

**“THE IMPACT OF THE PALESTINIAN POLITICAL DIVISION ON THE PALESTINIAN
FOREIGN POLICY AND THE PATH OF THE PALESTINIAN LIBERATION
DIPLOMACY”**

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ABSTRACT

This empirical research study seeks to identify the impact of the Palestinian political division on the Palestinian foreign policy and the path of the Palestinian liberation diplomacy. The study also aims to identify the most significant risks that the Palestinian political division poses to the Palestinian foreign policy, which is the cornerstone in building international and global political relations in support of the Palestinian cause, as well as identifying the most important pillars of foreign policy to achieve the Palestinian national project and the relationship of the demise of the effects of the political division on these pillars. It was found by the current study that the domestic political division has given birth to the emergence of two antagonist authorities that dominate the political landscape in the Palestinian territories, i.e., the West Bank including East Jerusalem Ruled by the PLO, and the Gaza Strip ruled by Hamas government. The division between the two political entities has led to the paralysis of domestic political process and hence a weakness and impotence in the Palestinian foreign policy and the path of the Palestinian liberation diplomacy. Furthermore, the findings of the study reported that the vast political division has also contributed to the decline in popularity of the Palestinian regime's authorities among the Palestinian people, which resulted in causing additional internal unrest, especially as these authorities continue showing their helplessness in front of this division and their capability to manage this division properly. In conclusion, the findings of the current research paper confirmed that the Palestinian political system has failed to encounter the divergence of its binary political entities' attitudes, ideologies, interests, and partisan identities away from the center towards a political division. The Palestinian political system has also failed to achieve a consensus, a unity, popular disgruntlement, and a political alliance among them. Such political fissures driven by the stifling political competition, political polarization, political divergence, and factionalism among the two antagonist authorities that dominate the political landscape in the Palestinian territories, limit their chances for achieving a domestic political rapprochement. This led to vulnerable political authority's structure that is plagued with instability. Consequently, this underperformed the Palestinian's foreign policy which became vulnerable as it rests on shaky foundations. As a result, the fragility, instability, incoherence, and weakness of the Palestinian foreign policy led to reducing its capacity to gain international support for the Palestinian Cause, decreasing the number of the Palestinian regime's allies at the international level, lowering the level of assistance used to be offered by some countries to the Palestinians which relates to protecting their independence and sovereignty, reducing the resources of the international financial support, changing the diplomatic posture of the international community in dealing with the power struggle among the Palestinian competing elites and the dominant political entities, limiting the efficiency of the Palestinian regime's foreign diplomacy in the international arena, disrupting its relations, solidarity, and cooperation with the neighboring countries and other developing countries, distorting the image and the international standing of the Palestinian cause in the eyes of the international community, which affected the credibility of the Palestinian resistive movements in pursuit of liberation and accordingly the credibility of the Palestinian's foreign policy commitments, which led to a state of a loss of confidence and trust in their intents from the perspectives of the Arab and Western world.

Keywords: The Palestinian political division, foreign policy, the liberation diplomacy, factionalism, struggle for power.

Background of the study:

To achieve international order and avoid coexisting in a state of anarchy, countries all over the world, through their policy-makers and decision-makers, pay a great deal of conscious efforts to establish and implement their own foreign policies towards other nation-states outside their borders in order to conduct their international relations (Waller, 2008; Martin & Simmons, 2001; Evans & Newnham, 1998).

A foreign policy is defined as the country's systematic pre-established and pre-structured strategies as well as guidelines that that are drafted by its government to adequately regulate and direct its activities in matters relating to its interactional relationship/s and dealings with any other political entities and organizations and based on the country's interests and agenda (Bojang, 2018; Wittkopf, et al., 2007; Gibson, 1944; Laura, 2008). On the same context, Padelford & Lincoln (1963: 8) stated that the foreign policy of any country represents the "totality of its dealings with the external environment. Foreign policy is the overall result of the process by which a state translates its broadly conceived goals and interests into specific courses of action in order to achieve its objectives and preserve its interests". Likewise, Frankel (1968: 7) said that: "foreign policy consists of decisions and actions, which involves to some appreciable extent relations between one state and others".

Moreover, there are numerous aims and objectives of any country's foreign policy, which include: 1) attaining its conceived goals and 2) pressurizing its national and international interests, 3) establishing its role, identity, and voice on the international arena (Evans & Newnham, 1998), 4) maintaining its internal peace against any possible external aggression and/or threats, 5) maintaining protection to its citizens abroad, 6) maintaining advancement and prosperity, 7) making adequate decisions regarding its international interventions, and 8) protecting the international commons and the stability of the international order (Hill, 20165).

