

FROM BURDEN TO STRATEGIC ASSET; THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF HAMAS AND MUBARAK'S EGYPT

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ABSTRACT

Hamas, is the sole armed resistance group of Muslim Brotherhood, which is an important religious and political and social movement in the Arab and Islamic World. Considering that the Muslim Brotherhood is Egypt-borned movement, the importance of the relationship between Egypt and Hamas will be better understood. Although the Hamas is an armed resistance movement in Palestine, but also has its political discourse and program. Hamas did not recognize Oslo Peace Process between Israel and the PLO so did not participate in the first elections of the Palestinian Authority. However, following Second Intifada Hamas argues that this process officially and de facto was over and decided to participate to elections in 2006. As a result of the Palestinian elections, Hamas gained the majority of the Assembly, and formed a government. The main objective of Mubarak regime was to convince Hamas to recognize Oslo Peace Process and to join peace talks with Israel. Geopolitical importance of Palestine and the Muslim Brotherhood movement particularly with the collapse of the Mubarak regime has become strategic situation. This study framework covers the period from the date of Hamas government. In our review, we will benefit from our personal observations in Palestine region and Arabic primary sources.

Keywords: Egypt, Hamas Government, Palestine, Gaza

JEL Code: N45

SORUN OLMAKTAN STRATEJİK DEĞER'E; MÜBAREK DÖNEMİ HAMAS HÜKÜMETİ VE MİSİR İLİŞKİSİ

ÖZ

HAMAS, İslam ve Arap dünyasında önemli dini ve siyasi bir toplumsal bir hareket olan Müslüman Kardeşlerin, tek silahlı direniş örgütüdür. Müslüman Kardeşlerin Mısır merkezli bir hareket olduğu düşünülürse Mısır ve HAMAS arasındaki ilişkinin önemi daha iyi anlaşılacaktır. Filistin'de silahlı direniş hareketi olmakla beraber HAMAS, aynı zamanda siyasi söylem ve programı olan bir harekettir. İsrail ve FKÖ arasındaki Oslo Barış Süreci'ni tanımayan HAMAS, Filistin Yönetiminde ilk yapılan seçimlere katılmamıştır. Fakat ikinci intifadan sonra bu sürecin resmen ve fiilen bittiğine inanan HAMAS yönetimi 2006 seçimlerine katılma kararı almıştır. Seçimlerin sonucunda HAMAS Filistin Meclisinde çoğunluğu elde etmiş ve hükümet kurmuştur. Mısır (Mübarek) yönetiminin bu süreçte temel hedefi HAMAS'ı Oslo sürecini tanımaya ve İsrail ile barış görüşmelerine başlamaya ikna etmek olmuştur. Filistin ve Müslüman Kardeşler hareketinin jeopolitik önemi Mübarek rejiminin yıkılması ile daha da stratejik bir konuma gelmiştir. Çalışmamızın tarih çerçevesi HAMAS'ın hükümet olduğu dönemi kapsamaktadır. İncelememizde Arapça birincil kaynaklardan ve Filistin coğrafyasındaki şahsi gözlemlerimizden istifade edeceğiz.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mısır, HAMAS Hükümeti, Filistin, Gazze

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INTRODUCTION

Egypt and Hamas relations are too sophisticated. Hamas may be seemed as a strategic asset serves the higher interests and national security of Egypt. It was clear that the behavior of the Mubarak regime in Egypt with Hamas, especially since its election victory and formation of a government, have to deal with it as a burden and a problem. All point to the sense of the existence of the burden or issue called Hamas. Policy that have

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accompanied the closure of the Rafah Border Crossing after the Hamas takeover, were proven that Egyptian President Mubarak would not allow the successful Hamas government in the Gaza Strip. Therefore, Hamas understood the closure of the crossing as part of the projection process of this policy and undeclared agenda practiced by the Mubarak regime in Egypt against it. It appears that breach the border and tunnels, and events associated with the exit of pilgrims, the sick and the travelers and their return, all increased from the case of tension between the two parties. The support the Egyptian side of sending Arab troops to the Gaza Strip Hamas also interpreted as an attempt to overthrow, and paving the way for the PA presidency and Fatah for control of the Gaza Strip before achieving reconciliation and national consensus.

