

Report

Obama's Foreign Policy Towards Israel: The Failure to Use Smart Power

*Dr. Ghassan Shabaneh**

31 August 2015





It is time for a paradigm shift in American Israeli relations [AP]

Abstract

This paper discusses the foreign policy of the Obama administration toward Israel. The paper suggests that President Obama failed to use smart power effectively to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and therefore diminished American credibility and prestige around the world. Furthermore, the paper argues that President Obama made little effort to translate the vision in his Cairo speech into a coherent strategy to end the occupation and revamp the poor image of the United States in the Arab and Muslim worlds. After the speech, expectations were very high and many hoped for a genuine change in the United States' attitude toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, the majority were surprised after the administration opted for stability at the expense of democracy, and resorted to rhetoric instead of real change to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Obama administration was unable to stand behind its own policy commitments on the question of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem; blinked when its especial envoy, George Mitchell, suggested linking economic aid to Israel's behavior on the peace process; retreated when the Israeli government refused to honor its agreements on releasing prisoners; and caved in to Israel's demands by voting against several resolutions at the United Nations. The paper posits that an effective use of smart power would have helped in solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in accordance with American national security interests and would have helped the US maintain its global prestige and credibility around the world.

Introduction

The United States' unwavering support for the State of Israel continues to be one of the largest sources of contention in the most dangerous region on the globe, and there is very little evidence that this will change anytime soon. Therefore, solving the Israel-Palestinian conflict based on United Nations (UN) resolutions stands in accordance with

American national security interests. Since the 1970s, American officials have been professing their disapproval of the occupation; many of them have been insisting that a compromise be found between the Israelis and Palestinians based on United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 242 and 338: the Land for Peace formula. Among all these officials, President Obama was the first to talk publicly about a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders. On May 19, 2011, he said, "The borders of Israel and Palestine should be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps, so that secure and recognized borders are established for both states."⁽¹⁾ But the president did not follow his speech with a coherent strategy to fulfill his vision and build on his previous Cairo commitments to the Arab and Muslim worlds to solve one of the thorniest issues between the West and the majority of the rest.

The disconnect between Obama's speeches and his strategies was observed by two former American national security advisors: Zbigniew Brzezinski and Brent Scowcroft. Both said, "He makes dramatic speeches," but "it never translated into a process in which good ideas become strategies."⁽²⁾ The two men cited the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as Obama's most important unfinished business.

President Obama came to office in 2009 with a democratic majority in both Congressional houses; unprecedented American public support for his vision of ending wars and conflicts around the world, especially in the Middle East; and a distinguished team of special envoys to help the administration shape events in its own image. Therefore, the president came to office with enough tools to effect serious change on the ground in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and on the behavior of the Israeli government regarding the peace process. The president should have capitalized on all of these assets to enhance the United States' smart power capabilities and fulfill his promise of change by utilizing them. Smart power implies that a country uses its diplomatic, cultural, military, economic, legal, and moral authority as tools to achieve its desired goals and preferred outcomes in foreign policy.⁽³⁾ Smart power combines hard power (use of force) and soft power (the power to convince and lead by example). Had the Obama administration constructed a policy in which economic, legal, moral, cultural, and diplomatic leverages were put together, the outcome in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would have been much better.

American Foreign Policy toward Israel

According to the two main theories of international relations, realism-neo-realism, and liberalism-neo-liberalism, states pursue foreign policy to accomplish four goals: protecting national security; achieving economic prosperity; spreading and protecting their own values; and increasing their political leverage and prestige.⁽⁴⁾ A deep analysis of American foreign policy toward Israel reveals that the US has been harming itself by

prolonging the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through constantly protecting Israel at the United Nations and other international forums; financing Israeli colonial projects in the Occupied Palestinian Territories; not preventing Israel from invading its neighbors; not insisting that Israel abide by the Arms Exports Control Act, which requires using American weapons for legitimate self-defense; and not taking serious economic, diplomatic, and political measures to end the occupation. American lack of action on the Israeli front leads to frustration and anger against the United States around the world. According to Stephen Van Evera, "The Israeli-Palestinian conflict poses a major threat to U.S. national security interests."⁽⁵⁾ Van Evera argues that "the conflict facilitates and eases al-Qaeda's recruiting efforts, it helps al-Qaeda terrorists find safe haven in Arab and Islamic societies, making Arabs and non-Arab Muslims less willing to cooperate with U.S. efforts to destroy al-Qaeda networks."⁽⁶⁾