Further, *Laura (2008) and Bojang (2018) added that* there are many influential factors that shape a country's foreign policy, including its own considerations at the domestic level, other countries' political behavior, any external threats against it, its geopolitical plans, its alliances, its defense, its international trade, its military conflicts, etc.

The current research paper seeks to identify the extent to which the Palestinian foreign policy is influenced by the internal political divisions among the Palestinian political parties.

Problem statement:

There is a frequent impact of the domestic politics on the country's foreign policy. In consonance with Bueno de Mosquita (2002), any conflicts regarding the domestic policy of a state will certainly reflect on the state's foreign policy and will thus lead to an inability of the policy-makers as well as the decision-makers to make decisions that are responsible about coping simultaneously with the domestic and international imperatives. In addition, any weakness in the domestic policy usually leads to decrease the level of awareness among policy-makers and the decision-makers regarding the requirements that are needed to carry out effective actions in the political context (Fearon, 1998).

In view of the above, and on the basis of current projections relating to the fractious political scene in the state of Palestine, it can be said that, based on the reviewed existing literature that is related to the Palestinian politics, that ideological heterogeneity, the political factionalism, and the ideological pluralism have played a critical role in defining the Palestinian political life, including the Palestinian domestic and foreign policy, from the inception of the Palestinian cause till modern history. Eventually, the previous mentioned factors have resulted in giving rise to a spectrum of various political outlooks within the Palestinian community (Nathan, 2005).

Moreover, the Palestinian political life has been also defined throughout a succession of distinct chronological phases, in which, as stated in Baumgarten (2005), several political factions have claimed the right to represent the over whole Palestinian national movement.

In totality, signing of the Oslo Accords in the mid-1990s between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization marked the beginning of a period of promise and confusion, particularly for the Palestinians. The establishment of the Palestinian National Authority, a transitional government with limited autonomy in the occupied territories, added an institutional layer to Palestinian politics (Al-Hazaymah, 1999).

Besides, the Palestinian representation has also suffered, over time, from this institutional ambiguity, with the entry of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the body representing all Palestinians, under the auspices of the Palestinian Authority, which has a much narrower horizon. The events that followed led to the division of the Palestinian political entity, the deterioration of the democratic process in the occupied territories, and the strengthening of authoritarianism in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, all of which undermined the legitimacy of Palestinian representation (Abdel Rahman, 2019).

So, it can be concluded that the Palestinian foreign policy, as believed by Tarayrah (2018), has been facing several determinants and challenges that affected the overall external decision-making process as well as the orientations of decision-makers. In fact, the previously mentioned determinants and challenges, foremost among which is the Palestinian factionalism and political rifts that led to a conflict between the most prominent faction in the Palestine Liberation Organization, represented by the 'Fatah movement' and the Islamic faction known as the ' Hamas movement' (Bani-Odeh, 2017). Actually, the aforementioned conflict has resulted in creating a state of political division among the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip which severely influenced the Palestinian cause in general and the Palestinian foreign policy in particular.

For more clarification or details, the Palestinian political division among the Palestinian movement at all levels, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, i.e., the embodiment and the national front of the Palestinian national movement, and other resistance movement's organizations, political parties, as well as among a numerous independent personalities and figures, have mainly led to hamper the efforts of the Palestinians to achieve their legitimate rights of obtaining a full-fledged and independent state with Jerusalem as its capital in the United Nations, obtaining the right self-determination, and obtaining the right of removing the Israeli occupation. On the other hand, the Palestinian political division has also led to a defect and imbalance in the Palestinian foreign policy (Tarayrah, *ibid*).

Research methodology:

The current research study was grounded in accordance with the qualitative research methodology and that is due to its foremost distinctive feature of being 'qualitative' in nature, i.e., it generally includes non-numerical data that are mainly come in a form of 'words' rather than numerical data that are come in a form of 'numbers'.

The qualitative research method is defined by Punch (20132) as the iterative process through which the nature of a given phenomenon is holistically studied for the purpose of achieving an improved understanding of its quality, its possible manifestations, the context in which it exists, and the perception of its relevant perspectives.

It is noteworthy that the qualitative research method has the merits of inclusiveness, openness, comprehensiveness, and the and specialty of having responsivity to the research context and the steps of its data collection and data analysis processes that are, according to Fossey, *et al.*, (2002), related to one another in a cyclical and cross-referenced manner due to the method's flexibility advantage which enables it to get closer to the phenomenon, under investigation, and explore it meticulously firsthand (*ibid*).

In a similar vein, Polit & Beck (2012) asserted that the qualitative research method is normally utilized through the use of various data collection methods that give more significance of offering a straight and holistic description to a poorly understood phenomenon, its associated concepts, and the definitions and meanings of these concepts in order to obtain detailed explanation regarding the complex reasoning and the various scenarios and situations that are associated with the phenomenon under investigation at the first place.