The nature of relationship between Egypt and the Gaza Strip has historical, geopolitical, religious and racial elements. When the Jews in Palestine declared its independence in 1948, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan declared war to the new Jewish entity. Egypt government taken over the Gaza Strip to gain control over the political and administrative units. But afterwards 1967, Gaza came under Israeli occupation. In 1973, Egypt has declared war against Israel to put end to the Israel occupation. Egypt had to make peace in order to save occupied territories in exchange for peace with Israel in 1978. After assassination of President Anwar Sadat by (alleged) a member of Muslim Brotherhood, Marshall Law has been declared in the country. Mubarak's regime has tired to prevent achievements of Hamas in Palestine and in Egypt between the years 1981-2011. Palestine Policy of Egypt has also evolved in this sense. Following the collapse of the Mubarak regime, it is seemed very clear that Muslim Brotherhood will have potency in the new regime. The new constitution was -adopted but political restructuring proceeds. In this study, the relationship between Egypt and Hamas, mainly post-Hamas government era which was established after 2006 will be evaluated.

1. HAMAS POLITICS IN THE POST OSLO AGREEMENT ERA

In 1993, Hamas refused to join to the Oslo Peace Process arguing that agreement was justifying the Israeli occupation. Palestine Authority was established due to this agreement. Legislature branch of Palestine Authority also was composed (Salih, 2010: 6). In December 1995 under the leadership of Egypt, Palestinian Authority and Hamas made a meeting concerning the participation of HAMAS to the elections if not, at least warning HAMAS not make hindrance to the elections (Salih, 2009: 9). Hamas and the Palestinian Authority (Fatah) did not meet again until the inception of the Second Intifada in 2000. Egyptian government struggled to persuade Hamas to join to the Palestinian Authority and made efforts to prevent armed resistance. But armed resistance is the sole strategic target and option for the HAMAS (Musa, 2007: 323). HAMAS believes Israel has occupied the whole Palestinian soil so resistance also must be kept within the borders of Israel. According to this strategy Israeli cities are also part of the armed resistance and armed operations. However, due to increasing international pressures and negatory view of the world, HAMAS gave up suicide attacks or other assaults on civilian targets in Israel cities. Egypt government was aware of raising reputation of Hamas in the Palestine streets. Therefore Egypt government was seeking for persuading HAMAS to join PLO. For this purpose, a meeting with Fatah and Hamas officials in Khartoum carried out in 2002. Thereafter, the Egyptian government has organized a meeting of all Palestinian movements in December 2003. The main purpose of these meetings was to ensure the continuity of cease-fire between Israel and the Palestinian resistance groups. The secondary aim of the meeting was gathering all Palestinian resistance movements under a central body.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian resistance movements and on behalf of Egypt, Egyptian Intelligence Minister Omar Suleiman

attended the conference held on March 2005 in Cairo (Rabbani, 2008: 71). As a result of this meeting 4 points joint statement has been declared. First, the Palestinians have right of resistance against occupation and Jerusalem is the capital of the state which will be founded as an independent Palestinian state and Palestinian. Right of return of Palestinian refugees was also mentioned. Palestinian institutions should be reformed and elections were scheduled, finally the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) must be reconstitute. Egyptian Intelligence Minister Omar Suleiman met with all Palestinian resistance groups and endeavored to assure them to a ceasefire. During elections in Palestine main discourse not occupation Hamas stated that should be provide a unified voice against occupation and corruptio. Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, the West Bank and stated that the law should be the creation of a common administration framework. Meanwhile the main objective of the Egyptian administration was to create a common front in Palestine-Israel peace negotiations. Ultimate aim of the Mubarak's regime was supervising Hamas by forcing it to join Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

