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Going Beyond Relief: The Egyptian Government's Plans for Economic Assistance and Development in Gaza, 1948-1952

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Going Beyond Relief: The Egyptian Government's Plans for Economic Assistance and
Development in Gaza, 1948-1952

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Contents

List of Abbreviations	3
Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	4
Chapter 2 - Historiography	8
Chapter 3 - Theory	13
Resources	13
Colonial influence	15
Regional Power Politics and Security	15
Maintenance of the Regime	16
Chapter 4 - Material and Method.....	19
Material	19
Methods.....	22
Chapter 5 - The Emergence of Economic Assistance and Development as Solutions to Displacement.....	24
From Relief to Economic Assistance and Development	24
The Work of International Organisations	31
Chapter 6 - The Egyptian Government's Economic Assistance and Development Plans for Gaza	36
Plans as seen from the Press	36
Infrastructure for communications, religious, and health purposes	36
Promoting Education	38
Facilitating Gaza-Egypt trade	40
Sending experts to study the development of Gaza and provide help	45
Plans as seen from UNISPAL	49
Rejected Plans	52
Observations	53
Chapter 7 - Analysis and Conclusion.....	58
Bibliography	71

List of Abbreviations

AFSC - American Friends Service Committee (Quakers)

APG – All-Palestine Government

ESM - Economic Survey Mission of the UNCCP (Clapp Mission)

FRUS - Foreign Relations of the United States online series

MENAN - Middle Eastern and North African Newspapers collection

UNCCP - United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNISPAL – United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine

UNRPR - United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees

UNRWA - United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The Arab-Israeli war in 1948 was known among the Arabs as *al-nakba*, the catastrophe.¹ In December 1948 the United Nations (UN) estimated that 600,000 Palestinians, half of the pre-war population of Palestine, became refugees. Almost a quarter of these refugees fled to what became the Gaza strip (hereafter referred to as ‘Gaza’): coastal land that was only part of the mandatory Gaza province.² The pre-war population in the strip was 80,000.³ Early in the war the Egyptian forces entered Gaza and took control. The Egyptian administration of Gaza was confirmed in the 1949 Egypt-Israel Armistice Agreement and continued until 1967. The administration was military in nature and so placed under the Egyptian Ministry of War and Navy.⁴ In September 1949, the Egyptian government led the Arab League in creating the All-Palestine Government (APG) in Gaza as the government of Palestine, but this government received limited recognition and had little power under the patronage of Egypt.⁵

The war and the arrival of refugees presented huge challenges to the economy and society of Gaza.⁶ The Egyptian government, the newly established UN, and charitable organisations worldwide provided financial and material help. Late 1948, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC, commonly known as the Quakers) was asked by the UN to organise a relief

¹ Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Gaza: A History*, trans. John King (New York, 2014) 71.

² United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (hereafter UNISPAL), symbol PAL/405, Palestine question – Radio talk by Acting Mediator – Press release, 27 December 1948. The number of refugees was amended with better counting methods through the first few years after the war, and the first annual report of UNRWA estimated there were about 876,000 refugees, about 200,000 of whom were in Gaza. This larger figure was probably a more accurate estimation, but also included the population growth in the three years.

³ Filiu, *Gaza*, 71.

⁴ Moshe Shemesh, *The Palestinian National Revival: In the Shadow of the Leadership Crisis, 1937–1967* (Bloomington IN 2018) 152.

⁵ Avi Shlaim, ‘The Rise and Fall of the All-Palestine Government in Gaza’, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 20 (1990) 37-53, 40, 43.

⁶ Lyndall Herman, ‘“Recreating” Gaza: International organizations and Identity Construction in Gaza’ (PhD thesis, University of Arizona, 2017), 84.

programme in Gaza.⁷ The commitment of AFSC originally lasted into August 1949 only, because it was expected that by then the Palestinian issue would have been resolved and the refugees would return to their hometowns.⁸ The UN General Assembly affirmed this right of return for all Palestinian refugees in its resolution 194(III) in December 1948.⁹ However, it was acknowledged that even though the right of return was established, the difficulties faced by the refugees and their receiving societies would not simply be resolved by the return of refugees. The UN mediator Count Bernadotte commented in his report submitted in September 1948 that '[t]he vast majority of the refugees may no longer have homes to return to and their resettlement in the State of Israel presents an economic and social problem of special complexity'. He pointed out the need of 'placing them in an environment in which they can find employment and the means of livelihood.'¹⁰

In 1949, the UN surveyed the economic situation in Arab states and 'recognized the fact that the Gaza area [...] [held] no prospects of economic development'.¹¹ At the same time, the failure of peace talks facilitated by the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) in 1949 meant that even the partial return of Gaza refugees expected by Bernadotte was nowhere in sight. To add to the difficulties, international donors and organisations were unwilling to continue the provision of relief, both because of the financial burden that entailed and the political implication it carried – a tacit approval of the extension of refugee suffering.¹²

⁷ Ilana Feldman, 'Difficult Distinctions: Refugee Law, Humanitarian Practice, and Political Identification in Gaza', *Cultural Anthropology* 22 (2007) 129-169, 131.

⁸ Asaf Romirowsky and Alexander H. Joffe, *Religion, Politics, and the Origins of Palestine Refugee Relief* (New York NY 2013) 49.

⁹ United Nations Official Document System, symbol A/RES/194 (III), Palestine - Progress Report of the United Nations Mediator, 11 December 1948.

¹⁰ UNISPAL, symbol A/648, Progress Report of the United Nations Mediator on Palestine, 16 September 1948, part 1 section V point 8.

¹¹ UNISPAL, symbol A/1255, UNCCP Sixth Progress Report, 29 May 1950. Annex II letter 2.

¹² Romirowsky and Joffe, *Religion, Politics, and the Origins of Palestine Refugee Relief*, 86.

Two alternative solutions gradually emerged as an attempt to replace relief. The first was ‘programmes of economic assistance’, projects of public work or small-scale industry at the receiving societies to provide refugees with temporary employment, so that they could become self-sustaining. The second was ‘development’. To contemporaries, such programmes were largely economic, with the goal being the regional transformation of the Middle East so that the Palestinian refugees could be resettled throughout the Arab states. To scholars, development carries a deeper meaning: the term includes the efforts in the development of individuals and societies through education and welfare programmes. This shift of focus from relief to economic assistance and development is signified by the creation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which began its operation officially on 1st May 1950. As its name suggests, UNRWA is concerned not only with relief, but equally emphasised ‘works’, a general term covering the programmes of economic assistance and development.