Also, the correlation between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and anger, frustration, and violence against the United States in the Arab and Muslim worlds was echoed by two top military and security officers: General David Petraeus and Admiral Mike Mullen. Both have linked favoring Israel over its neighbors to damage to US interests and the possible loss of American lives. They said, "Israel's intransigence could cost American lives." It's rather difficult to maintain the fiction that only fringe Israel-haters see the connection between our support for Israel and Muslim hatred toward the US."⁽⁷⁾ Their message was reiterated by Vice President Joseph Biden during a meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Biden said, "Israel's actions are endangering US troops in the region."⁽⁸⁾ Opinion polls in the US agree with Biden and the two generals on the link between Muslim anger and frustration and violence against the United States.

For instance, many American opinion polls in the Arab and Islamic worlds have linked American policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict to the anger and the frustration Arabs and Muslims feel toward the U.S.⁽⁹⁾ Furthermore, according to Zogby polls, "More than four-in-five Americans (81%) agree the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has a negative impact on US interests, including a majority of both Democrats (88%) and Republicans (77%)."⁽¹⁰⁾ "Americans have made clear that ending the Israel-Palestinian conflict is important and negatively impacts US interests, but the growing partisan divide over policy is worrisome," said Arab American Institute President James Zogby.⁽¹¹⁾

President Obama and the Israeli Occupation

On June 4, 2009, President Obama gave a speech to the Muslim world in Cairo, Egypt. In the speech, the president laid the foundation of his vision for solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The President reiterated his vision at the United Nations General Assembly in another speech he delivered on September 23, 2009. In both speeches the president spoke about his desire to see an end to the occupation and an end to building

settlements; and he committed to an independent Palestinian state living side by side with Israel. In his Cairo speech, the president was absolutely clear about US opposition to Israel building settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: he said, "The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements."⁽¹²⁾ However, the Obama administration did not take any political, economic, or legal measures to prevent Israel from building in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Nor did the Obama administration heed the political recommendations of its peace envoy, George Mitchell, regarding American financial assistance to Israel. Mitchell suggested that "under American law, the United States can withhold support on loan guarantees to Israel."⁽¹³⁾ Had the Obama administration contemplated doing that, and followed in the footsteps of several previous administrations, many believe the outcome between the Israelis and the Palestinians would have been different. Several administrations have used money (economic aid) as a leverage to compel Israel to change its behavior on settlements and other aggressive policies.

For instance, the George H.W. Bush administration asked Congress to delay a \$10 billion loan guarantee request by the government of Israel to settle Soviet Jews in the Palestinian Occupied Territories. In 1992, Secretary of State James Baker said, "The president would not approve the loan guarantees unless Israel promised to halt settlement expansion."⁽¹⁴⁾ Similarly, in 1953, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles said, "The U.S. was suspending foreign assistance to Israel unless Israel stops its canal project on the Jordan River."⁽¹⁵⁾ Israel stopped and the aid resumed. Finally, the Eisenhower administration threatened to cut off US government aid to Israel and take legislative action to block private aid by US citizens to the Jewish state if Israel did not return the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt. Israel heeded the call and withdrew from the Sinai and other conquered territories in the Spring of 1957.⁽¹⁶⁾ The president has at his disposal many tools to encourage change in the behavior of many countries around the world, let alone a country that receives and fully relies on American financial, military, diplomatic, and economic help. Therefore, President Obama should have used financial and economic assistance in accordance with American law based on the recommendations given to him by his peace envoy, George Mitchell, just as President George H.W. Bush did to prevent Israel from continuing settlement construction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

