ambiguity by differentiating between attacking wars, that Iran does not resort to, and defence wars which Iran has to fight.

In this regard, Bizin Iyzdi, an Iranian thinker, explains this ambiguity by saying: "the Iranian constitution prevented the current regime from intervening in other nations' affairs, not countries. Thus, any form of intervention to rescue those oppressed from the oppression of their governments does not contradict with this constitutional principle. For sure, the problem arises from the interpretation related to "nations," which are divided into various sects and groups, some of whom accept foreign intervention."(Iyzdi, 2000).

2.4 Factors Impacting the Process of Formulating the Iranian Foreign Policy's Decision-Making

The Islamic Republic of Iran is witnessing internal as well as external changes, which together influence the direction of the political authority that leads the Iranian political system since the Islamic Revolution back in 1979. Despite changes in leadership, the norm of maintaining the goals of the revolution remained the same, shaping the policies of Iran on the internal and external stages. Despite this, some changes took place internally, making the regime change its policy at all levels, especially those related to modernity and political reform, as well as in the fields of politics, economy, society and security. This also revealed that what might change in Iran's internal policy is connected to Iran's choices externally, especially those related to the neighboring Arab countries.

Studying these political changes is important because they are inter-related and affects the political system in its internal and external relations. This also governs decision-making and is reflected in the performance of public policy, and implementing continuing strategies that maintain the continuity of making various issues of interest to the political system and changeable principles coherent with the goals of the political system, and the aspirations of individuals and institutions of the state.

Internal factors play a major role in the Iranian foreign policy and forming its strategies and goals, which Iran aims to achieve. Most important internal factors, which influence Iranian foreign policy, are The Economic Factor: The Islamic Republic's approach at the

early stages focused on economic development, without applying a clear economic approach, and this approach remained dependent on general guidelines, which aimed to end economic dependency and restrictions imposed on the economy and to have economic independency. It also aimed at setting general guidelines responsive to the system of the Islamic Republic, that is loyal to the Faqih mandate, and adopting Islamic economic principles (Abdulmomen 2007).

Some intellectual trends in the economic field appeared in Iran during the first three stages of establishing the Islamic Republic, during the time of the first President of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Abulhassan Bani Alsadir), who was elected to office in 1979. His time witnessed establishing sovereign institutions in Iran that was not fully compete, in terms of authorizations and tasks. Bani Alsadir presented an electoral program that was based on liberating the Iranian currency from being tied to the United States Dollar's, to achieve economic development using profits made from producing oil, and to restructure exports, and to expand economic activities to all fields and sectors. Despite this, Bani Alsadir was ousted by the Popular Islamic Party, which had the majority of seats in the parliament, under the claim that he did not have political efficacy and that he had liberal trends (Najeeb 2009).

The other economic trend was led by AyatuAllah Bhshari, who established an approach to reform the economic track of the country, based on economic justice, and meeting basic needs of the individuals, combating poverty, and decreasing spending, giving economic opportunities to individuals and companies, and having all possible means that would eventually lead to economic independence (Najeeb 2009).

Despite the importance of adopting this economic approach at the first state of the Islamic revolution, Iran's economy was influenced by the eight-year-Iranian-Iraqi war, and further convinced the political leadership of Iran to activate the fifth system, which allowed for 20% of the oil money to be given to scientific projects, which was in charge of implementing charitable projects, and raising funds for unexpected disasters. One of the consequences of the war was the increasing control of the government over the

economy, and directing much of the budget and planning to the war. The need for reconstruction cost the Iranian economy a lot in all sectors (Rajaee 1993).

The second phase of the revolution witnessed the birth of many notions, which called for the need for realizing economic reform by achieving political reform, because the first phase of the revolution was theoretically serving the aspirations of individuals and bodies in developing the economic sector as expected by the leaders of the revolution. Thus, there was a need to have a political priority, which paid attention to economic security, combating corruption, and reforming economic laws, regulations, and policies which secured having a national consent, which included the foundations of the regime, and public polices as well as all other levels, and which guaranteed achieving economic growth and reduced inflammation and unemployment (Amirahmadi 1990).

During the time of Presidents Hashimi Rafsanjani and Mohammed Khatami, the government of Rafsanjani paid attention to privatize industries and major service centers, after the Iranian Economic Supreme Council issued an investment list in 1991, which motivated investors to establish industrial projects at all levels. This was reflected in the growth of the private sector, creating new jobs, and improving living conditions. During the time of Rafsanjani, when reconstruction took place soon after the Iraqi-Iranian war, a new social trend emerged that called for abandoning the revolution ideas of 1979, and forming a work team of economists, to liberate the economy. This could be done by liberating prices and privatizing the public sector, and liquating the value of the currency, lifting restrictions imposed on imports, encouraging investment, and taking loans form international organizations (Alizadeh 2003).

Despite the importance of what was proposed by Rafsanjani during the first term of his presidency in regard to improving living conditions, and supporting the market and investment, the formation of a new unity coalition, which included various political parties, soon after the 4th and 5th parliamentary elections, made Rafsanjani unable to follow up with his economic policy based on modernization, because of the rise of unemployment, failure to privatize the public sector, and the spread of bureaucracy and

administrative corruption, and the increase in inflammation, and widening the gap between classes due to the unfair distribution of income and national wealth.

The government of President Khatami was interested in making Iran a transit point between the south and then north, which qualifies the Islamic Republic to gradually avoid international economic pressure. Iran would do so by using Bumbai (India) and Bandar Abbas (Iran) seaports, and using trains to Anzali seaport through Qizeen sea for shipments to be transferred through Israkhan seaport in Russia (Farhi et al. 2012).

Private banks were established, taking loans from the central bank by the state was prohibited, and regional stocks were developed, iron and agriculture stocks were established, the value of the currency was standardized, and foreign investment law was implemented.

This phase was important in the gradual change in the Iranian economy, yet the interest in political reform was a priority for Khatami, which led to decrease in the value of the currency, and not being able to liberate the economy as expected (Farhi et al. 2012).

During the third stage in the revolution, the Iranian government during the term of Ahmadi Najad took several steps to change the track of reform internally, by changing the concepts of monetary system, and changing those who were in charge of the monetary management. This was done to make sure that banks gave services to customers and paid the money back on time in cases of loans, rather than being a tool for profit or mediation. The government proposed selling 5% of governmental shares in investment companies, and allowed for paying back the money of shares in 10 years, aiming at encouraging the private sector and bridging the gap between various classes, and prevented exploiting shares trade, which very often had its prices going up for illogical reasons, which qualified Iran to enter World Trade Organization and to face economic sanctions imposed on the country (Najeeb 2009).

The government of Ahmadi Najad tried to make fundamental changes in planning and management, by changing a number of qualified economists, setting new economic

policies, and monitoring system on the Republic's Presidency, which secured non-centralism, which served highest national interests, away from the dominance of traditional economic ideas. It also set a long-term economic plan until 2025, based on economic justice, and supported by religious and popular groups, in which Iranian individuals and companies took the responsibility and were committed to the spirit of collaboration and social harmony, which led to developing intellectual as well as economic potentials at the same time.

In general, the internal factor in economy played a vivid role in the third stage of the revolution, because Ahmadi Najad's government implemented the plan proposed by International Monetary Fund and The World Bank to liberate the Iranian economy, so that Iran could join World Trade Organization, after giving promises to reform customs and monetary sectors and reforming support program, after it has been implemented at the end of 2010, where some goods were excluded from support, such as oil, electricity, clean water, mailing, aerial and land services.

World Bank's data between 2005-2011 reveals that foreign investment in Iran doubled and reached to 15 billion in 2011, compared to 10 billion in 2007 and four billion in 2005, and less than one billion during the first and second phases of the revolution. Geographic and Demographic Factors: Iran is located in the Middle East. It is surrounded by the former Soviet Union countries from the north, Afganistan, Pakistan from the west, Iraq, Turkey from the west, and Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf from the south, with total border areas estimated at 5440 km.

The Gulf is Iran's main crossing for selling oil, in additional to the Iranian belief that the Gulf is Persian, which was emphasized by the foreign minter of Iran by then Ali Wilayati, who said: "our coastal line to the south, the Gulf and Strait of Hurmouz are our strategic borders, which are the most important to us." (Al Dawod 2010).