How this shift made an impact on and was implemented by international organisations has been studied in detail. However, less is known about how the Egyptian government in the Gaza strip reacted to this shift. The Egyptian government was connected to the shift happening at the international level in two ways: within the Gaza strip, it shared the work of administration¹³ with AFSC and UNRWA which began their plans of economic assistance and development earlier. On the state level, it was cooperating with the UN and western donor states regarding the future of the refugees. Locally, the people under its rule, both Egyptians and Palestinians, also made demands for an improvement in the situation in Gaza. It is reasonable to expect that the Egyptian

¹³ Ilana Feldman, ‘Mercy Trains and Ration Rolls: Between Government and Humanitarianism in Gaza (1948–67)’, in: Nefissa Naguib and Inger Marie Okkenhaug (eds.), *Interpreting Welfare and Relief in the Middle East*, (Leiden 2008), 175-194, 175.

government moved towards adopting economic assistance and development as a new response to the problems found in Gaza, under the influence of the network of international and local actors it was situated in.

This research then raises a question: **Was the Egyptian government more receptive to the influence of some actors than others when it planned economic assistance and development in Gaza? If so, why?**

The period studied is 1948-1952: a five-year period beginning at the outbreak of the first Arab-Israeli war. In 1952 the constitutional monarchy under King Farouk was overthrown by the Free Officer revolution. The revolution upset the internal situation of Egypt as well as abruptly changed its relationships with internal, regional, and international actors. The significance of this study lies not only in filling a gap in literature on how Egypt governed Palestinian refugees, but also in viewing the network of the monarchical Egyptian government from a new perspective; that of the practical issue of economic assistance and development for Gaza refugees. The Palestinian issue was highly politicised, and what was said on negotiation tables differed from what was practised on the ground. It is in these plans on the ground where this research expects to find a new perspective on the considerations of the monarchical Egyptian government in its last years, embroiled in internal and external turmoil, and unaware its end is near. This research is an attempt to understand Egypt as the receiving government of Palestinian refugees, as well as its interaction with other actors towards the end of its reign.

Chapter 2 - Historiography

Historians described the context of the Egyptian rule in Gaza. Jean-Pierre Filiu's *Gaza: A History* gave a chronology of the military actions and political changes in the strip during the period studied.¹⁴ The *Cambridge History of Egypt* presented the events from the side of the Egyptian government, highlighting the internal circumstances of the state before and after the war, notably nationalism and persisting colonial influences.¹⁵ William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton's *A History of the Modern Middle East* illustrates the regional context of the events studied in this research.¹⁶

Feldman conducted extensive research on Gaza. Her book *Governing Gaza* highlighted the concept of 'tactical government', exploring how the lack of certainty for the future affected the administration of the Egyptian government in the strip. The book described early relief and economic assistance work in the strip by the government and international organisations, and the tension between the actors.¹⁷ Her article 'Mercy Train and Ration Rolls' focused on the vague distinction between humanitarianism and government, which impacted the operations of the Egyptian government and international organisations alike and created tensions between them.¹⁸ Her other articles on the involvement of UNRWA and AFSC also addresses their interactions with the Egyptian government and the economic assistance and development work in Gaza.¹⁹ Beryl

¹⁴ Filiu, *Gaza: A History*.

¹⁵ M. W. Daly (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt Volume 2: Modern Egypt, from 1517 to the end of the twentieth century* (Cambridge 1998), 309-333, 290.

¹⁶ William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East, Fourth Edition* (Boulder CO 2009).

¹⁷ Ilana Feldman, *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule, 1917-1967* (Durham and London 2008). The idea of uncertainty and vagueness as a character of the Egyptian administration was first raised in her article 'Government without Expertise? Competence, Capacity, and Civil-service Practice in Gaza, 1917-67', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37 (2005) 485-507.

¹⁸ Feldman, 'Mercy Trains and Ration Rolls', 175-194.

¹⁹ Ilana Feldman, 'Difficult Distinctions: Refugee Law, Humanitarian Practice, and Political Identification in Gaza' 129-169; 'The Quaker way: Ethical labor and humanitarian relief', *American Ethnologist* 34 (2007) 689-705; 'The

Cheal focused exclusively on the refugees in Gaza and the initial relief work. She covered the work of the Egyptian government and had a generally positive attitude towards it.²⁰ Other scholars researched the Egyptian administration in Gaza as a background for their analysis of later periods from a non-historical perspective. Ann M. Lesch analysed the situation in Gaza from 1948 to the 1980s and commented on the lack of economic development in the strip during Egyptian rule.²¹ Oroub El-Abed produced a detailed sociological study of Palestinians in Egypt. Her work gave insights into the Egyptian government's general attitude towards Palestinians, as well as specific events in Gaza.²² Sara Roy's book *The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of De-development* included a chapter on the Egyptian rule in the strip. She saw the emphasis of the Egyptian government as centralising power and authority in Gaza, and criticised that it neglected the economic needs and development in the strip.²³ Laurie A. Brand focused on the politics of Palestine. She described how Egypt gradually gained control over Gaza, and described early plans of resettling refugees.²⁴ Like Brand, Moshe Shemesh's analysis is politically oriented, and discussed the political aspect of the Egyptian rule over Palestinians in Gaza.²⁵

To summarise, scholars agree that during the monarchy period, the Egyptian government did little to develop Gaza or help the Palestinians in Gaza.²⁶ This conclusion was, however,

challenge of categories: UNRWA and the Definition of a "Palestine Refugee", *Journal of Refugee Studies* 25 (2012) 387-406.

²⁰ Beryl Cheal, 'Refugees in the Gaza Strip, December 1948-May 1950', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18 (1988) 138-157.

²¹ Ann M. Lesch, 'Gaza: Forgotten Corner of Palestine', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 15 (1985) 43-61, 45.

²² Oroub El-Abed, *Unprotected: Palestinians in Egypt since 1948* (Washington and Ottawa 2000).

²³ Sara Roy, 'Gaza under Egyptian Military Administration (1948-1967): Defining the Structure of the Gaza Strip Economy', in *The Gaza Strip: the political economy of de-development* (Washington WA, 1995), 65-101.

²⁴ Laurie A. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for State* (New York NY 1988), 41-106.

²⁵ Shemesh, 'The Palestinians of the Gaza Strip under the Egyptian Government', 152-162.

²⁶ Roy, *The Political Economy of De-development*, 66; El-Abed, *Unprotected*, 40; Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, 49, Lesch, 'Gaza: Forgotten Corner of Palestine', 45.

deduced from passing remarks and examples, which are insufficient to provide the full picture in Gaza from 1948 to 1952. First, scholars saw the monarchy period as a transition towards the later rule of Nasser and not as a period in its own rights. Second, the research that paid attention to this period focused on the relief or political policies of the Egyptian government, and not on economic assistance and development work. There is a gap in the literature that must be filled before evaluating the effort of the Egyptian government for the Palestinians in Gaza from 1948 to 1952.