President Obama did not have to reinvent the wheel to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. His predecessors provided him with many formulas and precedents to facilitate a paradigm shift in American Israel relations. For instance, the president could have used the Clinton parameters, agreed upon in Taba, Egypt in 2001, to rally the American and Israeli people behind US interests and start serious negotiations for two states solutions. In addition, he could have used United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1397 and the Road Map as legal precedents to compel Israel to accept a two-state solution. In

2002, the George W. Bush administration authored and passed UNSCR 1397 that clearly stated the following: "The council affirmed a vision of a region where two States, Israel and Palestine, lived side by side within secure and recognized borders."⁽¹⁷⁾ It also called upon the Israeli and Palestinian sides and their leaders to cooperate in the implementation of the Tenet work plan and Mitchell Report recommendations with the aim of resuming negotiations on a political settlement."⁽¹⁸⁾ Finally, Obama could have empowered the Quartet, a committee of four global actors that includes the United States, the European Union, the Russian Federation and the United Nations, by granting it the necessary authority to author and implement an international framework without any US threats or vetoes.

Therefore, the Obama administration did not employ American smart power effectively enough in its foreign policy to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The reluctance of the Obama administration to use the diplomatic, cultural, legal, economic, moral, tools at its disposal continues to endanger American national security interests, compromises American values, threatens its prestige and credibility and negatively impacts its economy.

American National Security and the Illegal Israeli Occupation

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict creates anger, frustration, and humiliation that feeds the enemies of peace and moderation in the region and beyond. The perpetuation of the conflict has negatively affected the public opinion of many in the Arab and Islamic worlds against the United States and has legitimized/justified targeting American interests in the Middle East and beyond. For instance, the Khobar Towers bombing in 1996 in Saudi Arabia, the bombing of the American embassy in Dar-e-Salam, Tanzania in 1998, the attack of the USS Cole in 2000 in Yemen, and the 9/11 attack in New York are but a few examples of what the U.S. has suffered because of its policies on the Israeli-Palestinian, and larger Arab-Israeli, conflicts.

The al-Qaeda leadership has been using the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the suffering of the Palestinians to justify many of its attacks against the United States. For instance, Osama bin Laden gave a speech on the 60th anniversary of the creation of Israel that stated unequivocally the motivations that drive Al-Qaeda to attack America: "The main root of the conflict between our civilization and your civilization is the Palestine question. I stress that the Palestine question is my country's central issue. Since childhood it has provided me and the free 19, a reference to the hijackers of September 11, with an overwhelming feeling of the need to punish Jews and those supporting them."⁽¹⁹⁾ In addition, the 9/11 Commission Report concluded that Khaled Sheikh Mohammed justified the terrorist attacks against the United States based on American relations with Israel.

He said, "My animosity towards the United States stems from my violent disagreement with the US foreign policy favoring Israel."⁽²⁰⁾

On many occasions the United States has found itself suffering from the same global isolation the Israeli government has been experiencing. For instance, the United States had to withdraw its financial support from the United Nations Education Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) after UNESCO admitted the State of Palestine as a member. The United States lost its membership after it failed to pay its annual dues as an objection to the Palestinian admission. Many American diplomats feared that the U.S. would become "a toothless UNESCO member with a weakened voice in international programs fighting extremism through education and promoting gender equality and press freedom."⁽²¹⁾ Phyllis Magrab, the Washington-based US National Commissioner for UNESCO, said, "We won't be able to have the same clout. . . . In effect, we [now won't] have a full tool box. We're missing our hammer."⁽²²⁾ The experience at UNESCO is not unique for many American diplomats. American officials had to withdraw or suspend their participation on other UN councils to protect Israeli behavior. Presidential hopeful Ted Cruz has asked the US to quit the UN Human Rights Council after the council condemned Israeli behavior in the Gaza Strip.⁽²³⁾ The US was the only country to vote against the resolution.