2. HAMAS AND THE ELECTIONS

Unforeseen declaration of HAMAS its participation call to the legislation elections has astonished West and regional states such as Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia and Israel. These Arab states gave priority to diplomacy in their Palestine policies rather than armed resistance. Ismail Haniyeh was entrusted to form the new government in Palestine. HAMAS is the only armed organization of the Muslim Brotherhood in the whole Muslim World. Muslim Brotherhood is an Egypt-borned and Egypt-based movement due this reason Mubarak's regime against HAMAS's political strength in Palestine. Islamic resistance is the core idea of Muslim Brotherhood in its Palestine discourse. They do believe the sole way to end occupation and establish a Palestinian state, is armed resistance and jihad.

Following electoral victory of Hamas, Mubarak regime insisted on Hamas must recognize Israel if HAMAS was willing to form a government. Recognition of HAMAS will end all fears of Mubarak's regime and this recognition would mean integration of HAMAS into the political and diplomatic system in the region. Palestine Liberation Organization has advised HAMAS prior to forming government, should recognize Israel in order to participate in peace negotiations. Hamas government was willing to be aware of Mubarak regime's opinion afterwards elections, sent a delegation participated in, such as Ismail Haniyeh, Mahmoud Musa Abu Marzuk Zehar on February 6, 2006. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's political adviser Osama El Baz, in an interview mentioned; The will of the Palestinian people should be respected. In the same speech Baz stressed that meeting with Hamas, not to impose their views but they mutually exchanged views. But Egypt's Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif said in a statement that Hamas should bound to the Oslo agreement and must remain committed to the roadmap.

Egyptian Intelligence Minister Omar Suleiman on February 2, 2006 told a newspaper that Hamas must recognize Israel before to form the government. The reason of the contradictory statements by the ranks of the Egyptian administration was hesitation from the Palestinian public view. In the same statement, Omar Suleiman, stated Hamas should stop violence (that he named). However, Palestinian factions in Cairo in March 2005 with the support of the Egyptian government announced in a joint statement stressed the importance the right of resistance. Egyptian foreign minister Ahmed Abu'l Gayd stated that he hope Hamas government would follow the road map. With Road Map meant here; continue peace talks with Israel without armed resistance to establish a two-state, recognizing each other. Muhammad Mahdi Akif leader of the Muslim Brotherhood

movement in Egypt announced, Palestinian people chose the path for a solution with Islamic methods and discourses. This solution was based on the armed resistance and jihad to save Palestinian territories and Jerusalem. Egypt is officially dealing sensitively with the Islamic movements in general, including Hamas, especially when it comes to the Muslim Brotherhood, who represent the strongest opposition at home during Mubarak era before 2011,

Mubarak regime's understanding of Muslim Brotherhood was that it is a organization which recognize Hamas clearly and boldly belonging to them spiritually, ideologically and is in them the values and goals away. The ascent of Hamas in Palestine and the widening popularity and victory in the legislative elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was undesirable from the official Egyptian destination. But the requirements of the Egyptian labor in the Palestinian arena and domestic politics, made the ruling regime in Egypt to avoid entering into any open and transparent conflict with Hamas. Egypt under Mubarak regime has chosen the path of compromise and peace with Israel and supports the Palestinian forces, which charted a similar cause and viewed the resistance sponsored by Hamas and the majority of Palestinian forces and factions at this stage does not serve the political realism. They thought that Islamic movements basically does not understand the fact the balance of power on the ground. Palestinian issue requires working through diplomatic means only, to grab Palestinian rights and the establishment of a Palestinian state on the territory of the West Bank and Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