To reveal the influence of the geographic factor for Iran in making its foreign policy, this has to be linked to the developments with its Arab neighbors and others, as the

Iranian decision maker pays attention to Iran's border relationships with the former Islamic Soviet republics, which finds in Iran a crossing point, in addition to border conflicts and the continuing crisis resulting from Iran's occupation of the Emirati Islands, the Arab Israeli conflict, and the issue of peaceful settlement to this conflict, and how this would affect Iran-Arab relationships in general, and the Iran-Palestine relationships in particular, in addition to the Afghani question and its complexities.

The geo-political factor is the most important factor shaping Iran's foreign policy and achieving its national security aims. The new situation in Afghanistan and war on Iraq, and the inter-border relationship with the two countries and Iran, all of this, puts Iran in front of geographical challenges which seriously requires careful treatment. This issue shows clearly how geography has an impact on political-decision-making of Iran's foreign policy.

As for the demographic factor, the demographic structure of the Iranian society is made of a number of numerical, age, geographical, cultural, and racial characteristics of the population. These various characteristics are reflected in the political behavior of the country, by having a state of political stability. It also has an impact on political trends of the society and the balance of powers inside the political system.

Iran has various nationalities, races such as Kurds and Azaris, Arabs, Turks and Persians, which made its foreign policy highly influenced by this equation, especially that Iran is demographically connected to the Arab world in three major points:

Kurds, Persians, Arabs, which is reflected in shaping Iran's foreign policy, the protection of its national security, and its relationship with some countries which has these nationalities and races (Al-Rushaidi 2007).

Ideological factor: Religion has played a crucial role in Ira's revolution vision especially in the first decade after the revolution. Alkhumaini states that, which reflects how ideology plays an important role in Iran's foreign policy,: "We face the world ideologically." The revolution presented a new discourse, which described international

and well as local players differently. This was characterized by Islamic values and principles by successfully quoting the Quraan, which had a great impact on those receiving knowledge. The major measurement, which shaped Iran's foreign policy, was "arrogance."

The Iranian approach considered the concepts of independency and Islamic rule the two most basic ideological foundations, and they are in fact the two ideological entrances, which impacted the development of Iran-Arab relationship. The more Iran became committed to these concepts, the more tensions in relations with the Arab world Iran would have. This was clear in the 1980s, when Arab countries supported Iraq against what they called the Iranian threat in the region. What makes the Islamic Republic of Iran really has a political approach to what Islamic rule should be, based on one important pillar, the mandate of Faqih, which Iran sees as the Islamic solution for the Muslim World problems (Al-Sharqawi 2004).

This period of time was linked to "exporting the revolution" concept, which the Gulf countries are sensitive to, for having some large Shiaite minorities in their countries such as Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The members of the Iranian elites had different opinions as to how to export the revolution properly and effectively; some of them believed that Iran should be an example to follow as a means to export the revolution, thus using non-violent methods, and another group of Iranian elites believed that imprinting the revolution could only be achieved through military, and this was too weak and soon vanished since 1986 (Al-Zahrani 2009).

The moderate leadership of Rafsanjani was a factor in reducing restrictions imported on the eternal environment of the country, which stirred a technological transformation gradually, in regard to exporting the revolution, which led to systemic withdrawal of violent activities of the country outside.

Since the ideological factor is important in making Iranian foreign policy, some think that the religious factor is behind the Iranian support for the Palestinian people and their

issue, as it is being viewed as one of the core issues of the Arab and Muslim nations. Imam Khumaini thinks that Israel is a cancer cell, which should be removed. He declared in 1979, an international day to protest and mobilize to support Jerusalem, on the last Friday of Ramadan (Brandenburg n.d.).

Security and Military Factors: A country's ownership of military capabilities allows it to protect its political independence. It also allows for more flexibility and wider options for its foreign policy in favor of successfully facing threats, while the absence of these capabilities limit a country's alternatives when it comes to facing external threats and besieges its diplomatic alternatives without resorting to the military option when the diplomatic one fails. This negatively affects the capability of that country to protect its political independence and thus reducing the status of the country in the international system (Al-Nazer 2011)**.**

The importance of owning military power for Iran is about confronting any internal external threats and achieving balance with regional and international powers, and its ability to help its strategic allies in the region.

Iran's insistence on owning nuclear capabilities strengthened its regional and international position. This weapon gives Iran the courage to deal with western powers, and to adopt a more solid position during negotiations. Adding to this, the internal goal of providing alternative resources for power instead of oil (World Nuclear Association 2015).

3. IRANIAN FOREIGN POLICY'S DETERMINANTS TOWARDS HAMAS

3.1 What is Hamas?

Hamas is a national Palestinian movement, which works with its people inside and outside Palestine, along with the various factions and powers, national and Islamic, to resist the Zionist occupation, to liberate the Palestinian land and Jerusalem with its Islamic and Christian sites, to secure the return of refugees and displaced, and to fulfill the Palestinian national project, by establishing a real Palestinian independent state, through serving the Palestinian people all over the world, and by all possible means, which help them survive and continue, and bear the consequences of the confrontation with the Israeli occupation (Hamas, 2015).

Hamas is comprehensive and institutional in nature, represented by resisting the Israeli occupation, as its strategic project and essence. Hamas works in various fields: political, diplomatic, media, cultural, popular, societal, charitable, and educational. Hamas works on all Palestinian, Arab, Islamic and International levels Al-Shekhkhalil (2011, pp.2-4).

Hamas is a national liberation movement, which adopts a moderate Islamic approach, and that limits its struggle to the Palestinian cause, does not intervene in the affairs of others, and does not fight a battle against any party in the world Rezqa (2014, pp. 3-6).

Hamas' decision comes from its leadership and institutions, based on the interest of its people and the requirements of the Palestinian cause, and no one is intervening in its decisions. The movement is not inter-related with any faction, party or a state.

Hamas believes in openness to all, in theory and practice. Since day one, it worked on establishing political relationships with various Arab and Islamic states as well as

regional and international powers, based on the belief that the cause of Palestinians is just, thus, the movement was ready and willing to communicate with all countries and peoples and cultures and civilizations (Occupied Palestine 2010).

The Palestinian arena, for the first time since the Palestinian Catastrophe (Nakba) in 1948, has witnessed the establishment of a political power with an ideology and political program that is different from that of the Palestinian Authority. This power today has strong popular support. Moreover, the Palestinian legislative elections in 2006 gave Hamas the first ranking among the competing parties, and allowed it to win the biggest number of seats in the parliament Abu Ammer (2006, pp. 55-57).

Hamas has defined its goals in its Charter, which revealed that the movement is part of an origin, and a wing for the global Muslim brotherhood, and that is trying to be based on the historical heritage of Jihad in Palestine (Hamas Authority).

3.2 Hamas Vision On Foreign Policy

"Hamas' surface to power was not sudden, but rather it was an accumulation of argument and political discussions about the movement's approach and how it handles the complicated Palestinian situation. Therefore, the movement moved from the resistance square to political activism which was not easy. The development accompanying adopting their approach made the movement pay attention to new dialogues and diplomatic moves with the international community and regional powers and global organizations" Yousef (2010, p.7).

Hamas believes that Arabs and Muslims are its strategic depth, which it belongs to and gets its strength and support from. Its Charter states that "Arab and Muslim countries surrounding occupied Palestine are asked to open their borders and support the Palestinian people by all possible means. Other Arab and Muslim countries are asked to provide political and financial support, the least they can do."(Aljazeera, 2015).

Hamas drew broad lines to its relation with Arab and Muslim countries as follows: Hamas seeks to contact various Arab and Muslim parties, regardless of their attitude and political and intellectual path Muslih (1999, pp. 11-16), Hamas does not intervene in the internal affairs of other countries, and at the same time, refuses the intervention in its own affairs, also Hamas is not fighting any battle with any Arab and Muslim party, and considers Palestine as the space for military struggle against Israel, and the movement tries to create balance in its political relationship with other Arab and Muslim parties, and refuses to make its relations with any party at the expense of another.

On the international level, one of the most important goals for the movement is to legalize Hamas internationally, as a liberation and legitimate resistance movement Muslih (1999,pp. 5-8).