In addition, the thorough and authoritative study of Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer demonstrates the overwhelming political and economic cost the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands has had on American national security interests. The study argues that "Israel is a strategic liability because Israel does not act like a loyal ally."⁽²⁴⁾ For instance, the study shows that Israel provided sensitive military technology to China and is willing to authorize aggressive espionage operations against the United States. According to the study, the US State Department defined such aggressive actions as " a systematic and growing pattern of unauthorized transfers."⁽²⁵⁾ Israeli actions and behavior and its constant interferences in American policies prompted former Defense Secretary Robert Gates to define Israel as an "ungrateful ally."⁽²⁶⁾ Gates made these comments after Israel attempted to block an arms sale to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The defense secretary, like other American commanders on the ground, believes that the "Israeli ill-conceived conceptions for peace ends up hurting US national security interests and harms American credibility and prestige around the world."⁽²⁷⁾

American Prestige and Credibility and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

President Obama has failed to live up to the expectations he created in the Arab World. His first foreign interview was granted to the al-Arabiya news channel; among his first phone calls was one to Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian National Authority; and his speech in Cairo sent signals of hope and a serious intention for

change to many in the region and the world. The president's decision to appoint George Mitchell (author of the Mitchell report) to be his peace envoy to the region solidified this hope; people were looking for a new beginning, given Mitchell's vast experience in negotiating a peace agreement between the Ulster Unionists and the Sinn Fein movement in the United Kingdom.

However, to the dismay of many in the region, President Obama did not deploy any of the United States' smart power tools to compel Israel to change its behavior and in retrospect protect American national security, credibility, and prestige around the world. In fact, the Obama administration changed its values and behavior to accommodate the State of Israel: the Obama administration vetoed a United Nations Security Council Resolution that declared Israeli settlements illegal.⁽²⁸⁾ President Obama's lack of decisiveness on the settlement question triggered a harsh response from former Secretary of State James Baker III. Baker said, "I don't understand how the US can oppose settlements for 30 plus years, then veto a UN resolution opposing settlements."⁽²⁹⁾ In addition, Zbigniew Brzezinski was perplexed about the administration's concessions to Israel on settlements. He said, "It was pathetic to see the United States making big concessions to Israel this month—ones that should be reserved for a final grand bargain."⁽³⁰⁾ The administration's attitude at the UN and its retreat from its professed positions and policies sends mixed signals to many countries around the world and compromises and harms the prestige and the institution of the presidency.

Furthermore, American diplomats found themselves voting against another Obama aspiration at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). On September 23, 2010 Obama had addressed the UNGA and stated the following: "If we do when we come back here next year, we can have an agreement that will lead to a new member of the United Nations -- an independent, sovereign state of Palestine, living in peace with Israel."⁽³¹⁾ But the Obama administration voted against a resolution on November 29, 2012 to accord Palestine a non-member status at the UNGA. The president instructed his team to vote against his own voiced aspirations and counter to American national security interests.

Moreover, the US used its leverage to prevent an advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice on the "illegality of the separation wall" from reaching the United Nations Security Council for a vote. Fourteen international judges found that "construction of the first 125 miles of what is planned as a 435-mile barrier has involved the confiscation and destruction of Palestinian land and resources, the disruption of the lives of thousands of protected civilians and the de facto annexation of large areas of territory."⁽³²⁾ According to the Guardian newspaper, "The US said the issue of the barrier should be resolved through the peace process not in court. The European commission

said the ruling reinforced the EU's call for Israel to remove the fence and wall.”⁽³³⁾ The question of the wall demonstrates the extent to which the US constantly struggles to justify Israel's illegal action in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. This also places the Europeans in an awkward position with many of their constituencies.

Domestic politics are gradually shifting in Europe, with many organizations and individuals calling for Israel to be held accountable for its actions, seeking court orders to imprison Israeli leaders, and encouraging the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to join the International Criminal Court (ICC). For instance, the case of Tzipi Livni, co-chair of the Zionist Union Party, and many others stand as a reminder of how Western politicians risk their democracies to bail out Israeli politicians. According to the Guardian “The British government has granted temporary diplomatic immunity to a prominent Israeli politician ahead of a visit to the UK this week to protect her against arrest and potential prosecution for alleged breaches of international law.”⁽³⁴⁾ This case and many similar others such as the Goldstone Report reflect the burden that Israel has become on many Western countries due to its insistence on defining everything along its security and military parameters with very little considerations to others. Western countries have jeopardized their democracies to protect Israeli actions. A key cardinal of liberal democracy is the separation of powers. In Europe as in the US we witness a constant interference from the executive branch in the judicial branch to protect Israeli politicians from prosecution.