Withal, and by virtue of the fact that the current research study is emanated from a qualitative perspective, and in light of its descriptive purpose, the researcher has wherefore adopted the Analytical Descriptive Approach (ADA). This research approach aims to identify and thoroughly study a specific phenomenon. It also aims to put the phenomenon of research in its proper framework, collect sufficient and accurate information and data related to it, explain all the circumstances surrounding it in a comprehensive manner, analyze the collected information and data, and finally report the concluded findings in an in-depth manner and deliver an appropriate explanation of the extracted conclusion, in which the element of the data saturation is fulfilled through the researcher's empirical confident that there is no further relevant information that can be discovered/extracted from analyzing the data (Al-Manaraa, 2022).

On a related matter, ADA is characterized by being efficacious to analyze, explain, and validate qualified, i.e., non-quantified, research topics, through which the information and data that are associated with a particular phenomenon are collected using various methods of data collection. In addition, whilst employing a number of variables, various aspects of the selected

phenomenon are completely described, such as the reasons that are responsible for the occurrence of the phenomenon. In other words, this approach is concerned with the “Why?”, “How?”, and “What?” questions. The final aim of this approach is to come up with comprehensive research finding, whose hallmark is their capability of creating a scope for further research about the phenomenon investigated (Fox & Bayat, 2007).

Based on the foregoing, the researcher adopted the qualitative research method framework, particularly the qualitative analytical descriptive approach, to investigate the most readily apparent phenomenon of factionalism and political rifts that characterizes the Palestinian political landscape. Besides, the highlighted above approach was also adopted to examine the impact of state of political division among the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on the Palestinian foreign policy. Or better yet, the domestic, regional, international and/or transnational implications of this political division on the performance of the Palestinian foreign policy.

Beyond recall, it is indicated that the current empirical study has implemented the Internet-based methodical model to collect the study’s data. This model (also referred to as the cyber-research model, the Web-based model, the Internet-mediated research model, the On-line research model, and the Internet research model) is considered, as reported by Benfield & Szlemko (2006) and Reips & Bosnjak (2001), as an evolving type of research methodologies’ models that employ the Internet information that are available at the World Wide Web, extracted using the search tools such as the Web search engines, with emphasis on the idea that Internet, in this respect, represents the primary medium and vehicle for collecting the data required for research purposes.

Moreover, during the process of data collection that is relied on the Internet-based methodical model, several steps should be taken, including (Reips, 2012): identifying the topic under investigation, gathering as much related information as possible to enrich the accumulated knowledge and therefore enhance the topic’s understanding, carrying out a post-collection analysis that is concerned with quality and/or synthesis, finding further relevant data that share a homophilic relationships, i.e., a common characteristics, with the research topic, and extracting a thoughtful and unique insights from the overall collected data and thereupon reaching conclusions (making balanced and focused judgments and taking reliable decisions after an in-depth thought) (Williams, 2007).

Finally, and in a related context, it is necessary to emphasize the potentials of implemented the Internet-based methodical model, which include: granting the researcher with an access to a vast and diverse online data from a lot of different sources, such as academic publications, informational websites, social media platforms, etc., which helps in making a sense out of the context of investigation and from the researcher’s scope of interest, decreasing the time- and cost- efficiency of the research process, enhancing the possibilities for a cross-cultural research through collapsing the geographical boundaries, facilitating the data collection method in an automatic manner and through reliance on electronic data resources, revolutionizing the majority of the scientific fields and disciplines through providing the greatest possible representative and diverse data, accomplishing real-time data and trend analysis, offering more inventiveness-based possibilities that are limited only by the researcher, and allowing more access to appropriate expertise (Krantz, 2012, Hewson, et al., 2003; Carbonnell, 2020).

Theoretical framework:

The *theoretical framework* of the current study aims to introduce, hold, support. and describe the theory and concepts that are relevant to the topic of a research study. In fact, it aims to support the overall research process through providing the theoretical aspects and the relevant scholarly literature regarding the theory underpinning the research problem (Trochim, 2006).

For more clarification, the theory is used to understand a research problem and guide the research study’s data analysis. Is also helps in describing a phenomenon observed in order to make generalizations about its various aspects (e.g., its meaning, its nature, and its challenges), especially as most of the theories are often experienced but unexplained (ibid).

David Easton’s (1953) System Analysis Approach (SAA):

Contrary to the alternatives to conventional models of organization, Ludwig Von Bertalanffy formulated the General Systems Theory (GST) in early 20th century. Forsooth, this theory was regarded by Bertalanffy as an interdisciplinary study and interpretation of the nature of complex systems.