Hamas did substantially believe that PLO does not represent the Palestinian people due to this reason it should be reformed (Salih, 2007: 187). Essentially an authoritarian political structure was set up in Palestine after the Oslo Process (Pogodda, 2012: 539). But American and Israeli governments declared in the first place that they would not recognize Hamas government. Fatah officials declared they did not participate any Hamas-led government. Soon after this declaration the prime minister Ismail Haniyeh established the new Palestinian government on March 2006. Hamas government policy based on struggle against corruptions in domestic and resistance against occupation at the mean time. They did efforts to orchestrate armed resistance groups against Israel. As a result of a military operation conducted with three Palestinian resistance group in southern Gaza, including the military wing of Hamas Qassam Brigade, an Israeli soldier taken hostage on June 25, 2006. This three-organization declared joint statement issued after taking captive, release of 1000 Muslim and Arab prisoners and of those detained under the age of 18. Capturing was the only way for Hamas to free the Palestinian prisoners. This method is giving reputation to Hamas in Palestine and in the Arab world.

Capturing was also providing psychological advantage over Israel in favour of armed resistance movements. Israel administration made pressures to Egypt government to make release these captures. A single crossing point between Gaza and Egypt is Rafah Border, the Egyptian government put pressure on Hamas by holding crossing off needs. Mubarak regime was using it as a tool to impose their politics. Gaza tunnels is considered as an vessels for life. Due to Israel's blockade of the Gaza people, including live animals and gasoline and food needs a lot of underground tunnels are covered by Egypt government and destroyed. Egyptian government, was under pressure from the U.S. and Israel administrations and Hamas, due to the attitude of the Rafah border crossing. This situation creates extremely uncomfortable understanding for the people of Palestine and Egypt. Therefore, all Islamic countries, sent their charities by Rafah Border Gate to the people of Gaza and underground tunnels that enables to require their needs. Mubarak regime disgraced in the Arabic world and also in her public view due to assaults these underground tunnels.

Mubarak regime comprehended that struggle with Hamas weakens the Egyptian rule. So regime was seeking for a solution between Israel and Hamas. Secret talks between

Palestine and Israel were carried out under the supervision of Egypt government. Egyptian government did not demand any interference by the other countries. Hamas government was not accepted by the regimes in Egypt and Jordan, as a result of stress from these regimes, Fatah and Hamas signed an agreement in February 2007 in Mecca. Latterly the National Unity government was formed. With this agreement Fatah and Hamas was supposed to be ended armed conflicts and disputes. But essentially, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia regimens to neutralize Hamas and hoped to dissuade armed resistance over time. With this agreement, Palestine Liberation Organization as well as highlighted earlier restructuring agreements were emphasized.

Fatah and Hamas formed a joint government and Egyptian government hoped to resumption of peace talks with Israel and ending internal problems. The main purpose of Mubarak regime had intention to minimize and reduce the impact of Hamas in the government's foreign policy. US, Egypt and Jordan governments attempted to overthrow Hamas government in Gaza. Due to this plan, military clashes began between Fatah and Hamas members and Hamas with the help of security on the ground Qassam Brigades took over direct control of the Gaza Strip on June 14, 2007. The government headed by Ismail Haniyeh was declared outlaw by the Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and proclaimed Marshall Law. He authorized Salam Fayyad to form extraordinary government. The Egyptian government in this process has trained thousands of military persons belonging to Fatah, led by Mahmoud Dahlan. But the process showed that they were trained by Egypt, for conflict with Hamas forces rather than in the struggle against war with Israel.

Egypt, Hamas in Gaza to provide military dominance, then pulling principal office in Gaza closed military. Soon after, does not accept the legitimacy of the situation in Gaza and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas appointed Salam Fayyad's government has recognized the new has been announced. Hamas political chief Khaled Meshaal said in a statement that they would give no harm to national security and internal affairs of Egypt and stated that the only focus of their policy would be Israeli occupation. After the assassinations of some members of Hamas and announced by Hamas in order to ensure their own safety they took complete control of the Gaza Strip. Mubarak government adviced an Arab military unit would be sent to restore law and order in Gaza but Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip denied that a government elected by the people was in charge.