Current literature on economic assistance and development in Gaza focuses on efforts from UNRWA and AFSC. Besides the publications of Feldman cited above, Maya Rosenfeld traced the history of the relationship between UNRWA and Palestinian refugees.²⁷ Building on the works of Schiff and Buehrig,²⁸ she argued that the US held crucial influence over UNRWA's early development projects as a donor. Rempel identified the influence of western development theories in UNRWA's work and gave a detailed analysis of UNRWA's experience of engaging refugees in development.²⁹ Benjamin N. Schiff focused on UNRWA after 1967, but he pointed out that development was seen by its proponent as a way to resolve hostility in refugees and ultimately make them willing to settle at the new place. This idea was not welcomed by the Arab governments nor by refugees.³⁰ David P. Forsythe is well known for his research on UNCCP and UNRWA and their roles in peace. While not forming the core of his research, he discussed the 'works' and development programmes that UNRWA attempted and saw as their ultimate goal the resettlement

²⁷ Maya Rosenfeld, 'From Emergency Relief Assistance to Human Development and Back: UNRWA and the Palestinian Refugees, 1950–2009', *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 28 (2009) 286–317.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdp038>

²⁸ Benjamin N. Schiff, *Refugees unto the Third Generation* (Syracuse NY 1995); E. Buehrig, *The United Nations and the Palestinian Refugees* (Bloomington IN, 1971). These two books are recognised as must-reads on the issue of UNRWA, but unfortunately, they were not accessible in the duration of my research.

²⁹ Terry Rempel, 'UNRWA and the Palestinian refugees: a genealogy of "participatory" development', *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 28 (2009) 412–437.

³⁰ Benjamin N. Schiff, 'Between occupier and occupied: UNRWA in the West Bank and the Gaza strip', *Journal of the Palestine Studies* 18 (1989) 60–75.

of refugees in Arab countries.³¹ As for the AFSC, Romirowsky and Joffe gave a detailed analysis of the work of AFSC in Palestine.³² Their book is important not only for covering the efforts of AFSC, but also for analysing the application of regional development ideas in the Palestinian issue. Therefore, it also explored the complex international relationships affecting the region. Herman's PhD thesis took a comparative approach to the works of AFSC and UNRWA, in the process highlighting their economic assistance and development work.³³

The UNCCP was to a lesser degree relevant. It concerned mainly the political aspect of the conflict and was not directly responsible for the refugees. Literature on UNCCP is still helpful, however, for shedding light on the interaction between states. Forsythe's *United Nations Peacemaking* focused on the power politics between western and Middle Eastern states, as well as the intra-UN tensions that marked the work of UNCCP from 1949 to 1951.³⁴ Tiller and Waage focused on the period 1949-51 and discussed the mediatory role of the UNCCP and the US. Applying mediation theory, their work provides insight into the relationship between parties with asymmetrical power.³⁵

Literature on economic assistance and development in Gaza highlighted the diversity of actors involved in the processes, illustrated in figure 1 below. Local, regional, and international actors were involved, and they held widely different views towards the processes of economic

³¹ David P. Forsythe, 'UNRWA, the Palestine Refugees, and World Politics: 1949-1969', *International Organization* 25 (1971): 26-45.

³² Romirowsky and Joffe, *Religion, Politics, and the Origins of Palestine Refugee Relief* (New York NY 2013).

³³ Herman, "'Recreating' Gaza: International organizations and Identity Construction in Gaza".

³⁴ David P. Forsythe, *United Nations Peacemaking: The Conciliation Commission for Palestine* (Baltimore and London, 1972).

³⁵ Stian Johansen Tiller and Hilde Henriksen Waage, 'Powerful State, Powerless Mediator: The United States and the Peace Efforts of the Palestine Conciliation Commission, 1949-51', *The International History Review* 33 (2011) 501-524. See also Hilde Henriksen Waage, 'The Winner Takes All: The 1949 Island of Rhodes Armistice Negotiations Revisited', *Middle East Journal* 65 (2011) 279-304.

assistance and development. The reviewed literature serves as a foundation for the analysis of the plans of the Egyptian government. On the one hand, literature identified ways through which these actors may influence the Egyptian government. On the other hand, they illustrate similar works of economic assistance and development of these actors, which could be compared with the Egyptian government's plans.

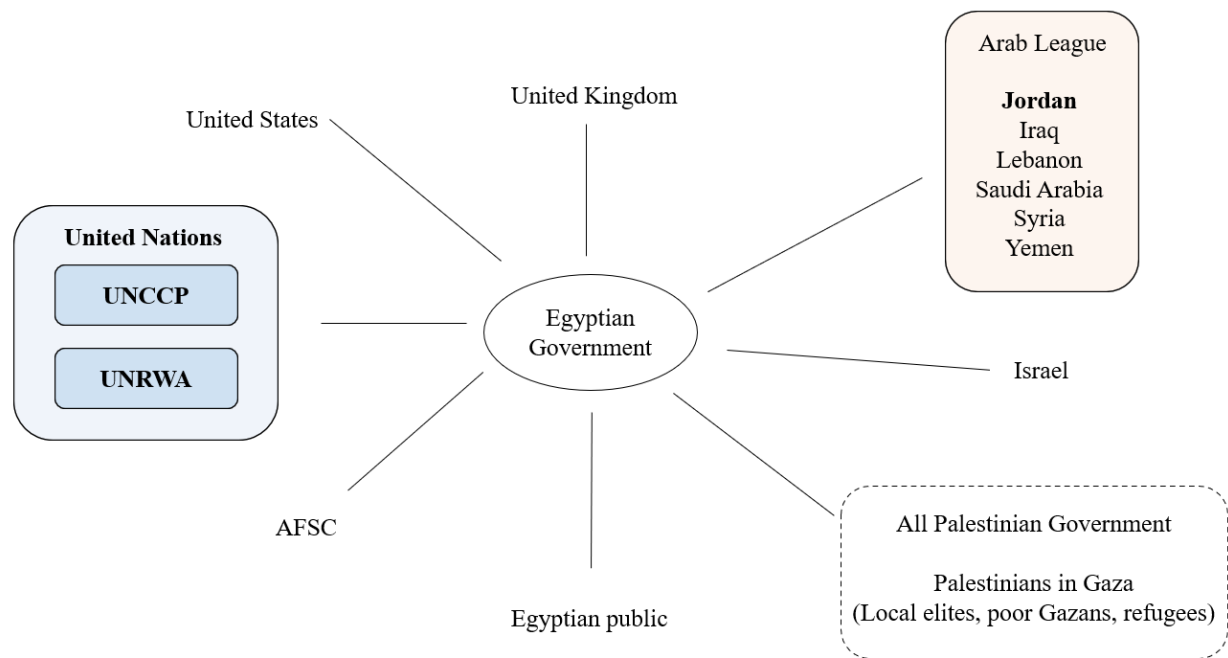


Figure 1 - the Egyptian government and actors in economic assistance and development in Gaza

Chapter 3 - Theory

This section presents, based on the literature, four hypotheses regarding the factors that might determine how responsive the Egyptian government would be to other actors.