Admittedly, the main assumption and the key concept of GST, as claimed by Bertalanffy (1934), is that any complex system is composed of multiple smaller subsystems (also referred to as the set of units/blocks/components resulted from the partitioning of an entire complex system). Besides, the interactions between the aforesaid subsystems is broadly considered the main cause and condition that led to the formation of an entire system as a whole.

Arising out of this standpoint, whenever GST is applied to any discipline, despite of its nature, the highest priority should be given to the whole complex system rather than its constituent subsystems. Furthermore, upon explaining or rationalizing a complex system, its entire characteristics should be examined in a collective manner. However, if the explanation and the rationalization are solely relied on examining certain or limited characteristics of only one single subsystem (out of the entire system's overall subsystems), then this explanation and rationalization will be insufficient, inadequate, and unreliable (Laszlo, 1974).

Emerging from the central viewpoint of the GST and the application of its theoretical tools, the political thinker David Easton, during late 1950s and 1960s, initiated and formulated the System Analysis Approach (SAA) in political science. Incontrovertibly, Easton conceived the idea of exposing and adapting the (GST) to analyze political phenomena and to develop theories in field of political science, which was basically built on his assumption that the GST is applicable to the study of Political Science (Easton, 1953).

In his approach, Easton proposed that the various components, parts, and levels of the political system interact with each other in a way that if one of these components changes or comes under stress, the other components of the same political system will adjust to compensate. Additionally, the political system, according to Easton, has precise boundaries and therefore it is characterized of being delimited. Besides, the political system is also characterized of being fluid; due to the volatile nature of decision making process that takes place within the framework of this system. Therefore, the political system is believed by Easton to be working within an environment that generates different demands from different bodies and entities within the society (Easton, 1965a; 1965b; 1953).

It is crucially important to indicate that Easton, within his approach's framework, defined the political system as an interactional-based system, through which, a constant flux of political allocations (whether binding or authoritative) are made to allow the entire political system to adapt and survive. That is to say, it is the all-embracing continuous-based political interactions that take place among the subsystems that are interrelated to the broad system (the overall system).

In a related context, and with Easton's view and insight of the political system as a starting point, the current research study proposed the following definition for the term 'political system': "*The political system is a coordinated set of wide and sophisticated interactional processes that take place between a state's major supreme governing body (in the broad sense the totalitarian state's notion) and its submissive constituent subsystems that are emanated from it in the first place and further operate within or alongside it*".

It should be pointed out that the formerly stated subsystems are considered as an inalienable, integral, and intrinsic part of the broad system, and this is due to the fact that they are directly responsible for allowing this large system to function and hence attaining a state of equilibrium (ibid).

Easton added that while all political activities within the political system's behavior are integrating, the political policy-making process could be then formulated and executed, with an emphasis on the linkage between the political system, its environment, the regularities of patterns and processes in the overall political life, and other social systems.

By way of explanation, for the sake of analyzing any political system and deduce its total properties, a set of subsystems, associated with the broad system, should be basically allocated. This is followed by determining the conditions that the broad system imposes on these subsystems. Consequently, and based on repeating the same steps in a continuous manner and in the same vein, an integrated and inclusive analysis process of the political system, including the analysis of its gross properties, will be effectively and successfully accomplished.

Ancillary, Easton stated any political system has two components: 1) the input: which is consisted of the flow of influences that are resulted from the environment and which cast a shadow on the political system; 2) the output: which is consisted of the flow of influences that are resulted from the political system itself and which cast a shadow on the environment. Besides, it should be noted that the inputs represent the 'demands' that flow into the political system. These demands are then

converted into outputs, particularly in a form of actions and decisions. As a matter of fact, these inputs constitute the allocation of values (whether binding or authoritative) (ibid).

Based on the foregoing, David Easton's (1953) System Analysis Approach was employed by the researcher explain, predict, and understand the phenomenon that is set out to the current research study. Indeed, this approach was meant to guide the research process, connects the researcher to the existing knowledge of the current research topic, within the limits of the critical bounding assumptions, and accordingly allow the researcher to make predictions about the phenomenon under investigation.

The fallout of the Palestinian political division and its impact on the Palestinian foreign policy:

Consequently, and based on the direct link between the Palestinian political division and the foreign policy of the State of Palestine, the researcher believes that it is absolutely essential to include a detailed historical background about the Palestinian political division in order to identify its negative effects and fallouts on the Palestinian foreign policy.

As an entry point to Palestinian political division, reference must be made to the highly grave ramifications generated by this conflict and its fallouts that are placed on the Palestinian foreign policy.