In this regard, the position of the international community was divided into three:

1. Those who considered Hamas as a terrorist organization that must be boycotted, and forced to change its positions regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. This position is led by the United States and Europe Levitt (2005,pp. 10-11).

2. Those who didn't consider it as a terrorist organization yet asked the movement to change its positions and to accept all international agreements such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia (Nafe'e 2010).

3. Those who considered it as a legitimate liberation movement, and supported it, which is led by Iran Katzman (2009, pp. 30-31).

3.3 Relationship Between Hamas and Iran (Historical Background)

The relationship between the Islamic resistance movement, Hamas, and the Islamic Republic of Iran has started since 1990. Hamas sent a delegation to participate in a conference to support the Palestinian Intifada in Tehran in November 1991. By then, Hamas asked to be officially represented in Tehran, which started with the appointment of Imad Alalame, who was deported by Israel, at a time the relationship between Iran

and the PLO was very cold, especially after the second Gulf War, and the engagement of the PLO in political negotiations with Israel, which led to direct confrontation with the PLO, when a group of Iranian students besieged the office of the PLO's office in Tehran, and held its staff inside for a few hours in 1994.

The movement's relationship with Hezbollah in Lebanon, especially after the deportation of a big number of Hamas leaders to Marj Alzohor in Lebanon in the late 1992, has improved. The foundation of this relationship was the involvement of these parties in resistance, and their need to build strategic alliance, to support and strengthen resistance by then (Alsabeel, 2014).

Hamas' relationship with Iran was in consistence with its approach of collaboration with all countries and parties in the region to sever the Palestinian cause, based on the principle of balance, without being biased to any party, or to any group, and to follow a policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of these countries and groups (The Palestinian Information Center, 2014).

This was re-enforced by the visit of Hamas' founder Shiekh Ahmed Yassin to Tehran, for six days, during his famous trip in 1998, after a visit he made to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and later to the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. This was an important step to shape the rising relationship between both parties which was characterized by balance, in Hamas' regional relations.

Apart from the sectarian disagreement, the Islamic background of both parties, and their vision to liberate Palestine from the River to the Sea, and not to recognize Israel, played a role in bridging the gap and strengthening their armed resistance ties, and supporting the steadfastness of the Palestinian people. Iran was aware of Hamas' political and resistance weight, and considered it an entrance to support its credibility, and to strengthen its regional position (Ramana, 2008)

The relationship went reached a tipping point after Hamas won the legislative elections in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and forming the Palestinian government, where it

strongly supported the government of Ismail Hanyieh in facing the siege imposed on it. This support reached its peak during Israel's assault on Gaza in 2008-2009 (Anne, 2009).

By default, the polices of both parties were always consistent during the past period of time. Yet, they managed to successfully manage their relationship differences, and there was a strategic agreement between them, to some extent. Yet, they managed to manage their differences with a great deal of success. There was what would be described as a strategic agreement. Yet, the relationship faced coldness and crisis, because of the consequences of what has become known as "the Arab Spring," and because of the serious disagreement towards the Syrian crisis, and especially after Hamas' leadership left Damascus at the beginning of 2012.

3.4 Religion and Its Role in Relations Between Iran, Syria and Hamas

Changes and uprisings in the Arab region, Iran's attempt to play a regional role, its will to solve its economic crisis in accordance in line with the west's demands after the nuclear agreement, and its support to the Palestinian cause are all influential elements in the Iranian decision. In addition, religion has always been present in the Iran, Syria and Hamas relations.

Iran has been playing the card of the Islamic groups in the Arab world since the 80s. Indeed, it selects many different strategies to engage and convert the Arabic Islamists to an indirect agent to the Iranian revolution (Bakeer 2016).

Khomeini realized at the beginning of the Shiite revolution that there is one case that unites the Arabs and divides them at the same time that is the Palestinian cause. This cause was exhausted a lot by the ideological nationalism in the Arab world, and it became a patriotic case connected with land, so the national nature overcomes the religious one. As a result, Iran chooses to use the religious side of this cause particularly that is related to AlQuds situation that is the center of religious emotions as described by Iran. In order to place itself in the heart of the international events, Iran's Khomeini

suggested to make an international day to celebrate AlQuds from all Muslims around the world (Al-Maaref Islamic Organization 2011).

For Iran, Hamas is considered a Sunni movement and could serve as a counterbalance for Iran since Palestine has a central position at the Arab and Muslim levels that supports the regional position of Iran.

In addition, the Islamic ideology background for both sides provide many mutual and identical points, especially that the relationship between Iran and Hamas relieves the doctrinal color for the Iranian role in the region through the confluence of the Shiite crescent with Sunni axis. On the other hand, Tahran has a very integral regional base, which is very influential for Hamas, particularly at the level of logistic support for resistance (Bakeer 2016).

The Syrian uprising represented a crucial turning point in Hamas-Iran relationship where Iran fully supported the Syrian regime. Further, Iran put pressure on Hamas to support the regime, since Iran is going to be the biggest loser if Al Assad's regime falls. Syria is considered to be the gate for Iran to the Arab world and the link with its wing in Lebanon, Hezbollah.

Hamas-Iran relationship is distinguished for being more structural and deeper and that is cannot end due to the Syrian revolution. Iran is well aware of the dilemma that Hamas fell in, in terms of being a Sunni resistance movement not suitable for its principles to bolster the Alalwite regime that kills its people. Thus, Iran understood the situation after they calmed down (huff post arabi 2016).

Iran became an Islamic republic and one of the most theocratic countries in the contemporary world since the 1979 revolution (Fisher 2013).

However, Syria combined both secularism and socialism since the time of Hafez al-Assad in 1970 who took power. While Iran is Persian, the majority of Syria's population are Arabs. However, one of the most powerful existing alliances in the region is between Tehran and Damascus, part of this has to do with the political debt. While Shiite

dominates Iran, Alawites- a branch of Shiites- dominates Syria. Both sides found common interests, which is the survival of this minority in the Middle East in which the Sunni Muslim population is about 85% (Khalaji 2013).

These links got a practical translation when the Iranian regime called for the protection of the Shiite shrines in Syria. This happened after they received reports that the Syrian rebels have dug in Hajar Aben Qudi's tomb in Damascus in May 2013. Indeed, he is one of the symbols respected by Shiites (buratha news 2013).

Then, the Iranian's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi pointed out that these actions could lead to ignite sectarian and religious conflicts among the followers of major divine religions (Alalam 2013).

In Syria, there are about 50 Shiite shrines and a place for pilgrimage. For centuries, Iranians have come to Syria for pilgrimage and to visit the holy shrine of Lady Zainab in Damascus suburbs(Khalaji 2013).

Therefore, the Syrian regime follows some policies aimed at legitimizing the Alawaites' sect, which played an important role in the formulation of the Syrian policies towards the Shiites. So, one of the most important results of the political hegemony for Alawites was the importance that Syria gave to its relations with the Shiites in Lebanon and Iran (Sendawi 2013).

After the former President Hafez al-Assad took power in Syria in 1970, he tried to improve the image of Alawites in the eyes of Muslims from other sects. Further, the Iranian cleric and the leader of the Shiite community in Lebanon Moussa al-Sadr recognized Shiites as an Islamic group in 1974(Salama 2011).

4. The impact of the Arab uprisings on Iran's foreign policy toward Hamas

4.1 Iran's Foreign Policy Towards the Arab Spring

The concept of "global arrogance", which was raised by Iran in the face of the United States, represents one of the main concepts that Iran used to gain an acceptance among Islamic groups, as well as left-wing political movements in the Arab world (Sharafedin2015).

During the Arab Spring, Iran found a match with another concepts, "change" or "revolution." Those incidents were like a crane that Tehran has never dreamed of for the past several decades. Due to these incidents, a list of alternative scenarios opened up, giving Iran the opportunity to sneak through and contribute to the control of one or more from those assumed scenarios.

Since the shares of Political Islam are rising because of Arab Spring, Iran understood that the incidents are logically going in the direction of supporting the conceptual tool that was made gradually over the past decades. The concepts of revolution, change, coup, religious authority and governance of the jurists and first and foremost the concept of political Islam itself are all beyond the concepts of the Iranian revolution, so it is acknowledged to be led by Iran towards Arab Islamists since the declaration of the Revolution at the end of the 70s of the last century (Rafati).