Resources

Resources, both financial and technical, were required to support any programmes of economic assistance and development in Gaza. Literature shows that the need for external resources for relief influenced the relationship between Egypt and international organisations. Herman wrote that Egyptian officials in Gaza had to remove an officer who conflicted with AFSC staff members, because they ‘understood their limitations and knew that they would not be able to provide food, blankets, tents, and fuel for 200,000 refugees.’³⁶ The resources provided by AFSC were so crucial to the Egyptian government that it increased the organisation’s bargaining power. Commenting on the cooperation between the Egyptian government and UNRWA, Feldman found in post-revolution records that ‘[a] great deal of the correspondence between the two parties is taken up with such questions: who would pay for (or pay for what percentage of) what.’³⁷ This testifies to the central role financial resources played in the interaction between the Egyptian government and other actors involved in relief. It is reasonable to expect the same in the field of economic assistance and development: the Egyptian government would be more receptive to the actors who could provide financial resources for its plans.

The Egyptian control over refugees in Gaza provided an argument for the government to ask for external resources it could use in Egypt. El-Abed described Egypt as ‘a host country that

³⁶ Herman, ‘International Organizations and Identity Construction in Gaza’, 92.

³⁷ Feldman, *Governing Gaza*, 159.

itself faces daunting poverty, overpopulation, and enormous pressures on scarce employment opportunities and resources—in other words, a host population scarcely better off than the refugees.’³⁸ Romirowsky and Joffe argued that ‘[f]or Arab states, however, these proposals (of regional development) primarily offered a means to extract development aid first and consider the refugee situation later, if ever.’³⁹ The positive attitude the Egyptian government held to UN development plans was seen as driven by its own need for resources. The Egyptian government might be more responsive to actors who were willing to meet such needs. The US was likely an actor willing to provide such resources, especially in Cold War contexts. To prevent the strategic region of the Middle East from turning to the communist bloc, the US used developmental aid to co-opt Arab states (to be explored in chapter 5). If the Egyptian government accepted such aid, it might then be asked to contain communism from spreading in the territories it controlled, and adjust its plan for economic assistance and development to match the donor’s desires.

The influence may not be limited to financial and material resources, but extended to human and technical resources as well. Although there is no explicit reference to this in the literature on the Egyptian administration in Gaza, development scholars have pointed out how the perception of expertise was often racialised. Kothari argued that ‘[...] the west provide[s] symbols of authority, expertise and knowledge’⁴⁰ in the eyes of the formerly colonised.⁴¹ Egypt might have seen a lack of technical know-how and developmental expertise in its own people, and sought

³⁸ El-Abed, *Unprotected*, 1.

³⁹ Romirowsky and Joffe, *Religion, Politics, and the Origins of Palestine Refugee Relief*, 5, also see 96.

⁴⁰ Uma Kothari, ‘An Agenda for Thinking about ‘Race’ in Development’, *Progress in Development Studies* 6 (2006) 9-23, 10.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 16

experts from the West. In that case, actors who could provide these desired human and technical resources might influence its plans, in ways similar to the discussion on financial resources above.

Therefore, the first hypothesis is: the Egyptian government would be more receptive to the actors who could provide financial and human resources to it.

Colonial influence

Britain colonised Egypt and despite Egyptian independence in 1922, its influence in Egyptian politics remained strong.⁴² At the same time, it played a crucial role in the Palestinian issue. Romirowsky and Joffe analysed that Britain had two concerns about development possibilities in Gaza: whether it could maintain its military bases in Egypt, and whether Egyptian nationalist sentiments would be fuelled by the Palestinian refugees. British interest in the affairs of both areas meant that it might seek to influence Egyptian plans in Gaza, and it is hypothesised that the Egyptian government would be receptive to the influence of the British government because of long-existing colonial ties.

Regional Power Politics and Security

Economic assistance and development in Gaza carried political implications, such as territorial control and refugee settlement. They were not planned in isolation but along with regional political changes. This was true for all Arab receiving states of Palestinian refugees, and the Arab League may coordinate actions in this respect. Egypt would share such concerns over power politics and

⁴² Joel Beinin, 'Egypt: Society and Economy, 1923-1952', in: M. W. Daly (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt* (Cambridge 1998), 309-333, 290.

security implications of its plans to economically assist and develop Gaza. Regional rivalry was also present. Shlaim described the Egypt-Jordan rivalry over the establishment of the APG,⁴³ and Jensehaugen and Waage noted the same in terms of territory.⁴⁴ At the same time, it continued to be at war with Israel even though an armistice was signed in February 1949, and peace negotiations directed by the UN continued. Both Jordan and Israel contested the Egyptian control over the Gaza strip, as will be explained below. The ongoing conflict within the region may have prompted the Egyptian government to adopt what Feldman called ‘tactical government—a means of governing that shifts in response to crises, that often works without long-term planning, and that presumes little stability in governing conditions.’⁴⁵ In the context of economic assistance and development in Gaza, this means that Egypt might plan economic assistance and development in a tactical manner, to avoid triggering unwanted conflicts in the tension-ridden region. The hypothesis is that the Egyptian government would be sensitive to the political and security pressure from within the region and change its own plans in Gaza accordingly.

Maintenance of the Regime

The Egyptian government had to carefully consider the public reaction to its action in order to maintain its fragile regime. The defeat in the war damaged the reputation of the Egyptian government, an experience shared with other Arab governments. According to Romirowsky and Joffe ‘there was bitterness against Arab leaders who had so miserably betrayed their people’s

⁴³ Shlaim, ‘The Rise and Fall of the All-Palestine Government in Gaza’, 39-40.

⁴⁴ Jørgen Jensehaugen and Hilde Henriksen Waage, ‘Coercive Diplomacy: Israel, Transjordan and the UN—a Triangular Drama Revisited’, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 39 (2012) 79-100, 82.