From a general perspective, and based on reviewing the findings of a significant amount of literature on international relations and comparative politics, it was demonstrated that the domestic political conflict and division within any state are closely associated with its foreign policy. As a matter of fact, the historical treatments conducted at the arena of the domestic conflict and foreign policy demonstrated that there is clear correlation between the two phenomena (Lawson, 1985; Fry & Gilbert, 1982). In a related matter, one aspect of the aforesaid correlation can be seen, as per to Allison (1971) and Waltz (1967), through the crucial part of the domestic politics in generating the states' foreign policy (also referred to as the state's international political outcomes), through which the state displays its international political choices, intentions, goals, and desires.

Precisely, the political division, as an explicit aspect –among many other important aspects- in the domestic politics as well as the domestic-political interactions of any state, is considered as a variable and idiosyncratic factor that plays a critical role in determining the state's foreign behavior, distinctly its foreign policy. Hence, contingent on the broad concept of the domestic politics, every state is always keen to pursue different foreign policies' choices for the sake of addressing its political targets and above all, avoids any possible differences and/or conflicts in its political institutions, as such factors can cause suboptimal foreign policies (Snyder, 1984; Posen, 1984; Van Evera, 1984).

In the interest of brevity, there is a complex affinity and interdependence between the domestic political conflict of any state and external/foreign policy behavior. Further, in order to fully clarify the aspects of the previously indicated affinity, Snyder (1984) and Posen (1984) asserted that the catastrophic failure in a country's foreign policy is more likely to happen due to a political division that exists between its dominant domestic-political factions. Moreover, the domestic politics in some of the countries that are ruled by military regimes are characterized of being organizationally biased and this is usually coupled with the existence of domestic political threats within these countries. Depending on terms of reference, there is a strong possibility that these regimes advocate offensive military doctrines in the context of their countries' foreign policies and therefore increases the likelihood of their countries' intrusion in foreign conflicts. Additionally, in other countries were the adopted domestic politics are bureaucratic, this results in increasing the probability of embracing suboptimal foreign policies by these countries.

Starting at square one, since its emergence in the mid-20th century, it has become evident that the Israeli–Palestinian ongoing dispute is regarded, beyond a reasonable doubt, as one of the most enduring conflicts ever witnessed in history.

Due to the occupation of Palestine in 1948, which was the leading cause that lies behind the emergence of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and in light of the subsequent grave events that took place in the Palestinian arena the Palestinian

territories at the demographic, political and national levels, a state of sharp discrepancies, disagreements, and division arose in the Palestinian political arena (Bani-Odeh, 2017; Ahmed, 2018).

In fact, despite the common unanimity among the Palestinian-led resistance movements (whether official or non-official) in terms of their absolute obligation towards their cause and the need to adhere to the struggle pathway (with its combat, steadfastness and remarkable endurance) until their overarching national goals, including the liberation of Palestine, achieving Palestinian self-determination, and securing the return of the refugees, are entirely attained, however several arguments or disputes arose among these movements due to their different opposing agendas, programs, opinions and interests (Swilem, 2007).

As a by-product of such political scene, a state of factionalism has started to dominate the political landscape in the Palestinian territories, i.e., the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. This was also accompanied by the formation of many Palestinian factions, groupings, organizations, parties, and national movements of national action against the Israeli occupation. Examples include, but are not limited to: The Palestinian Liberation Organization (*the official and legitimate representative of the State of Palestine and the umbrella organization for various Palestinian factions. PLO, which was recognized internationally as the official Palestinian Authority, rules and governs the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, that both represents the first major constituent of the Palestinian territories*), alongside with its constituent bodies, especially 'Fatah', which is PLO's dominant party and largest faction (Britannica, 2020), 'Hamas' (*the Islamist militant organization that rules and governs the Gaza Strip, which is the other major constituent of the Palestinian territories*), and the rest of the national Palestinian-led resistance movements (whether official or non-official and whether covert or clandestine) (Tahhan, 2017; Hilal, 2013).

In the midst of the aforementioned political landscape, and judging by the state of factionalism that has started to prevail and gaining ground due to the emergence of several nationalist-minded, Islamist-minded, democratic-minded, and socialist-minded Palestinians political movements that have started to compete (sometimes violently) at the national level to exercise their indisputable hegemony and authority throughout their respective territories and to exercise full control over the direction of any future Palestinian state, signs of an evolving political conflict between the two main Palestinian political movements in the Palestinian territories, i.e., Fatah and Hamas, have started to rise.

Taking into consideration the fundamental differences and the extent of divergences that profoundly marked the political relations between the two movements in terms of their political behavior, agenda, course of action, ideology, tendencies, and their political positions, the combination of these factors resulted in widening the gap between the two movements and hence shattered any hope for possible mutual understanding, stability, a spirit of consensus, and coexistence between them.