Therefore, it was not surprising when Iranian TV channels began during the first weeks of the outbreak of the Arab spring's incidents in Tunisia, broadcasting documentaries and programs related to the events of the weeks prior to the fall of Iran's Shah before the

outbreak of the revolution when Iranians went out in streets and Shah run out of Iran. Then, they started rebroadcasting documentaries and programs about the first days of Al Khomeini in power and his speeches against Iran's collapsing power. There was a clear suggestion that this new day for Arabs is like the past day for Iran. Moreover, there was another suggestion that these incidents are going to pave the road for its presumed allies, Arab Islamists, to reach to power in their countries (Abo Helal 2011).

Regionally, and looking at what the Arab Spring produced especially in Egypt, Yemen and Syria, Iran is to benefit from that. If this was linked with what happened in the recent decades and how both Lebanon and Iraq turned into Iranian protectorates, we could ask ourselves: Is this a coincidence or is a blueprint to be implemented on the ground gradually and silently(Al kali 2015).

Iran considered the primary consequences of these regional developments in its interests on the basis it provides an indication of a US failure, which received support from some regional powers like the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes, to rein its nuclear and regional ambitions (Yalouh 2011).

Not only did Iran bless the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, but also it considered it as "signs of Islamic awakening inspired by the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, as the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic Ali Khamenei said on Friday sermon on 4th of February in 2011. They also worked to invest the success of the Egyptian revolution in overthrowing the former President Hosni Mubarak's regime with the thirty-second anniversary of the success of the Islamic revolution on February 11, 2011 to show the strength of the Iranian revolution's impact in its regional environment (Abo Helal 2011).

In Egypt, Hosni Mubarak's regime made a strong regional alliance with Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, Iraq and Jordan against the Shiite axis, which Iran kept talking about since the arrival of Malali to power in 1979. Because the Egyptian president Anwar Sadat hosted the ousted Shah Iran, the ties between the two countries had been cut. Thus, the fall of Mubarak was like the fall of bitterest enemy who stood in the face of Iran's extension. That is why Iran welcomed the victory of the Egyptian revolution; in

addition, to the friendly visits exchanged between Mohamed Morsi and Mahmoud Ahmad Najad, the reopening of the embassies of the two countries and the promise of Iran to help Egypt in its economy (Auken 2011).

In Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh's regime has been a strong element in this Sunni alliance which is led by Saudi Arabia and Egypt in the face of Shiite Iran. It launched a war before the outbreak of the revolution against the armed Shiite Houthi militias backed by Iran, which worked to spread chaos or separation in the north at a later stage. Even though the fall of Saleh rejoiced the Yemeni people, but it also rejoiced Tehran's rulers because they got rid of another bitter enemy. Today, Houthis have returned to attack the military and the tribes in the north in an attempt to expand their influence, before Saleh allied with them after he left power (MIDDLE EAST MONITOR 2015).

Moreover, Iran sees that these regional developments have put its regional rivals before few alternatives, such as Israel, which has lost one of the most important regional allies, former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. He was considered a "strategic treasure" because of his eagerness to comply with their policies, particularly regarding dealing with the Palestinian issue, and the siege of the Gaza Strip, which from Iran's perspective, prevented its rivals from certain privileges, thereby reducing their ability to become an important cornerstone in the region.

After the initial results of the Arab revolutions were removed, the Iranian position began to change gradually. The welcoming slogans to the revolution started to change to a state of confusion and hesitation. Because the revolution arrived to Syria, the most prominent ally for Iran in the region. So, the clear Iranian support for the Syrian regime shows Iran was trying to hide towards the Arab revolutions that is "supporting the oppressed" and "combating arrogance" which was evident when it was dealing with the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain and Yemen. So, it was so clear that Iran was pursuing a utilitarian policy to protect its strategic interests in the region; moreover, Iran isn't committed in this context to the limits imposed by the Islamic revolution's ideology(Abo Helal 2011).

Due to the complexity of the situation, Tehran has worked to get interests from the Syrian revolution since this revolution achieved its dream in opening Syria's doors widely. Before the Syrian revolution took place, Iran had economic, social, shitte and political influence. However, now after the revolution was armed, Iran started having military influence on the ground represented by the revolutionary guards, Hezbollah fighters, Iraqi militias and others. This led one of the Iranian clerics to finally announce Syria as the thirty fifth province in Iran (Al-Zahed 2013).

4.2 Iran's Influence in The Region

Measuring a country's strength is one of the problems resulting from studying International Relations, and there have been various approaches to it. Some have built their measurement based on one variable, such as military and economy, while others have used various power variables (population, space, military power, gross domestic product (GDP), technological development, administrative competency etc.) (Merritt. and Zinnes 1988).

The study of Clifford German in 1950 was a serious attempt in the field of measuring a country's power by using the following equation: A country's strength = nuclear capabilities (space, population, the size of industrial base, and the size of military power) (German 1960).

(Singer 1990) proposed the following equation:

power= the percentage of the world's population- the percentage of rural areas to population + the percentage of a country's production of iron and steel + the percentage of power's consumption in a country to the world+ the percentage of military spending in the world+ the percentage to the population ÷ **6**

(Kennedy 1987) connected between the rise and fall of great powers by two main variables: the economic growth and military power, which enabled him to anticipate the decline of America's status since quarter a century (Kennedy,1987: p. 514)

Accordingly, the measurement of the Iranian power must be based on various factors on one hand, and considering the strength of allies and adversaries on the other hand, which reflects the existence of factors that might influence the decision-making process and formulating Iran's foreign policy.

Iran's approach to own distinctive military capabilities are historical, because of the difference between Arab and Persian civilizations. By doing this, Iran tries to ensure its self-capabilities and achieve external balance. Iran has built its military doctrine in accordance with this approach. One of the pillars of this approach is to own military capabilities that allow for facing the siege imposed on it by the international system, and take security measures to confront the foreign military presence in the region, in addition to expanding its influence in the region (Chubin 2015).

Speaking of this power, Iran also seeks to build alliances with the region's countries, most importantly Syria, Palestine and Lebanon, to achieve the notion of protecting the regime and the state and its regional role (NTI 2015).

It is clear that sanctions coupled with the decline of oil prices, which went down by 50% in 2014, did not deter Iran from arming its allies in the Middle East. In Syria, Iran continued to provide military equipment and consultation to the Assad regime, and ensured that this support will continue regardless of the decline of oil prices (Al-Khalidi 2014).

the U.N. special envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura said that the Iran's aid to the regime in Syria is $6 billion annually, while a research shows that Iran spent between $14 and $15 billion in military and economic aid to the Damascus regime in 2012 and 2013 (Lake 2015).

Without these donations, the Assad regime would not be able to survive. The Iranian aid took clearer forms by supporting Iraqi militias and Iran continued to send weapons to the Houthis in Yemen, who expanded their control over the Yemeni capital Sanaa, which pushed the Yemeni President Adedrabu Mansourhadi to resign in January 2015

(Nicholas2015).

The Washington Institute for Improving the Quality of U.S. Middle East Policy stated that Iran is funding the Shiite militant group Hezbollah 100 million USD every year (Levitt 2005).

Since the emergence of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Iranian interest of improving relations with the government of Iraq and other political parties, has mounted. This interest was translated into the financial and logistic support for the Iraqi government and parties fighting ISIS, most importantly the Kurdish Peshmerga. The Iranian National Guards (ING) became the real manager of the Iraqi profile. Despite the strong relations with the Iraqi government, the ING prefers to depend on Shiite militias, which has strong ties with Iran. This relation required financial and in kind commitments given by Iran to its allies in these militias. This support was, in a way or another, Iran's' window to become the most influential state in Iraq (Nader 2015).

Iran supports different militias with different names and leaders, all of which are Shiite, most importantly: Badr militias, Asaeb Ahl Alhaaq (roughly translated into the brigades of rightful people), Hezbollah brigades, and various groups of the Sadr army.