⁴⁵ Feldman, *Governing Gaza*, 3.

trust.’⁴⁶ Cleveland and Bunton wrote ‘[t]he ruling elite of these (Arab) regimes, anxious to shore up domestic support, adopted a hard-line stance on the Palestinian issue.’⁴⁷ Tiller and Waage commented that the action of the Arab governments, at least in the open, had to be hard-lined because ‘[t]he Arab leaders, because of their fragile regimes, could not ignore this deep-seated sentiment.’⁴⁸ Thus, it can be assumed that the Egyptian plans in Gaza had to conform to the public sentiment in Egypt because of its subverting potential. Similar to negotiations, this would be especially true in the overt proclamations, but may be less influential in practical decisions.

At the same time, the Palestinians in Gaza who came under Egyptian rule added to the instability. Feldman stressed that ‘Egyptians worried that, wittingly or not, an uncontrolled population might put the Egyptian government at risk’, especially if they trigger further hostility at the border with Israel.⁴⁹ This newly formed relationship with Palestinians posed another constraining factor on the Egyptian government. While it took direct steps to strengthen its control over Gaza,⁵⁰ it likely would have tried to control by co-opting the Palestinians in Gaza through plans of economic assistance and development that benefitted them. The Palestinians of Gaza were not homogenous, and were groups of various economic and social standing. El-Abed found that when Nasser opened up employment opportunities for educated Palestinians, it was met with huge approval and the era is called the ‘Golden Era’ by all Palestinians even to this day, thus enhancing Palestinian support for the regime.⁵¹ A similar strategy could reasonably be sought by the pre-revolution government.

⁴⁶ Romirowsky and Joffe, *Religion, Politics, and the Origins of Palestine Refugee Relief*, 78

⁴⁷ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 266.

⁴⁸ Tiller and Waage, ‘Powerful State, Powerless Mediator’, 518.

⁴⁹ Feldman, *Governing Gaza*, 128.

⁵⁰ Roy, *The Political Economy of De-development*, 66

⁵¹ El-Abed, *Unprotected*, 43.

Therefore, it is hypothesised that the Egyptian government would be receptive to the demands of the Egyptian and Palestinian publics in its plans for Gaza, to maintain the stability of the regime.

This thesis will test if the hypotheses presented above will hold true. Figure 2 presents how the Egyptian government might respond to other actors as influenced by one or more of the hypothesised factors.



Figure 2 - factors on the response of the Egyptian government to other actors

Chapter 4 - Material and Method

Material

This research make use of three groups of primary sources. First, four daily newspapers published in Cairo between 1948 and 1952: *al-Ahrām*, *al-Balāgh*, *al-Muqaṭṭam* and *al-Miṣri*. *Al-Ahrām* has its own database,⁵² while the other three papers are found in the *Middle Eastern & North African Newspapers* collection.⁵³ The choice of these four newspapers was made based on availability: they are digitised and searchable, and they were accessible.

This research uses the Egyptian newspapers to reconstruct the economic assistance and development projects accepted by the Egyptian government, as well as to trace the public opinion of Egyptians and Palestinians. On the one hand, journalists of the newspapers followed and recorded events taking place in Gaza and Egypt, thereby providing a detailed chronological record of the evolution of the plans. On the other hand, through reproducing readers' letters, official reports, or researcher's comments, the newspapers captured general and longer-term opinions, feelings, and conclusions. Thus, newspapers provided a lens through which to research the processes of negotiating development.

Other scholars have used Egyptian government files and Palestinian newspapers in their research. This research did not use them even though they are highly relevant, because it was not possible to access them during the course of this research. This is a limitation that should be overcome by future researchers, and this research attempt to remedy this shortcoming by referring to literature quoting them.

⁵² *Al-Ahrām* digital archive (Hereafter *Al-Ahrām*), <https://gpa-eastview-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/alahram/> Last accessed 5 June 2022.

⁵³ The Middle Eastern & North African Newspapers collection (hereafter MENAN). <https://gpa.eastview.com/crl/mena/> Last accessed 5 June 2022.

Al-Ahrām has no specific party or political affiliation at the period studied, and is known as a ‘national newspaper’ of Egypt.⁵⁴ *Al-Muqaṭṭam* was a pro-British paper,⁵⁵ sympathetic to the Palestinian cause.⁵⁶ They cover the whole period studied except for a few missing issues. Both *al-Balāgh* and *al-Miṣri* were affiliated with the Wafd party and focused on political news.⁵⁷ In the archive, only a few *al-Balāgh* issues from 1951 were preserved; and the collection of *al-Miṣri* covered the period from 1950 onwards. A keyword search with the Arabic term ‘Gaza’ (غزة) between the years 1948 to 1952 yielded 387 hits. The researcher skimmed through all of them, removed the hits that came from inaccurate text recognition, and selected the ones relevant to this study. 77 articles are used in this research.

Second, the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), an online archive cataloguing UN documents and maps relevant to the question of Palestine, with scanned documents transcribed and translated to text in English.⁵⁸ The UNISPAL documents were used to reconstruct the engagement of UN actors, especially the UNCCP and UNRWA, in economically assisting and developing Gaza. The UN documents recorded the speech and correspondence from involved states, both in the Middle East and in the West. They help explain the views of these governments and the course of action they took. They also explain the interactions between these states, as mediated by the UN. Therefore, UNISPAL documents demonstrate how the economic assistance and development process of Gaza played out on an international level.

⁵⁴ cAwāṭif cAbd Al-Rahmān and Najwa Kāmil, *Tārikhu al-ṣaḥāfati al-miṣrīyyati: dirāsatu tārīkhīyyatun wa muʿaṣiratun* (Cairo 2020) 12.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 264.

⁵⁶ MENAN, *al-Muqaṭṭam*, 8 May 1951.

⁵⁷ cAbd Al-Rahmān and Kāmil, *Tārikhu al-ṣaḥāfati al-miṣrīyyati*, 156, 224.

⁵⁸ <https://www.un.org/unispal/documents/>

Two limitations should be noted in using UNISPAL documents. First, the inclusion of documents in this online platform is selective. Romirowsky and Joffe pointed out that internal files are omitted from this platform.⁵⁹ Second, the unofficial meetings and communications that the UN and other actors engaged in are not on record, and so UNISPAL does not represent the full picture of the events even within UN. The selective nature also means that what is available are documents that are seen as important on an official level, and likely the ones that had a lasting impact.

The researcher used the English keyword ‘Gaza’ to conduct a search in UNISPAL, limiting the period to May 1948 to July 1952, thereby excluding pre-war and post-monarchy material. It yielded 152 files, but some of them are repeating in parts or all of its content. The repetition reflects the document-building process within the organisation, where new reports often take directly from older ones.