As an inevitable consequence of the prevailing political conditions overwhelmed, back then, by tension, complexity and shrinking in the political space originated from the dispute over national authority, the internal political situation kept worsening and took a turn for the worse. That is to say, as the intensity rose, a political crisis has emerged and kept aggravating and escalating until it got to the point where a military confrontation occurred between the two movements in 2007. As a result of aforementioned armed clash between Hamas, in whose territory this devastating event has occurred, and Fatah, casualties and enormous material losses were sustained.

For the sake of providing a greater clarification and a more concise and substantive briefing of the already stated conflict, attention must be drawn to the further merits and detailed baselines of this conflict which represented a precedent in the Palestinian cause.

In 2005, after holding the Palestinian presidential election in the Palestinian territories (the West Bank and Gaza Strip), which led to the election of President Mahmoud Abbas to a four-year term, Abbas, who is still functions as the nationally and internationally recognized president of the State of Palestine and the Palestinian National Authority, in addition to the positions of the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) which he has been holding since 2004, as well as the position of the chairman of the Fatah party (since 2009 till present), announced in the same year, i.e., 2005, a cease-fire in agreement with Israeli Prime Minister, at that time, Ariel Sharon. In return, Fatah's main political rival, i.e., Hamas movement, who boycotted the 2005 presidential election alongside with Islamic Jihad, has conversely endorsed this ceasefire and further signed the Palestinian Cairo Declaration in the same year, alongside with other (12) Palestinian factions, under which: 1) the reaffirmation and re-acknowledgment of the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, 2) retaining and upholding the right of the Palestinian factions and movement to participate in the track of the political process administered by PLO, provided that the this participation should comply with the democratic, and 3) preserving the right of

the inclusion of Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements as concerned parties whom are inseparably linked with the Palestinian cause. Furthermore, it should be pointed out that the period followed these consecutive events has conversely included the complete disengagement of Israel from the Gaza Strip in 2005 (Khalidi, 2009; Wilson, 2007; Shikaki, 2007).

Authentically, after the Palestinian parliamentary legislative elections that were held in 2006, culminating in a crushing victory of Hamas movement which was unanimously elected to hold the position of the second Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) that functions and serves as the legislature of the Palestinian National Authority, particularly with respect to the civil matters and internal security, and after deciding on the issue of the newly elected second Palestinian Legislative Council which was dominated by the Fatah movement, Ismail Haniyeh (who was basically a senior political leader of Hamas), and in accordance with his nomination to form a new government 'Hamas government', Haniyeh became one of two disputed Prime Ministers of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). At a later stage, after Haniyeh was formally presented to the President Mahmoud Abbas and sworn in on 29th, March, 2006, the emerging signs of political conflict between Hamas and Fatah movements have begun to surface gradually, and hence become observable and easily spotted, especially after Fatah movement refused to join the new Hamas-led Palestinian Authority government formed by Haniyeh who also rejected the earlier agreements made with Israel by Fatah and the Quartet's conditions, including the recognition of Israel. Later on, as the two movements have repeatedly failed to reach a deal to share government power, the Palestinian president called for a formation of a national unity government (also referred to as the coalition government) and accordingly the Hamas government was replaced by the newly-formed unity government on 17th, March, 2007, that comprised from ministers from the two movements and is headed by Haniyeh (Wilson, 2007; Shikaki, 2007).

However, the political conflict between the two movement kept rising until it reached a peak on 14th, June, 2007, represented by the outbreak of an armed conflict between the two movements that is attributable to the takeover of Gaza Strip by the armed forces of Hamas which became the *de facto* governing authority of the Strip, coupled with the movement's imposing strong controls over the Palestinian Authority positions, formerly under the Jurisdiction and Control of Fatah movement, and further removing Fatah officials from Gaza Strip.

As an outcome of the armed conflict, the Palestinian president declared a state of emergency and issued a presidential decree, by which he dismissed Haniyeh after announcing the dissolution of the unity government and further appointed an emergency government that is headed by Salam Fayyad, as the new Prime Minister, which represented the end of the era of Hamas' leadership of the Palestinian Authority government. On contrary, Haniyeh refused to acknowledge the decree and considered it illegal. He further continued to operate in the Gaza Strip and exercising his prime ministerial authority, claiming to be the legitimate government with the complete Jurisdictional control and authority over the Gaza Strip (Abrahams, 2008; Associated Press, 2007; Erlanger, 2007; Kershner & Erlanger, 2007)

Since the military conflict between the two main rival factions of the Palestinian National Authority, i.e., Fatah and Hamas movements, which was centered on the struggle for power based on the two movements' claim of legitimacy over leadership of the Palestinian territories, this prominent event resulted in a *de facto* division of the Palestinian territories into two entities, the West Bank under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian National Authority that continues to administer it, and Gaza Strip under the jurisdiction of Hamas that also continues to administer it. It should be noted that president Abbas, who promptly deposed the Hamas-dominated PA government, claims his administration as the legitimate government over both Palestinian Territories (ibid).