After the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, Iran played a crucial role in training and arming Shiite militias, but at the same time, Iran armed Sunni groups opposing the United States of America. After the American withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, Iraq, which has experienced deep sectarian division, witnessed serious shifts, most importantly the rise and expansion of ISIS in 2014. These developments paved the road for shared goals between Iran and the US (Levitt 2005).

American estimates, as shown in a WikiLeaks document, suggest that the Iranian support for the Iraqi militias is between 100-200 million dollars annually (Wilner 2011).

Also, the political discourse of Iran on Yemen tends to describe what is going on as if it is a pure Yemeni activism, without any Iran intervention: "The country which was considered a backyard for Saudi Arabia and Al-Qaeda developed today to be an uprising

line influenced by the Islamic Revolution in Iran. It was able to remove the oppressive and spy regime, and it is now about to form an independent popular government."

Since 2004, and until 2009, Iran provided financial and military aid to Houthis, and supported their war against Ali Abdallah Saleh's regime (Bayoumy and Ghobari 2014)

the Iranian support increased in the past two years, and during 2014, Iran has trained dozens of Houthis in a base belonging to the ING. In addition to this, Iran has sent dozens of experts to help the Houthi militias on the ground in Yemen (Dorell 2015).

Iran views the human and financial cost of its external military presence, being a dispensable option, to secure its national security. Iran bets that this presence is a step towards strengthening the geo-political change in the region. This was clearly expressed by the General Command of the ING, General Hussein Salami, by saying: "In Iraq, we have a popular army connected to the Islamic revolution, and it outnumbers Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon tens of times, in addition to the resistance axis in Syria. The result of this Shiite coalition will change the balance of power in favor of the Islamic Revolution." (Middle east monitor 2015).

The evidence of importing the Islamic Revolution to a number of areas as said by the command of Al-Quds Brigade Qasim Suleimani "became very clearly, it has reached Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Northern Africa," and without this support, Iran would not say, "its influence has been expanded to Yemen and Lebanon." (Badran 2015)

4.3 Hamas and Arab Uprisings

The events the Arab region has experienced, known as the "Arab Spring" (Marc 2015) was a challenge to the main political actors (regional and international) in the region; it raised the challenge of developing political positions regarding these events, which serves and maintains their strategic interests in the region. It also forced these actors to adapt with the political outcomes of these events (Abu Hilal 2015).

This challenge bypassed state-actors to non-state actors, as was the case with the important political movements in the region, such as the Hamas movement, whose political impact transcended local environment to include political interactions with important actors in the region such as Egypt, Iran, and Syria as what the movement represents of the importance in that strategy of these actors (Sadiki 2011). The regional environment - before the Spring Arab- raised great challenges for the Hamas movement (because of the isolation imposed on it after taking over the Gaza Strip in 2007), as well as internal challenges in the Gaza Strip, due to managing the Strip, and dealing with Israel, and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank (Brown 2012). The author seeks to present an overview of the challenges related to Hamas' relations with foreign countries in the region (Egypt, Iran, specifically).

In Egypt, Hamas relationship with Hosni Mubarak's regime was characterized by a great deal of negativity; the involvement of Egypt under Mubarak's regime in what was called the axis of "moderation" as opposed to the axis of "resistance" made Mubarak take a hard line on Hamas, after the later won the legislative elections in 2006, and the Gaza Strip's independence in 2007, which led to imposing a complete blockade on Hamas (politically and economically) by the United States and Western countries and most Arab countries (Edwards 2013).

The moderation axis included Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (Sullivan and Jones 2008), while the axis of resistance included Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, and Hamas (Baroud 2015).

This division was based on the extent these countries are in line with the US strategy: if they are consistent with it, they are considered moderate, if they are not, they are with the resistance axis.

These two terms were used during the Administration of George W. Bush, and were used by the Libyan Alzahf Alakhdar Newspaper in response to Bush's remarks that Iraq, Iran, and North Korea formed "the axis of evil." (Defense & Foreign Affairs 2002).

The term was used by Said Siam, the former Interior Minister of Hamas in 2006, during an interview with Alalam Iranian T.V. Siam referred to the shared goals against Israel and the U.S, and to the big number of Palestinian refugees in Syria, saying: "Syria also is an Islamic state and it is a target for Zionists and Americans, and that Syria, Iran, and Hezbollah face pressures together." (Federal News Service 2006).

The term "axis of resistance" was also used in August 2010 (Lyon 2010). Two years later, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution in Iran used the term, saying: "the axis of resistance against Israel, which includes Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the new Iraqi government and Hamas… Syrian is the golden ring of this axis against Israel." (Goodarzi 2013).

Egypt has participated in the siege imposed on Gaza significantly; this is because Egypt shares borders with the Gaza Strip and in particular through the Rafah crossing, which is the only way in out of the Gaza Strip. The impact of the Egyptian blockade of Gaza came to surface in the war launched by Israel on the Strip at the end of 2008 (Operation Cast Lead). (Idrees 2009).

On the other hand, the Mubarak regime ran its relationship with Hamas from a security perspective, and not a political one; to save the Sinai front from any security tensions coming from the Gaza Strip through the underground tunnels network which the Gaza Strip depended on economically, and was also used to transport arms from and to the Gaza Strip (Idrees 2009 p.175).

The relationship between Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood should not be forgotten, the main opposition party to Mubarak's regime. Hamas is an extension of the Muslin Brotherhood in Palestine, and Hamas' success in the Gaza Strip will encourage the Brotherhood to increase its degree of political popularity against the Mubarak regime, thus the success of Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip was not appealing to the Mubarak regime (Teflioğlu 2013).

Accordingly, the Mubarak regime's relationship with Hamas is complex, because of the role of Egypt in the Palestinian-Israeli issue. This is also due to Egypt's relations with both Israel and the United States, and their desire to maintain peace in the region.

In light with this isolation suffered by Hamas by being away from Arab Environment (especially Egypt), its relations with Iran was an opportunity so that the movement could survive as a political entity, and being capable of managing the Gaza Strip and facing the Israeli entity, and not to let the Palestinian Authority (Fatah) speak on behalf of the Palestinian cause. This common interest was shared by both Iran and Syria made them build strong ties with each other.

The Egyptian uprising in 2011 did not only change Hamas' relationship with Egypt, but also led to a radical transformation of this relationship; where it transferred from semi-complete break, to a total connectivity, almost. With the outbreak of the uprising in Egypt, it was logical that Hamas will support it. The removal of the Mubarak regime was a big gain to the movement undoubtedly. Mubarak's regime was taken down, and the closest entity to the movement came to power: the Muslim Brotherhood (BBC 2013).

Immediately, the aspects of this change began to appear on the Hamas-Egypt relationship, after the Muslim Brotherhood came to power in Egypt. Hamas' leaders were officially welcomed in Egypt, and Ismail Haniyeh delivered the Friday sermon at Al-Azhar mosque. The Rafah crossing was opened at the time, and the Gaza Strip marched in celebration after the victory of Mohamed Morsi (Kortam 2013).

On the contrary, the Syrian situation was a problem for Hamas. If the negative relationship between Hamas and Egypt during the time of Mubarak would justify the position of Hamas after the uprising, the situation in Syria was the opposite. Syria was a strategic supporter for Hamas at a time there was no relationship between Hamas and other Arab countries, and Hamas' office was in Damascus for more than a decade. Thus it was not easy for Hamas to publicly support the Syrian uprising as it did with Egypt.

At the same time, it cannot support the Syrian regime, because this contradicts with the logic of the movement, being a liberation movement, which supports peoples not rulers, and thus it might lose its credibility.

This situation put Hamas in an uncomfortable situation and it had two extremely difficult options. The first option was supporting the Syrian uprising, and thus losing a strategic ally and this also means losing Iran, its more important ally and the financial, military and logistic supporter of Hamas. And it also means Hamas leaders should leave Syria and lose their leg there, and being trapped in another journey of looking for a new country. The second option was supporting the regime and losing its popular credibility and thus losing any chance of building new ties with the new regime that may emerge in Syria after Assad (Mohns and Bank 2012).