In meanwhile the main political discourse against Hamas, was Talibanization of Gaza. House of Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Mustafa mentioned in a statement, it is not possible to adopt a religion remarked to a structure islamic emirate in the eastern border of Egypt on December 12, 2008. The rule of Hamas in Gaza for Egypt due to the Egyptian President Mubarak constitute a threat to national security. At the same time, Ambassador of Egypt in Gaza was withdrawn and Diplomants were sent to Ramallah. This was a strong clue that Ramallah government was supported by the Egyptian government in the Hamas and Fatah conflict.

Knesset of Israel took a blockade decision in September 2007 and blockade of Gaza was described as being the enemy began to be implemented vigorously. Mubarak regime by keeping the door of Rafah border closed, gave direct support to Israel's blockade of the same time. With the growing impact of the Israeli blockade on January 23, 2008, Gaza border fence was destroyed by thousands of Palestinian and walked into Egypt territory. As far as possible, the Egyptian government opened Rafah gate to reach an agreement between the parties but did not lift blockade. Following violations of the border into Egypt from Gaza the Israeli defense minister Barak signed bilateral agreements with

Egypt and threatened Egypt government. This statement containing threats and warning the Egyptian regime has left its own public and the Muslim public in a difficult position. The other issue was the content of bilateral agreement which was mentioned in announcement, has not been fully articulated.

It was seen that Mubarak regime siding entirely to the Palestinian Authority and take a hostile attitude to Hamas. It was also seen in her tacit support for Israel in its war on the Gaza Strip the end of 2008 and beginning of 2009 in spite of his claiming concern for the reconciliation between them. Today Egypt became more biased official position of Hamas and more conservative positions on the Palestinian Authority. Because current Egyptian President belongs politically and ideologically leading group of a global organization Hamas is a part of it and an extension of him, it is natural that raises the problem is concerned with determining the nature of the relationship between the national interests of the Egyptian and Palestinian national interests and the quality of the dividing lines between them.

Hamas in Gaza has a significant presence over these armed groups, but according to the security equation always kept under control. Where Hamas use these organizations in the battle over the terms of the truce with Israel. Meanwhile Hamas has tried, through compared to those organizations, drew the attention of the United States and the European Union, Hamas seems substitute or moderate partner more responsible, and reliable compared to those organizations which have narrow ideological vision. In the light of the so-called Arab spring which has given growing political power to Muslim Brotherhood organizations in the region. The interests of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt requires being careful recently. Muslim Brotherhood should not bring everything that would lead to heating Front Gaza so as not to cause embarrassment early for them. The more likely that Hamas will respond the developments in the region due to the needs of Muslim Brotherhood. The nature of the phase transition in Egypt, and the complexities of the relationship between the Brotherhood and the military council, requires careful not to prejudice equation fragile peace with Israel. Hamas is likely seeks to behave that does not make them a burden on parent organization in Egypt.

The Muslim Brotherhood after getting the presidency are attempting in coordination with Hamas and working on the continuation of the truce between Gaza and Israel, which has been supported for a long time. They probably preserve (at least in the beginnings) men used by Egyptian intelligence to carry out this role through the intensification of contacts with the parties in times of crisis, to reduce the mutual escalation of violence and to return once again to the truce. Muslim Brotherhood plays larger role in this case as the role played by the military and security situation in Egypt. At the same time Muslim Brotherhood tries to show care and the ability to achieve stability for the American administration which closely following the practices of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is difficult in such a context to predict the reaction of the military council(constitution was adopted but political structure has not been shaped yet) on such a step by the Muslim Brotherhood. It is has to be mentioned also the response or lack of response from Washington and Tel Aviv with the supposed new system. The reaction of the military wing of Hamas to Israel's violation of calm conditions this time would come at the hands of the mother-party in Cairo or not?

Hamas represents, at the current stage, the only exception among the Muslim Brotherhood organizations (Because it is a armed resistance group against Israeli occupation) which has not received recognition of West until today. This exception may constitute motivation for Hamas toward expressing moderation to get the recognition. Hamas on the level of cooperation adjust the activity of the Salafist jihadist, politically

costly if compared with the Quartet's conditions, such as truce with Israel, acting against violence.