To sum up, the Palestinian political system, represented by administrations of the two leading Palestinian political movements, namely Fatah and Hamas, has been undergoing an intense political crisis of confidence and legitimacy that continues, on various levels, to the present day. In fact, the profound political division, which at a certain point erupted into full-scale hostilities and intercommunal violence between the two movements, was due to their political competition as well their distinctive agenda, objectives, interest, ideologies, divergent views, distinctive programs of action, etc., has seriously accelerated this political crisis (Khalidi, 2009). Hence, in light of the resulted deteriorated political situation, it seems that the two movements are still unable to neither finalize their ongoing political conflict nor reaching a reconciliation and internal agreement.

Notwithstanding, while the state of factionalism and political division continues to dominate the political landscape in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the foreign policy of the State of Palestine was not immune to the prolonged effects of such political situation.

According to Abu-Yaqoub (2017), the Palestinian political division, resulted from the splitting the Palestinian political authority's structure, has led to diminished opportunities for achieving foreign political achievements for the Palestinian cause and declining the international positions in supporting the Palestinians' legitimate quest to liberate their land. as a result of splitting the Palestinian political authority's structure. As a result, international positions in support of the Palestinian cause have declined. Abu-Yaqoub added that the political division contributed to weakening the Palestinian position before the international community, and also contributed to passing the Israeli propaganda.

Al-Rajoub (2012) asserted that the ongoing internal Palestinian political division has had negative effects on the Palestinian foreign policy and the path of the Palestinian liberation diplomacy, as the multiplicity of representatives of the Palestinian people resulting from the political division does not enable the Palestinians to fully and truly convey their voice to the world. The Palestinian foreign policy is implemented by several political entities. In addition to the two PA's governments in the West Bank and in Gaza Strip, there are political factions and movements of each has its own foreign policy opposite to the other. Accordingly, the multiplicity of Palestinian discourses abroad does not convey the message about the suffering of the Palestinian people as it is supposed to. In the same line, Kershner & Erlanger (2007) and Merete (2008) emphasized that the Palestinian foreign policy has failed politically, considering that any foreign policy that does not proceed from the logic of force and unity in pursuit of the goal of liberation, cannot succeed. Al-Rajoub explained that since 1969, the Palestinian official foreign policy has witnessed many deviations from the logic of liberation, especially with the start of initiatives for a peaceful solution to the Palestinian issue. He also expressed his reservations about the Palestinian foreign policy and the performance of the various parties towards their political interests. The Palestinian foreign policy is considered incomplete and unclear because of the ambiguity of the Palestinian scene. Also, there is an imbalance in the Palestinian foreign policy and the path of the Palestinian liberation diplomacy, both in relation to the political differences that overlap between the Liberation Organization and the National Authority, or between Hamas and the dismissed government in Gaza, and therefore it is necessary to reconsider the Palestinian foreign policy and reformulate it on the basis of the Palestinian people's interests (ibid).

Conclusion:

This article reviews the variables of the Palestinian foreign policy through highlighting its internal determinants that affect its performance and its effectiveness in terms of obtain the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

It was found by the current study that the domestic political division between the Palestinian political system, represented by administrations of the two leading Palestinian political movements, namely Fatah and Hamas, has a negative impact on the Palestinian foreign policy and its performance as well as on the path of the Palestinian liberation diplomacy.

Bearing in mind that the Palestinian cause, according to Tarayrah (2018), has a specificity with an Arab and international dimension, and it is affected by many variables at the local, regional and international levels, hence the Palestinian foreign policy represents a necessity to the Palestinian political process.

The findings of the study further indicated that the issue of Palestinian division has given birth to the emergence of two antagonist authorities that dominate the political landscape in the Palestinian territories, i.e., the West Bank including East Jerusalem Ruled by the PLO, and the Gaza Strip ruled by Hamas government. The division between the two political entities has led to the paralysis of domestic political process and the Palestinian cause in general, practices by inclusive institutions such as the PLO and the PNC, and the Palestinian foreign policy.

In a related context, Catley-Carson (2010) emphasized that as the foreign policy of any country is seen as the abroad pursuit of achieving the domestic policy goals. In addition, Catley-Carson postulated that even though the desired impact of population programs is to change the country's outcomes abroad, however countries should adopt a successful domestic policies regarding their internal politics at the first place.

Furthermore, the findings of the study reported that the vast political division has also contributed to the decline in popularity of the Palestinian regime's authorities among the Palestinian people, which resulted in causing additional internal unrest, especially as these authorities continue showing their helplessness and weakness in front of this division and their capability to manage this division properly.