Hamas initially sought to mediate between the two options, so that its position is not considered in favor of one of the parties: the regime or the people. And then, Hamas sought to be a mediator between Assad and his people, in order to resolve the crisis; Hamas tried to convince Assad to conduct reforms to prevent the transmission of spark of uprising to Syria, but to no avail (Akhter 2014). The Syrian uprising broke out, and Hamas wanted to be silent, but Assad wanted much more: to get Hamas to announce full support for the regime, and the Assad was exercising tremendous pressure on the movement to issue statements supporting him, but the movement was dragging its feet and trying to reach a political middle ground that is not in favor of him nor opposes him (Cafiero 2012). For example, this is found on Hamas's official website:

"We consider what is happening an internal matter which concerns our brothers, the Syrians. Even so, we in Hamas, and by virtue of our principles, and our respect for the will and aspirations of the Arab and Islamic nations, hope Syria manages to pass the current circumstances in a way that the hopes and aspirations of the Syrian people are realized, and maintain the stability of Syria and its internal cohesion." (RT 2013) Thus, Hamas tried to play the role of the mediator in the crisis (Tait 2013), but as time went on, this role was no longer an available option; the Syria opposition wanted Hamas to

declare its support for it, while the regime asked the same from Hamas. The movement was stuck between the demands of the two sides. In the same context, Hamas was under pressure from Iran, which reduced the financial support for the movement, and stopped it later, as a result of its refusal to speak out in support of the Syrian regime (The Times of Israel 2015).

As time went on, Hamas leaders began leaving Syria. And as Hamas stopped issuing political statements, it appeared that the role of mediation was over (Fahmy &Al-Mughrabi 2012), and that the movement (more or less) supported the uprising against the regime (RT 2013) (Israel Matzav 2011).

Khaled Meshaal officially announced this when he said: "who he supported us for rightful cause, we will not support him for a wrongful one," (CII Broadcasting 2015) and thus the final position of Hamas on the Syrian Uprising was supporting it, but a support that kept in mind the historic relationship between Hamas and the Syrian regime.

Hamas refuses the accusations that Iran and Syria dictate their policy to Hamas in return for the support they provide to the movement, nor does anyone (Occupied Palestine 2012).

Hamas' crisis reached its peak when the military coup against President Mohamed Morsi took place, giving Hamas only one year to enjoy having the Muslim Brotherhood in power (Wedeman, Sayah & Smith 2013) (BBC 2013).

Hamas lost everything after the military coup in Egypt. The situation now is the same as it was before the Muslim Brotherhood reached to power in Egypt, and it has lost the trust of Iran and Syria, and is trying now to fix its relationship with them (Ben Shitrit and Jaraba 2013).

This miserable situation pushed the movement to try to fix its relationship with Fatah, a relationship that is characterized by big obstacles that lead to not reaching a reconciliation every time (Abu Amer 2015).

With the outbreak of Arab Spring's revolution, Hamas opted to stay aside from those revolutions and adopted a neutral discourse, without hiding allegiance to the people and their demands. After the fall of the Mubarak regime, the arrival of the Muslim Brotherhood to power, and the intensity of the Syrian revolution and the regime's insistence to face the people, Hamas was forced to leave the neutral square. Hamas stated that it supports the people, and it is an integral part of the process of the Arab spring that brought Islamists to power or at least it confirmed the difficulty in shaping the fate of the region (Haddadi 2012).

The Egyptian revolution opened the door for Hamas' leadership to contact regional and international powers. The Syrian revolution's forces and the regime's insistence to use repressive security solution led to the withdrawal of the Hamas leadership from Damascus (Assad: Syria has 'no relation' with Hamas, will Never Trust it Again 2015).

These two situations paved the road to rearrange the house of Hamas in accordance with the new balance of power in Cairo and Damascus and the region. After months of those revolutions, Hamas' leadership understood that the Arab Spring destroyed countries due to the disastrous military policies and that the new regimes after independence will be busy working to reconstruct and establish fair democratic and civil states. Hence, the Palestinians should not give them more than they could bear and should not ask them to be more Palestinian than the Palestinians themselves.

After the revolution, the relation between the official Arab regimes and Hamas marred by internal doubt about the strength of the Brotherhood because they were concerned about using its resistance image to convince the people that the Islamic movements are right. Hamas tried to get closer to Egypt since it was the country able to break the siege on Gaza, but all these attempts failed, especially after Abdel Fattah al-Sisi took over the country where the Egyptian regime cracked down on the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas altogether. In March, the Egyptian government declared Hamas a terrorist organization, breaking its hopes in getting closer to Egypt (Trager 2014)

Further, the Egyptian media blamed Hamas for the ongoing war in the Sinai Peninsula. This diabolical plan reached the peak when the Egyptian Court of Appeal charged the military wing of Hamas "Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades" with terrorism(Abo alghit 2014).

In the light of the destruction of tunnels in Rafah border area with Egypt and building a fortified buffer zone besieging the Gaza Strip from the Egyptian side, the blockade on Gaza has been totally completed (About Sinai and What Sisi Wants from Hamas 2014).

At the beginning, high hopes has been held on the Arab Spring's revolutions, which began in 2011, but later this uprising led to bringing the entire region to bloody conflicts. These revolutions led to unprecedented political and sectarian polarization. Consequently, Hamas could not escape the sectarian classification in the Arab region because Hamas is a mixture of a national liberation movement a religious ideology. So, this classification became the crucial test to policies in the Middle East.

Because of these crumbling Arab regimes, the war in Syria seemed to be the best scenario to implement the western plans, including that of USA, Israel and other Arab regimes. A lot of money and weapons has been pumped within the peaceful popular uprising to smash any room to settle this crisis. Because of the hard situation in Syria, Iran and Russia got motivated to enter this fight despite the different purposes. Russia has entered to regain its international position while Iran has entered to extend its regional influence, especially after its arm "Hezbollah" joined in the fight. Therefore, the Sunni-Shiite segregation became apparent in the region (BBC 2015).

Both - the Sunnis and Shiites - did not allow Hamas to operate outside the sectarian model that governs the region, so Hamas was expected to join one of the two sides, and likewise has been the imposition of these options on the region's countries. Hamas' political maneuver has cost it a lot. Hamas chose the secession from (Iran, Syria, Hezbollah) and joined the Arab front that were united in seeking to overthrow Bashar al-Assad's regime, but the war in Syria has developed on both sides. The opposition has been spilt into several groups; the most prominent was Islamic state, which is known for

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radical and extreme violence. In the awake of declaring Al Khilafa (succession), democracy and reformation were no longer important and instead the sectarian discourse dominated the conflict (BBC 2014).

For Hamas, conflicts in Egypt added insult to injury. After toppling down Morsi from power, Sisi's supporters launched a large-scale war on the Muslim Brotherhood, including Hamas. As a result, the political gamble of Hamas did not achieve any gains(BBC 2014).

So, the isolated movement worked to join Abbas's Fatah faction to end the division in order to find a way out of this hopeless situation (Abou Jalal 2016).

Amid these conditions for Hamas, Israel attacked Gaza in 2014, where the media focused on the involvement of Hamas in kidnapping and killing three Israeli settlers. After Hamas left the axis of resistance, isolation imposed on it by the Arab moderate camp, the faction was so weak. The Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu found the chance to deliver a final blow to Hamas, which was very brutal in order to break Hamas politically before breaking its military capabilities (BBC 2014).

During this period, Arabs were either busy with their problems or watching the severe punishment Gaza received from Israel. The parties that urged Hamas to leave the Iranian camp, failed to fill in the huge gap, specifically in terms of arming and funds. Some leaders from Hamas considered leaving Hamas without support a treason while others originally did not agree to leave the Iranian axis and urged the movement to rethink its political alliances again. Indeed, there are attempts to repair relations with Iran. All signs, direct and indirect, recently launched by Hamas showed some sort of closeness between Iran and Hezbollah on one hand, and Hamas on the other hand. This could tell the future of Hamas's relations with Iran and Hezbollah (Baroud 2015).

4.4 The Future of Iran's Foreign Policy Toward Hamas

The Arab Spring produced the biggest two strategic variables with ongoing effects with varying degrees. They are stirring the public awareness, generating people's confidence in their ability to bring about change and the rise of "political Islam" to power. In the regional space it created what is called the axis of "defiance and resistance" and the axis of "moderation", creating a new regional map.