Finally, the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) online series, a record of the foreign policy and diplomatic activities of the United States.⁶⁰ It covers correspondence over US policy decisions, reports on the attitudes and activities of other governments and organisations, and also internal opinions and views of US officials. Some of the content of FRUS documents are similar to what is read from UNISPAL, providing opportunities for tracing and comparison between the two.

This research uses the American record, but not that of other states, for three reasons. First, scholars agree that the United States played a critical role in the Israel-Palestine problem. Second, several of the stakeholders crucial to the development of Gaza were led by Americans and were in

⁵⁹ Romirowsky and Joffe, *Religion, Politics, and the Origins of Palestine Refugee Relief*, 7

⁶⁰ <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments>

regular communication with the US government, such as ASFC, UNCCP, and UNRWA. These communications are kept in the archive and provide insight to the organisations as well. Third, the FRUS is open-access and in English, and therefore easy to use.

Using FRUS documents present similar challenges to that with UNISPAL in terms of selectivity in document preservation and accessibility, and its official nature. FRUS documents however carried a more personal tone than UNISPAL documents, using slang and showing a more direct expression of views, which arguably remedy the second constraint.

For the analysis, the English keyword ‘Gaza’ is used to search within the period from May 1948 to July 1952, and this yielded 162 documents.

Methods

First, this research uses a simple method of tracing to connect the different materials.⁶¹ Tracing is a method to trace how ideas and arguments related to economic assistance and developing Gaza were proposed, argued, finally refuted or adopted; it is also a method to follow how such ideas and arguments moved between actors as time progresses. This method allows the clarification of the progression of each development project or policy, paving the way for the next step of the analysis.

Second, after tracing the progression of each proposed plan of economic assistance and development, the researcher identifies the actors influencing the discussion of each plan. The researcher also identifies the ways the actors became involved, for example, whether the influence was direct or indirect, or whether it was through speech or material. This is then compared with

⁶¹ Derek Beach, “Process-Tracing Methods in Social Science”, in: William Thompson et al. (eds.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.176>

the hypothesised factors influencing the interaction between the Egyptian government and each actor, to see whether the actors' influence confirmed or rejected the hypotheses.

The material provides multiple perspectives to the plans and actions of the Egyptian government and the involved actors, and the methods identify the influences of the actors. Together, they allow this research to answer whether and why the Egyptian government was more receptive to the influence of some actors than others when it planned economic assistance and development in Gaza.

Chapter 5 - The Emergence of Economic Assistance and Development as Solutions to Displacement

From Relief to Economic Assistance and Development

Before going into the Egyptian administration in Gaza, it is useful to consider how the idea of economic assistance and development became linked to the displacement of Palestinian refugees.

Since late 1947, some Palestinians had been leaving Palestine in fear of impending military conflicts.⁶² The war led to massive displacement. As the refugees fled to surrounding Arab states, they required immediate humanitarian relief. When AFSC took charge of the relief programme of Gaza in late 1948, it defined relief as ‘attempting to preserve life and health and provide shelter for those whose destitution arises from the present troubles, without any discrimination except that of human need.’⁶³ Count Bernadotte, the UN Mediator, noted, ‘[m]ost of them left practically all of their possessions behind and have no means at their disposal.’⁶⁴ He wrote that the refugees needed food and water, emergency and medical provision, accommodation, clothes and bedding, and ‘[w]ork of activity to occupy the attention of the refugees’.⁶⁵ Here, the provision of work to refugees was attached a psychological, rather than material, significance. It was also a step beyond the AFSC definition of preserving life and health which aimed at the refugees’ wellbeing, not just survival.

⁶² El-Abed, *Unprotected*, 14.

⁶³ AFSC archive, Minutes of the Foreign Service Executive Committee meeting, 17 November 1948, as quoted in Romirowsky and Joffe, *Religion, Politics, and the Origins of Palestine Refugee Relief*, 49.

⁶⁴ UNISPAL, symbol A/648, “Bernadotte plan” – UN Mediator on Palestine – Progress report, 16 September 1948, Part one, section V, point 3

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Part three, section II, point 6

Tracing the UN documents, they reveal two contradictory attitudes towards relief from early on: relief was seen as temporary, expected to last no more than a year,⁶⁶ since the situation that caused displacement would be resolved and the need for relief would cease. At the same time, it was acknowledged that many refugees would not return for various reasons, even with the end of hostilities.⁶⁷ The problem of sustenance for refugees who would not return was noticed, but this did not result in practical steps toward resolving it. Later UNRWA documents would obscure this early recognition of the impossibility to resolve the plight of Palestinian refugees by repatriation only. When recapping this history of UN relief in Palestine, it wrote that ‘the original operation was deemed to be *an emergency programme of short duration* and funds were available only to provide basic food, clothing and shelter...’⁶⁸ ‘When UNRPR (United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees, the forerunner of UNRWA) was set up by the General Assembly, it was presumably with the idea that the problem would be *resolved in a matter of months*.’⁶⁹ (author’s emphasis). It glossed over the early acknowledgement that relief and repatriation were not enough, which was probably done to justify the lack of planning for alternatives.

The previous quote continued, ‘[d]uring the summer of 1949 it became obvious that some other approach was needed...’⁷⁰ The consideration of approaches beyond relief and repatriation for the Palestinian refugees returned when there was neither progress in the negotiations for

⁶⁶ Ibid., Part three, section II, point 8; see also UNISPAL, symbol A/1451/Rev.1, UNRWA – Interim report of the Director and the Advisory Commission, 6 October 1950, Chapter 1 point 6.

⁶⁷ UNISPAL, symbol A/648, Bernadotte Plan, 16 September 1948, Part one, section V, point 8; See also UNISPAL, symbol, A/AC.25/SR/BM/4, Refugees’ rights/humanitarian situation/Jerusalem discussed at Beirut meetings with Egypt – UNCCP – Summary record, 22 March 1949.

⁶⁸ UNISPAL, symbol A/1905, UNRWA – Annual report of the Director, 30 June 1951, Chapter IV point 176.

⁶⁹ UNISPAL, symbol A/1451/Rev.1, UNRWA – Interim report of the Director and the Advisory Commission, 6 October 1950, Chapter 1 point 6.