In conclusion, the findings of the current research paper confirmed that Palestinian political system has failed to encounter the divergence of its binary political entities' attitudes, ideologies, interests, and partisan identities away from the center towards a political division. Garber (2022), Mukhimer (2017), Odeh (2017), Brown (2010), and Viken (2008) asserted that Such political fissures driven by the stifling political competition, political polarization, political divergence, and factionalism among the two antagonist authorities that dominate the political landscape in the Palestinian territories, limit their chances for achieving a domestic political rapprochement. This led to vulnerable political authority's structure that is plagued with instability and hence a popular disgruntlement regarding the political performance of the Palestinian regime has emerged.

Furthermore, in light of the pressure caused by the disruption of the transactional relationships between the multilateral rival powers in the Palestinian political system, including the official and non-official actors, which ultimately failed to be driven to the negotiating table, and therefore, this had a significant impact on the Palestinian's foreign policy (Hagan, 2008).

Actually, the aforementioned impact on the Palestinian foreign policy was attributable to the failure of the two antagonist authorities that dominate the political landscape in the Palestinian territories, namely the PLO, alongside with its dominant party and largest faction, i.e., Fatah, and Hamas government, to achieve a consensus, a unity, and a political alliance among them that is based on a unified ideology, a common agenda, goals, programs, and political approach.

Bearing in mind the complex nature of the Palestinian political system and its dynamics, and in light of David Easton's (1953) System Analysis Approach, the Palestinian political division, as a political phenomenon, and the state of factionalism that dominate the political landscape in the Palestinian territories, mainly between the Palestinian political system, consisting of the major supreme governing body; the Palestinian Liberation Organization (which is recognized as the official government of the de jure State of Palestine and the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people by over (100) countries that it has diplomatic relations with), alongside with its s dominant party and largest faction 'Fatah' which govern the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and on the side, its main rival faction, i.e., Hamas movement which governs the Gaza Strip, is caused by the lack of efficacy regarding the political interactions between the Palestinian political system (in the broad sense the totalitarian state's notion) and its submissive constituent subsystems (represented by the Palestinian-led resistance movements; whether official or non-official, that are emanated from it in the first place and further operate within or alongside it) and hence considered inalienable, integral, and intrinsic part of the broad system.

Taking into account that the Palestinian political system is delimited due to its precise boundaries, and within its domestic environment that generates different demands from different political bodies and entities (sub-systems) within the Palestinian society, as well as the political conflict between the aforementioned political bodies and entities which is centered on the struggle for power that is based on their contrast claims of legitimacy over leadership of the Palestinian territories, therefore the entire Palestinian political system (the broad system) has become incapable of embracing the overall continuous-based political interactions that take place among its subsystems and as a result, it lost its ability to function properly and hence attaining a state of equilibrium. Consequently, the interactions that take place within the realm of the flow of influences and demands that are resulted from the Palestinian political environment and which cast a shadow on the overall political system (referred to by Easton as the 'input') that are converted into a flow of influences (in a form of actions and decisions) that are resulted from the Palestinian political system itself and which cast a shadow on the Palestinian political environment (referred to by Easton as the 'output'), experienced a state of inconsistency and lack of compatibility which led to negative outputs that were reflected in the political performance of the Palestinian regime, especially on its foreign policy, which has become suffering from weakness in its performance and inability to achieve its goals.

This is led to a vulnerable Palestinian foreign policy that rests on shaky foundations. Indeed, the fragility, instability, incoherence, and weakness of the Palestinian foreign policy, which came as an outcome of such a political reality, can be extrapolated through: the impotence of the Palestinian foreign policy to gain international support for the Palestinian Cause, decreasing the number of the Palestinian regime's allies at the international level, lowering the level of assistance used to be offered by some countries to the Palestinians which relates to protecting their independence and sovereignty, promoting a better governance, a better justice, economic, and social systems, protecting its security, etc., reducing the resources of the international financial support, changing the diplomatic posture of the international community in dealing with the power struggle among the Palestinian competing elites and the dominant political entities, limiting the efficiency of the Palestinian regime's foreign diplomacy in the international arena, disrupting its relations, solidarity, and cooperation with the neighboring countries and other developing countries, distorting the image and the international standing of the Palestinian cause in the eyes of the international community, which affected the credibility of the Palestinian resistive movements in pursuit of liberation and accordingly the credibility of the Palestinian's foreign policy commitments, which led to a state of a loss of confidence and trust in their intents from the perspectives of the Arab and Western world. In total, the contemporary

Palestinian foreign policy, in such political circumstances, has become powerless with respect to deciding, engaging, convincing, moderating, compromising, and settling any kind of international relations that aim merely at integrating the State of Palestine into the international society, promoting its liberalization and sovereignty and further consolidating and defending its independence in order to enhance the state's capacity to survive and prosper in an international order whilst settling its domestic and broad disputes and conflicts peacefully.

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