These two factors blew up most of the regional powers' concerns on the sides of the two axes: the axis "of defiance and resistance" and the axis of "moderation". Further, some states worked to bring the Arab Spring down, each in their own way combined with parallel international efforts to achieve the same aim. At the end, the counterrevolution came to remove "political Islam" from power, but it increased chaos, causing the outbreak of uprisings. As a result, a massive regional liquidity was produced, causing violent conflicts between regional powers to re-democratize the Arab region in a grim atmosphere full of uncertainty about the future (Hirschkind).

The following is the situation of both Iran and Hamas in the unstable regional scene. Iran fears losing its strategic ally in Damascus that will lead to a serious decline in its geopolitical position. Iran still works hard to support the Syrian regime in spite of the fact that this will lead to popular losses and material losses, at least among the Sunnis. Hezbollah is suffering, a strategic ally of Iran in Lebanon, from the impact and the implication of its logistic and military intervention with the Syrian regime. As a result, this will lead to attrit its power, popular and material losses and crises in Lebanon (Gagliardini 2015).

Tehran agreed that the Syrian regime would destroy its chemical weapons to protect its survival. Moreover, it started to get closer to Washington and the Western world in terms of the nuclear profile to calm down the situation and to have the requirements to build its economy, worn out by the Western siege (BBC 2014).

For Hamas, the military coup against the Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi was a shock, given the fact that the new democratic government at the time would provide a regional support to the movement.

The Egyptian regime, after the military coup, started besieging the Gaza Strip, which is controlled by Hamas in an unprecedented manner. In addition, the Egyptian judiciary worked to criminalize the movement (Menachem 2016).

The Israeli occupation forces chase the movement and its political, popular and military structures as well as by and the Palestinian security forces. Moreover, the regional arena has changed, except the support from Turkey and Qatar, which is vital, but in fact, it is not up to the levels of its hopes and role due to the conditions of politics in both countries.

In the post-Arab spring environment, Hamas needs Iran more than Iran needs Hamas because Hamas may not find a substitute for Iran, such as Turkey, Egypt or Qatar, with the recognition that these alternatives are less reliable than Iran, while Iran cannot find a substitute for Hamas. Indeed, Iran cannot ditch Hamas since it is the most organized and influential resistance movement, compared to the rest of the Palestinian movements. In addition, it represents an important card in Iran's strategic project in the region, which makes it hard for Iran to lose Hamas. News reports continuously say Hamas rejects a financial offer from Iran to stand with it against Saudi Arabia because Hamas does not want to lose the main Sunni country (Aialyoum 2016).

Despite the disparity in positions on Syria, Hamas refused the Iranian demands to support Assad; Hamas maintained a good level of relationship with Iran, which continued to describe the movement as a "resistance" movement, and continued its low-level meetings with Hamas, as well as allowing the movement to open its representative office in Tehran. But Iran's assistance to the movement during the years of this relationship (Levitt 2007) was reduced. The official Syrian media attacked Khaled Mashaal, describing him as a "traitor" (The Times of Israel 2012), while Iran-affiliated

media accused Hamas of "giving up its guns" and surrendering for Israel, an accusation which was debunked after the Israeli aggression on Gaza, which lasted 51 days, and in which the movement was able to withstand without Iranian support.

Following the 2014 aggression on Gaza, Iran began moving towards fixing its relationship with Hamas and held high-level meetings between the two parties. Media outlets talked about a planned visit by Khaled Meshaal to Tehran, which has not happened yet, because of disagreements over the visit's agenda and the officials Mashaal will meet. This was evident in the remarks of the adviser of the Head of the Iranian Shura Council for International Affairs, Hussein al-Islam, who welcomed the visit but without setting the rules and conditions of the reception (al-akhbar 2015).

To explore the future of the relationship, Hamas's relationship with other players such as Turkey and Qatar (Gidda 2014), and Saudi Arabia, Iran's bitter enemy, should be considered. Hamas supported Saudi Arabia's steps to establish Arab coalition to stand by the legitimacy in Yemen, against the Houthi Shi'ite Iranian-backed militia of (Abu Amer 2015).

Thus, it appears that Hamas is moving towards the Sunni axis of the Arab Gulf States as well as Turkey, at the expense of Iran, which is willing to provide support for Hamas in return for supporting Bashar al-Assad (Levy 2015).

But senior Hamas leader Ahmed Yousef says "Hamas's policy is to not cut its relationship with Arab and Islamic depth, no matter what happens," stressing that the Syrian profile has an impact on the movement's strong relations with Iran(Yousef 2015).

It seems that Hamas will not forget the support provided by Iran over the past decade, financially and militarily, at a time Arab countries turned their back on the movement. Thus, the movement seeks to fix the rift caused by the Syrian Uprising that is related to its relationship with Iran.

In this regard, Yousef said that Hamas did not respond to the Iranian demands, which led to Iran's stopping political support given to Hamas, though the logistic and military support are still going on. Yousef confirms that "if the Syrian profile ends through a political solution, certainly, the relationship with Iran and Hezbollah and Hamas will be resumed." (Yousef 2015)

According to statements and facts, the relationship between Hamas and Hezbollah is in a good condition, most recently, Hamas condemned Israel's killing of Hezbollah leader Samir Kuntar (Times of Israel staff 2015).

Adnan Abu Amer, a political science professor at the University of the Nation in Gaza, believes that there is a common interest between Iran and Hamas to work on restoring their relations in light with polarization that is taking place in the region (Abu Amer 2015).

Abu Amer said: "the two sides hope to develop financial, military and political relations, and is clear that Assad is no longer a significant issue between them, and Hamas's position on the Syrian uprising is no longer a condition for Iran." (Abu Amer 2015)

Iran is well aware of the trap Hamas fell in, and being a Sunni resistance movement, is not worthy to support an Alawite regime that is slaughtering its own people. It is easy to understand the position of the movement, after the initial anger from its position is contained.

Iranian diplomat (Mousavian 2015) commented on the future of relations between both parties by saying: "It is affected by the declared political attitudes of the region's crises." He confirmed that Hamas is moving towards more support from the Sunni axis as well as the Muslim Brotherhood (Mousavian 2015).

Adnan Abu Amer believes that there is an Iranian understanding and desire from Hamas not to issue statements on Syria and an agreement not to target Hezbollah and the Assad

regime in Syria by Palestinian groups, as the two parties stress that "they overcame the Syrian situation to restore relations." (Abu Ammer 2015).

Mousavian agrees by saying: "relations between Iran and Hamas will continue, but to a limited extent during the current stage." (Mousavian 2015)

5. CONCLUSION

Before going into the results that may lead us to the possible scenarios in determining the future of the ties between the two countries, we have to review the causes of disharmony between Iran and Hamas, summarized in these main points:

Firstly: Changing the resistance ideology of Hamas had a clear impact on distancing itself from Iran. The resistance discourse- with its long history- had no sectarian dimension like the one that dominated the Arab scene during the last few years. Hamas did not use the sectarian discourse, based on antagonizing Iran, but rather it headed towards Turkey and the Arab Gulf instead. Hezbollah and the Alawite Syrian regime had a significant impact on deepening the discord as Sunni vs Shiite axis.

Secondly: Hamas' heading towards the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria was a major reason behind the tepidity in ties with Iran. Tehran would understand that Hamas distanced itself from the Syrian crisis, but antagonizing the Hamas-supporting axis was a hasty option, which led to the inevitable replacement and having the Muslim Brotherhood instead, which led to widening the gap between Iran and Hamas.

The third reason had to do with the decline of the resistant discourse of Hamas. The movement's leaders became more open when talking about a long-term truce with Israel, practically turning resistance into a slogan. This tendency began before the Arab Spring and increased after the arrival of Morsi to power in Egypt (Ma'an News Agency 2015) (The New Arab 2015).

Generally, it could be said that the Iranian discourse and policy towards the Palestinian resistance have not changed, however; the change in Hamas' policies, that Syria was a big part of, brought about negative consequences to its ties with Iran and its allies.

Hamas' bet on the Brotherhood's axis increased the pressure on it inside the Palestinian Territories after Morsi's fall. The lack of focus on all possible alternatives of the strategic shift towards the Muslim Brotherhood and antagonizing the Syrian regime led to what Hamas has reached today (Scheller 2014).