⁷⁰ Ibid., Chapter 1 point 6.

repatriation, nor sufficient funds to continue relief operations.⁷¹ With this came a change in the attitude towards work for refugees. According to Ethridge, the US representative to UNCCP, ‘present relief funds would be exhausted before the problem could be settled. [...] The Commission hoped the Arabs would present plans for such *interim relief* through public works and other projects *designed to provide the refugees with work*.’ (author’s emphasis)⁷² Refugee employment became suggested as a form of economic assistance that could replace relief. It provided not just mental support, but a means to sustain livelihoods. It is also noteworthy that economic assistance is closely linked to the idea of refugee resettlement, even though a partial return was still believed to be a possibility.⁷³

The economic approach to alleviate refugee suffering and even bring peace was seen by Romirowsky and Joffe as a blind faith characteristic of the early Atomic Age;⁷⁴ by Herman as a conflation of the material and the moral;⁷⁵ and by Forsythe as an attempt to bypass the political impasse.⁷⁶ All three analyses are accurate, but political difficulties were probably the driving factor. It was because without political solutions, higher hopes became placed on economic ones, further encouraged by the optimist modernisation beliefs of the time.

Scholars agree that this idea of economic assistance came from the US government. Forsythe traced the shift of US priority from political settlement to economic assistance to late 1949;⁷⁷ while Romirowsky and Joffe, using declassified documents unavailable to Forsythe, argue

⁷¹ UNISPAL, symbol, A/AC.25/SR/BM/4, Refugees’ rights/humanitarian situation/Jerusalem discussed at Beirut meetings with Egypt – UNCCP – Summary record, 22 March 1949.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid. The quote above was followed by the same person saying “there was an urgent need for the resettlement of those refugees who would not return to their homes”.

⁷⁴ Romirowsky and Joffe, *Religion, Politics, and the Origins of Palestine Refugee Relief*, 114

⁷⁵ Herman, ‘Recreating Gaza’, 207

⁷⁶ Forsythe, ‘UNRWA, the Palestine Refugees, and World Politics’, 30

⁷⁷ Ibid., 30.

that the search for economic solutions began much earlier in March 1949.⁷⁸ On 9th April 1949, UNCCP created a Technical Mission on Refugees. The term of reference was, among other things, finding ‘immediate work relief’ for refugees.⁷⁹

At the same time, as will be explored in the next section, relief organisations contracted by the UN began their projects for economic assistance. Herman described the AFSC approach to economic assistance in Gaza as ‘focused on refugee-initiated and -led programs, such as a soap-making program and schooling program.’⁸⁰

Economic assistance was the first step towards plans for regional development. In August 1949, UNCCP built on the work of the Technical Mission and formed an Economic Survey Mission (ESM, also known as the Clapp mission). Scholars widely agreed that the ESM had a development focus and targeted the whole Middle East, not just receiving places of refugees. Romirowsky and Joffe called the ESM ‘the culmination of the American-led regional development concept’⁸¹, while Rosenfeld commented that it was a ‘tilt in favour of resettlement [which] was supplemented by a strong “developmental” line.’⁸² This development focus was rooted in historic context. Sachs called the Truman declaration in early 1949 the beginning of an ‘age of development’ and emphasised that development was never merely a socio-economic endeavour, but rather highly charged with ideological values and promises.⁸³ Romirowsky and Joffe argued that ‘[b]y the end of World War II development and security were explicitly linked in American

⁷⁸ Romirowsky and Joffe, *Religion, Politics, and Origin of Palestine Refugee Relief*, 82-83.

⁷⁹ UNISPAL, symbol A/AC.25/Com.Tech/1, Technical Cttee’s Terms of Reference; refugee estimate; UNRPR report; resettling Arab refugees; Arab development schemes; Syrian economic development; resettlement estimates/Syrian possibilities; org chart – UNCCP – working document, 14 June 1949, Annex A point 4.

⁸⁰ Herman, ‘Recreating Gaza’, 113

⁸¹ Romirowsky and Joffe, *Religion, Politics, and Origin of Palestine Refugee Relief*, 102.

⁸² Rosenfeld, ‘From Emergency Relief’, 291

⁸³ Wolfgang Sachs, ‘Introduction’, in: Wolfgang Sachs (ed.), *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (London 2009) xv-xx, xvi.

policy through the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine'.⁸⁴ The US saw development in the Middle East as a way to prevent it from falling to the communist bloc, and the Palestinian refugees provided a pretext for intervention into the region. Rempel noted how development in the Middle East was driven by western theories and practices at that time.⁸⁵ Commenting on failed UNRWA plans after 1952, Schiff called the regional development projects a 'naive attempt to transplant grand development schemes from their original setting in the US of the 1940s into the conflict-ridden geopolitical reality of the Middle East.'⁸⁶ Summarising scholars' analyses, the development approach was driven by the US and oriented towards western interests. The refugees were not central to the approach.

The work of the ESM became the foundation for the establishment of UNRWA by General Assembly resolution 302 in December 1949. As its name suggests, it encompassed 'relief and works', the latter referring to the 'employment of refugees [that] would not only arrest the demoralizing effects of long continued relief and the development of a professional refugee mentality, but *would also stimulate the economy of the host countries.*' (author's emphasis)⁸⁷ The works provided by UNRWA must be viewed in the context of development ideology described above.

In comparison, the Arab response to economic assistance and development is less discussed in literature and will be elaborated on here. The Arab states did not initially welcome the idea of economic assistance and development as solutions for the displacement of refugees. Economic

⁸⁴ Romirowsky and Joffe, *Religion, Politics, and Origin of Palestinian Refugee Relief*, 83.

⁸⁵ Rempel, 'UNRWA and the Palestinian Refugees', 415

⁸⁶ Schiff, *Refugees unto the Third Generation*, op. cit. 37, quoted in Rosenfeld, 'From Emergency Relief', 296.

⁸⁷ UNISPAL, symbol A/1905, UNRWA – Annual report of the Director, 30 June 1951, Chapter II, Section A, point 41.

solutions were seen as delaying return and closely linked to resettlement, something they principally rejected well into 1949.⁸⁸ This attitude was shared by refugees who saw works programmes as attempts to resettle them instead of assisting their return.⁸⁹ Changes in their attitudes can be traced through UN record of negotiations. In June the UNCCP was still working to ‘obtain an agreement in principle by the Arab States to the resettlement of those refugees who do not desire to return to their homes’.⁹⁰ On 29 June 1949, Transjordan became the first state agreeing to grant land for refugees to resettle and develop agriculture.⁹¹ In August, Egypt also considered the idea of allowing some refugees to resettle on its territory ‘[w]hen its eastern frontiers have been readjusted’ and ‘within the framework of international technical and financial aid’.⁹² It was not clear what exactly caused this change of attitude, but the fact that it happened around the middle of the Lausanne Conference suggest that it was probably an effort to break the deadlock in the peace negotiation with Israel. This tracing corresponds with the findings of Tiller and Waage, ‘By mid-July 1949, all of Israel's Arab neighbour states had admitted that a full repatriation of the refugees to Israel was unrealistic and that most of them would have to be resettled in the Arab states.’⁹³

Increased openness from the Arab governments to some sort of refugee resettlement possibly led to the acceptance of economic solutions. It was likely not a coincidence that the

⁸⁸ *Al-Ahrām*, 18 September 1949.