The gap between the United States and the European Union on the question of Palestine continues to widen. Many European parliaments have recognized Palestine, and the majority of European countries support the Palestinian cause at the United Nations and other global forums. In addition, Europeans have been boycotting many settlement products; many European academic unions have stopped cooperating with Israeli academics; and divestment has gained traction in several European labor unions, universities, hedge funds, and companies. Europeans are struggling to balance their national security interests with the constant diplomatic pressure of the US to slow their shift on the question of Palestine. This summer the French have been eager to submit a proposal to the UNSC to end the occupation, but the US has not been warm to the idea and has been trying to thwart the French proposal.

The danger of such gaps between the Europeans and Americans is monumental. The richest and the strongest have a conflict of interest over an issue that should have been solved long ago based on UN resolutions. In addition, the prolonging of the conflict has been endangering their national securities over the last few decades. Finally, solving the conflict during this sensitive and challenging global era would allow the US and the EU enough time to focus on other rising powers. China, India, and Russia are all awaiting a global economic and military transition. In a cost benefit analysis, the US and the EU

would be better off solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on UN resolutions; otherwise, they risk being challenged by other powers legally and politically.

For instance, when the United States demands that China grant independence to the Tibet region, the Chinese can easily use the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and challenge American hypocrisy on such an issue. Similarly, if the Americans ask Russia to free Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Russians will be quick to cite Israel and the United States' protection of it at the UN to reject any such American request. Protecting Israel's actions unconditionally at the UN and at other global forums creates many negative political, ethical, and legal precedents for American policy makers and forces the US to defend behaviors that harm its foreign policy objectives around the world. The United States cannot continue to claim its historical place as a beacon of democracy and liberty, and maintain its support for an occupying power that defies its values and harms its interests.

The constant concessions to the Israeli government by the Obama administration have resulted in an avalanche of challenges by the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, to the institution of the presidency. For instance, the White House was not consulted on the shipment of weapons to Israel during Israel's aggression against the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2014. The Obama administration sought to pressure the Israeli government by limiting its access to American ammunition, but the Israeli government "outflanked the White House on strategy."⁽³⁵⁾ The Israeli government secured shipments of weapons via the Pentagon without any consultation with the administration. In addition, Congress invited Netanyahu to confront the president on Iran and before that on the peace process before the international community. Furthermore, Israel's prime minister and his US ambassador, Ron Dermer, campaigned with the Republican nominee, Mitt Romney, against a sitting president in Florida. The aforementioned are but a few examples demonstrating the extent to which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is polarizing the American political debate and hurting the prestige of the presidency in the US around the world. Ending the conflict in accordance with international law and based on American foreign policy principles will serve American national security interests and preserve American prestige during such troubling global times. The longer the conflict lasts, the more harm it will inflict on American values, credibility, prestige, and its economy. The global impact of such reluctance on the US image and its credibility is monumental. The prestige of the US has been tarnished on many levels due to its illegal, unethical and unconditional support of Israeli policies in the Occupied Territories.

The American Economy and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has negatively affected the American economy over the last six decades and continues to endanger American economic interests in the Middle East and other Islamic countries around the world. For instance, in 2002, as a response to American support for Israel's incursions against Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, many people stopped buying American products. According to USA Today, "US businesses operating in Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Persian Gulf countries have been targeted by scores of boycott calls since violence erupted between Palestinians and Israelis in September 2000. The boycotts had largely fizzled before getting new life in April of 2002. That's when millions of Arab consumers, enraged by a six-week Israeli military offensive in the West Bank, began turning away from US-branded household goods, toiletries, cosmetics, fast-food chains, soft drinks, toys, credit cards, cigarettes, clothing, and cars."⁽³⁶⁾ In addition, since 1946 the U.S. has provided Israel with \$233.7 billion in aid after adjusting for inflation.⁽³⁷⁾