Hamas' traditional and natural determination to not being subordinated to Iran –at least- in a stage it still fighting in Syria, and even though it's its ally, Hamas still have its own principles that cannot be ignored. The most important principle is the popularity that it is afraid to lose if it supports the Syrian regime against its people, who ask for democracy and the removal of Bashar Al-Assad.

The Arab Spring showed that Hamas is not really part of what it called the regional "resistance axis" any more, which led the movement to a semi-complete desolation especially after the military coup in Egypt against the Muslim Brotherhood. Therefore, it found in Saudi Arabia, which classifies the Brotherhood as a terrorist group (Edwards 2016), an option to get rid of the desolation after the Saudi leadership change and the appointment of King Salman Bin Abdul-Aziz (Sursis 2016).

It is clear that Hamas' options are still very limited. The movement's leadership knows that the philosophy of resistance does not match with some Gulf countries' priorities. It knows that if Hamas would continue leading the Palestinian resistance, it must adhere to this regional equation.

Hassan Nasrullah, The Secretary General of Hezbollah, stressed during his speech in 2012 that Hamas can never adopt resistance if it went to Saudi Arabia. "Arms and rockets that used to go to Gaza were coming by Syria, not by the Saudi regime, the Egyptians, or any other Arab regime," he said (Benari 2012).

It is obvious that Iran continues its support for the Palestinian resistance movements, which may shape the future scenarios of Iran's options regarding its ties with Hamas as the movement continues distancing itself from interfering in Syria, except for what is related to the Palestinian resistance against Israel. The condemnation of killing the

leader in Hezbollah Samir Al-Qintar (Miskin 2015)made it clear that there is a sign of keeping the ties between the two parties, i.e. "resisting Israel" or at least "antagonizing Zionism" by Iran.

What this research contributes is Hamas' orientation with the Sunni axis as an alternative. What happened in Yemen made Hamas praise the Saudi steps, which was followed by the visit of Khalid Mishaal to Saudi Arabia (ALJAZEERA 2015). The rest of results are limited and governed by the new developments, which will shape the alliances and its expansion. The last one was the Islamic alliance formed by Saudi Arabia and another 34 countries, from which Iran was excluded (Browning,and Irish, 2015).

It was surprising for the researcher through analysis and interviews with officials and experts that both parties are trying to regain ties by being silent about the Syrian issue. Hamas sends clear signs through media to recover ties, while Iran and Hezbollah just praise Palestinian resistance factions and their attacks occasionally, and stress on antagonizing Zionism (Ben-Gedalyahu 2015).

Unlike the second offensive on Gaza in 2012 (BBC 2012) in which Iran declared supporting Hamas by rockets and weapons, Iran did not do such a declaration in 2014 (Dearden 2014) and did not say that it is behind Hamas' possession of rockets that was fired at Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

However, Al-Qassam brigades, the military wing of Hamas, kept the ties with Iran and Hezbollah at the end of 2014 by thanking Iran again "Iran didn't skimp on us with money, arms and other things; it supplied us with rockets that flattened the defenses of the Zionists, including anti-tank missiles."(Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014).

Although Iran did not comment on Hamas' thank-you message, Hassan Nasrallah said later "Gaza has defeated Israel."(AP and Times of Israel staff 2014).

The researcher presents proofs, which tell that ties did not end technically by looking at the continuation of statements and positive speeches from both sides, despite the fact of the Syrian uprising, which started in 2011. This will help researchers in the future continue providing a vision from different perspectives and might recover the actual tie in case of any political settlement in Syria. It will help them prove the failure of the Gulf axis to provide the needed political and financial support in addition to the exclusion of all forms of military support.

The researcher recommends conducting more detailed studies on the influence of supporting a regional party by a (small) party, like movements and effective parties which have a huge popularity, and its role in raising the balance of that party and at the same time considering the opponent's state, (Saudi Arabia and Iran for example).

The future of Hamas-Iran relationship is connected with some factors. They are the Syrian revolution and its results and the closeness policy between Hamas and the surrounding Arab region. Therefore, the growth of Hamas- Gulf state relations affects badly Hamas-Iran relations due to the dispute between the Gulf States and Iran.

All of this showed that the Iran-Hamas relationship is just aims to achieve certain goals, nothing more. Hamas determined that it is not going to be an Iranian's card in the region while Iran wanted Hamas to be subjected to it all the time. However, it seems that Hamas' effort to rebuild relations with Iran and its allies and to go back to the axis that connects Tehran, Damascus and Hezbollah is working. Mousa Abu Marzouk, a member in the political bureau of Hamas, stated, "What Iran has provided to the Palestinian resistance at the levels of supply and training, no other country could provide." This statement came to re- strengthen the relations again (Balousha 2016).

In light of the contradictions on the local, regional and international scene, Hamas reserves a recognition and gratitude for what Iran had provided it with, including economic and military aid, beside its clear relations with Iran (AlMayadeen 2016).

This was supported by the participation of Hamas in the World Jerusalem's Day initiated by Khomeini in which thousands went out to the streets in Iran and Arab countries in Ramadan 2016, in which Hamas has called on the Arab and Muslim nations to support the movement with money and weapons. By doing this, Hamas was trying to send a message to Iran to correct the track of their relations after being sure that relations would fail with any other potential ally (Farsnews 2016).

The Iranian's situation in the region indicates that Iran is trying to reduce its disputes in the Arab region by trying to expand its influence through sticking to the Palestinian cause and supporting resistance against Israel to gain the trust of Arabs and to encircle their enemies.

5.1 Recommendations

The leadership of Hamas knows it is impossible to maintain the status quo with the Israeli siege and occupation, as the resistance in Gaza still needs support to continue lead and to run the besieged Gaza Strip without facing an uprising due to internal uprising and to curb external plots against it on the other hand.

While achieving any real change in the Iran-Hamas relations is still not at hand during this period in the Syrian Uprising, the researcher recommends that both parties should manage their differences in a positive way, and focus on their mutual interests, instead. This is especially applicable to supporting the Palestinian cause, and the resistance forces and the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and breaking the siege.

Thus, Hamas and Iran, in coordination with other concerned regional parties to work to decrease sectarian tensions, because it drains the Muslim nation, its power and resources. At the same time, it deviates the real direction of the struggle, which is supported to be against the Zionist occupation.

Achieving this will lead to preventing Israel from making use of the status quo that emerged after the Arab uprisings. Thus, Iran has to provide tangible assurances to the

countries in the region and their people regarding its regional role, based on avoiding being engaged in sectarianism, and achieving the aspirations of the people of the region and building their own political structures and running them freely.

Iran could achieve this if it realized that supporting the Palestinian issue and resistance forces as part of the duty of Islamic regimes and peoples to end the Israeli occupation and achieve the dream of independence. In addition, this support should not be used as a tool to pressure any party.

On the other hand, Hamas has to understand that it needs to forge stronger ties with other allies in the region, without cutting its relations with Iran, most importantly Qatar and Turkey, in line with the movement's positions and principles, which aim at uprooting the Israeli occupation. These allies should welcome Hamas by allowing official visits to discuss the issue of Gaza's siege and establishing a Palestinian state.

Moreover, there is a need to establish strategic relations with other Muslim countries, such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Pakistan, which should play a greater role in the Palestinian cause. Hamas should strengthen its ties with the new leaders in the Arab Spring countries, and to invite a number of leaders to Gaza to break the siege and to give the Palestinian cause a greater international role.

The researcher recommends Hamas to adopt a media discourse that is more open towards the European countries, and to focus on the current events in the Arab regions, and on its ability to play a more influential role in the Middle East to achieve stability.

Internally, Hamas should seek to reach a reconciliation deal with Fatah and the Palestinian Authority, to be able to represent Palestinians outside, through the state's institutions, to serve the Palestinian cause and to take good care of the interests of Palestinians in the Diaspora and refugees all over the world.

Accordingly, Hamas should double its efforts to convince western countries to take it off any terror organization lists, and to convey its image as a national liberation movement

that seeks to achieve independence from the Israeli occupation. In addition, Hamas should study and analyze its leaders' relations with the international community and international organizations, and other non-governmental organizations and liberation movements, for what it holds of importance in evaluating the movement's external relations and benefiting from improving relations in the future.

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