The atmosphere of the Arab revolutions against authoritarian regimes brought gains to Hamas, but to the extent that has placed a new kind of challenges. In the past, enabled the difficult security environment and the complex operates Salafi-Jihadi organizations, Hamas has possibility to keep the activity of such groups under their control. Today the state of mobility that is sweeping the region as a whole, as well as the transition in which it operates many of the security services in the region and may not enable Hamas to keep the same old equation in relation to these regulations. Over time power struggle and the ability to gain power as may make it a fierce ideological rival to Hamas and the Brotherhood organizations in the region. Accordingly to their aim of these organizations does not constitute a benefit to Egyptian national interest only but also beneficial to both Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood. This security cooperation supposed between Hamas and Egypt remains dependent on security politics of government of Brotherhood in Egypt to deal with the dilemma of security in the Sinai Peninsula.

Mubarak regime which made embargo on drugs, even allowed into the Gaza Strip under Israeli blockade constituted the people of Egypt to increase their objections against the Mubarak regime. For the survival of Gaza's crossings between Gaza and Egypt is a kind of underground veins of life. Reports prepared by American and Israeli intelligence about the underground tunnels shows that Hamas provides the supply of military logistics mostly from these tunnels. The Egyptian government was accused for not doing enough to block the opening of these tunnels. Afterwards pressures over the Egyptian government rapidly began to destruction and as a result of this destructions many Palestinians have died in these tunnels. Even for destruction of these tunnels Egyptian border guards sent to be trained in the United States.

Egypt tries to maintain a ceasefire between Palestinian movements, such as trying to ensure that the ceasefire between Israel and Palestine. However, the main problem has always been the Israeli Palestinian resistance movements cease-fire attacks against Israel to halt all military activities and is itself perceived as attacks on military activities and did not accept to halt military operations. For this reason Egypt was forced to mediate between Israel and the Palestinian groups because resistance movements did not want to deal with the Israeli government directly without intermediaries. Between Israeli and Palestinian resistance groups was declared a cease-fire that would last for six months starting on June 19, 2008. This put an end to the attacks of both parties under the terms of the ceasefire and the blockade on Gaza would be removed. But the Israeli army in Gaza in December 2008 to launch heavy air strikes began to change in the region has led to all balances. This was a major blow over 30 years of authoritarian rule. During the attacks on the Gaza, being closed border crossing has created great anger against the Mubarak rule.

CONCLUSION

Egypt represents gate official and important to reach the Arab legitimacy for HAMAS and their entrance to gain legitimacy in the Islamic world and the third world countries, not because of the strength of the presence of the system on Arab and international levels, but because of the location of Egypt and its historic role, regardless of about the nature of the existing system and policies. As Hamas is aware of the serious antagonize Egypt for being the only outlet for the Gaza Strip, and because of the complexity of their relationships and their influence. Hamas is aware, too, that whatever the dispute with the Egyptian regime was acute, Egypt in the Arab equation (and regardless of the existing system where once again) their material and human potential enormous and the

Arab and Islamic affiliation remain an asset to Palestine and its cause. The overthrow of the Mubarak regime, in Palestinian politics Hamas completely conquered the psychological advantage. The adoption of a new constitution and a new political system in many aspects, Egypt administration and Hamas movement holds a very important place in terms of relationships. Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in the up coming period likely to be effective.

Mubarak regime had chosen the path of compromise and peace with Israel and supports the Palestinian forces, which charted a similar path. Mubarak regime considered that the resistance was also sponsored by Hamas and the majority of Palestinian forces and factions at this stage did not serve the political realism and did not understand the fact the balance of power on the ground. Palestine issue requires working through diplomatic means only, to gain the Palestinian rights and the establishment of a Palestinian state on the territory of the West Bank and Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

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