In addition, American decision to protect Israel militarily during the October 1973 war, led to the Arab oil embargo. During the oil embargo, oil prices quadrupled. A barrel of oil reached \$12 instead of \$3. In addition, Motorists had to wait for hours in long lines to get gasoline. came at a huge cost to the average American and to the US' economy and its Western allies. All the major industrial countries suffered downturn as a result of the increases of oil prices. For instance, the American gross national product decreased by 6 percent between 1973 and 1976, Unemployment doubled, reaching 9 percent.⁽³⁸⁾ In contrast the former Soviet Union benefited from higher oil prices. The Soviets sold oil to their traditional allies in the Eastern block and expanded to many Western countries too during that era. The increase in oil prices and the Soviet's ability to expand their markets during Arab oil embargo, allowed the Soviet's to buy huge supplies of basic amenities and resulted in prolonging the Cold War and in turn put colossal strains on the US' economy.⁽³⁹⁾

The Israeli occupation comes at a great economic cost for the US on the Palestinian side, as well. The United States has been supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in the Middle East since 1950. The US has been giving the refugee organization more than 25% of its annual budget since its creation.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Furthermore, the US has been financing the Palestinian National Authority since 1994. Ending the occupation and building a viable Palestinian state goes hand in hand with American national security interests and would save the American economy billions of dollars, while helping the US maintain its global role. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict negatively affects the US economically, militarily, and diplomatically. Using smart power could lead to a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and allow for the creation of a Palestinian state. Any future Palestinian state has the potential of becoming self-sufficient, decreasing the amount of American aid needed. For instance, the Jordan

Valley alone could provide a future independent Palestinian state with many of the economic resources it requires to become viable. It could serve as the food basket of the new Palestinian state and provide the Palestinians with enough underground fresh water and space to build affordable new cities and towns, in order to ease the population explosion in the Palestinian Occupied Territories.⁽⁴¹⁾

The United States could free itself from all these costs by utilizing its smart power tools and some of its leverage effectively to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The US could lift its political support from Israel at the United Nations and allow for a comprehensive settlement based on UN resolutions. In addition, the U.S. could link its economic and military aid to its commitment to human rights norms and values and demand that Israel respect international law. Furthermore, the US government could block all tax-deductible contributions from American Jewish activists to Israel and insist that no contribution should be used to solidify the occupation. Finally, the U.S. could restrict the exporting of advanced technologies to Israel to limit its military edge and compel it to negotiate a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Conclusion

Solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would serve as a key stabilizer in a region where the U.S. would like to decrease its presence. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been harming American interests due to the failure of successive American administrations to use smart power to solve it. The Obama administration has been hesitant to deploy all its resources in foreign policy especially with Israel and has allowed Israel to challenge the institution of the presidency on several occasions before the international community.

The tension between Obama and Netanyahu over peace and American national security interests is not unique. Many US presidents have endured similar embarrassing experiences with Israeli leaders in the last five decades. For instance, President George H.W. Bush and James Baker III had negative experiences with the Israeli leadership in the early 1990s over settlement building in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Israel's defense minister, Ariel Sharon, kept building despite all the appeals from the Bush administration. But Bush and Baker used financial aid to effect change in provocative Israeli behavior and force an early election in Israel. The constant Israeli challenge to the institution of the presidency harms American national security interests and allows for others to undermine the prestige of the United States. Therefore, it is urgent that the president of the United States end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to preserve the prestige and credibility of the US around the world.

Had the Obama administration made effective use of the smart power tools at its disposal, it would have achieved more preferable outcomes on the issues of a two-state solution and the thorny question of settlements, translating the Cairo speech into an effective strategy. The administration should have used the United Nations, and financial and economic aids, to build adequate public support for its policies and garner enough sympathy both in Israel and the U.S. to end a conflict that has been polarizing academics, decision makers, journalists, and legislators.

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*Dr. Ghassan Shabaneh: Senior Researcher at AlJazeera Center for Studies.

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