⁸⁹ UNISPAL, symbol A/1905, UNRWA – Annual report of the Director, 30 June 1951, Chapter II, section A, point 44.

⁹⁰ UNISPAL, symbol A/AC.25/PR.3, Lausanne conference, Lausanne Protocol – UNCCP – Third Progress Report to SecGen, 13 June 1949, point 14.

⁹¹ UNISPAL, symbol A/AC.25/Com.Tech/1, Technical Cttee’s Terms of Reference; refugee estimate; UNRPR report; resettling Arab refugees; Arab development schemes; Syrian economic development; resettlement estimates/Syrian possibilities; org chart – UNCCP – working document, 14 June 1949, Annex E. This document is dated 14 June 1949 in the system but in fact covers correspondence throughout June and July 1949.

⁹² UNISPAL, symbol A/AC.25/AR/17, Arab response to UNCCP questionnaire of 15 August 1949 – Letter and memo to UNCCP from Arab delegations (Lausanne conference), 29 August 1949, Section B point 13.

⁹³ Tiller and Waage, ‘Powerful State, Powerless Mediator’, 518.

Egyptian government also first approached the US government regarding the Point IV development programme in July 1949.⁹⁴ Therefore, while the term of reference of the UNCCP Technical committee stressed working relationship with the relief organisations,⁹⁵ the ESM stressed cooperation with governments.⁹⁶ In the first interim report of ESM submitted in November 1949 it suggested that works programmes ‘planned and arrangements negotiated with the appropriate Near Eastern Governments’ should begin the following year.⁹⁷ It shows that by then, the Arab states became cooperative to development solutions. Still, in the press, the Egyptian government denounced the ESM by stating that Egypt would adopt a ‘limited policy’ towards it. There were two reasons stated: first, Egypt’s national interest was incompatible with international attempts to supervise and guide its economy; second, ESM aimed to leave Palestinian refugees far away from their homeland.⁹⁸ This is an evidence of the Egyptian government’s diverging approaches towards the international community and its public. In June 1950 the Arab League approved its member states cooperating with UNRWA in its works programmes. Cooperation was under the condition that development should not prejudice the right of refugees to choose return.⁹⁹ Active discussion between UNRWA and Egypt began in late July that year.¹⁰⁰

The cooperation did not go smoothly, however. In its 1952 Annual Report, UNRWA complained that its work projects were viewed with suspicion and only accepted ‘because refugees

⁹⁴ Foreign Relations of the United States archive (hereafter FRUS), 1950, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume V, document 102.

⁹⁵ UNISPAL, symbol A/AC.25/Com.Tech/1, Technical Cttee’s Terms of Reference; refugee estimate; UNRPR report; resettling Arab refugees; Arab development schemes; Syrian economic development; resettlement estimates/Syrian possibilities; org chart – UNCCP – working document, 14 June 1949, Annex A.

⁹⁶ UNISPAL, symbol A/1106, Economic Survey Mission for Mideast first Interim report (“Clapp report”) – UNCCP – Report, 16 November 1949, section ‘The Problem’.

⁹⁷ Ibid., section ‘Recommendations’ point 2

⁹⁸ *Al-Ahrām*, 18 September 1949.

⁹⁹ UNISPAL, symbol A/1451/Rev.1, UNRWA – Interim report of the Director and the Advisory Commission, 6 October 1950, Chapter V point 42.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., Chapter V point 43.

wanted wages and governments wanted public works.’ The consequence was that ‘the Agency found itself financing and operating labour camps to build public works which the governments themselves would have built the following year’, without contributing to their intended goal – economic integration of refugees.¹⁰¹ As for the refugees, the UNRWA annual report of 1950 noted that ‘in many places this (hostile) attitude gradually changed; at some sites, requests for employment greatly exceeded the financial possibilities’¹⁰². It was not clear what led to this change; the UNRWA conclusion that wages were needed is reasonable.

While economic programmes were at the centre, other forms of development were not entirely forgotten. UNRWA’s first annual report recapped the early effort from aid organisations: ‘realizing that bread alone was not enough, (they) inaugurated a limited welfare and education programme, financed by the sale of empty relief supply containers.’ Economic solution was still seen as the main way to improve the morale and wellbeing of refugees. Social case work and education helped relieve distress and improve morale, but such ‘welfare’ work received little attention or funding.¹⁰³ Education only became the focus of UNRWA in the late 1950s.¹⁰⁴

The Work of International Organisations

Gaza was distinct from other receiving areas of Palestinian refugees for two reasons. First, the small strip of land could not support the Palestinian population in it. This was acknowledged by

¹⁰¹ UNISPAL, symbol A/2171, UNRWA – Annual report of the Director, 30 June 1952, Part III section A.

¹⁰² UNISPAL, symbol A/1905, UNRWA – Annual report of the Director, 30 June 1951, Part one chapter II section A point 44.

¹⁰³ Ibid., part two chapter IV.

¹⁰⁴ Rosenfeld, ‘From Emergency Relief’, 298.

both the Technical Mission¹⁰⁵ and the ESM.¹⁰⁶ The conclusion was that resettlement was inevitable, and Gaza held little economic prospect as long as it remained overpopulated. Second, it remained a contested territory throughout the period studied. In May 1949, Israel proposed to incorporate Gaza into its territory in exchange for accepting the refugees in Gaza,¹⁰⁷ a plan that was favoured by the United States.¹⁰⁸ The plan was not accepted and was dropped with the closure of the 1949 Lausanne Conference.¹⁰⁹ In November that year, in Jordan's negotiation for peace with Israel, it sought to 'replace Egypt at Gaza'.¹¹⁰ This contention for Gaza continued at least until the beginning of 1950,¹¹¹ but it never came to pass. Then, Egyptian Prime Minister Nahhas Pasha's speech on 8 October 1951 abrogated two treaties with Britain. It led to strong clashes between the two countries. The event's connection to the issue of Gaza was that Britain contemplated moving its troops stationed in the Suez Canal zone to Gaza to alleviate the conflict, since the troops would then not officially be on Egyptian soil. This was first reported as a rumour by *al-Balāgh* on 24 October 1950.¹¹² The Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed openness to this possibility,¹¹³ and a note from the then British Foreign Secretary Eden to the US confirmed that the plan was indeed considered.¹¹⁴ Filiu attributed the failure of this plan to disagreement from

¹⁰⁵ UNISPAL, symbol A/AC.25/Com.Tech/9, Outline of the Cttee's plan of work, execution of the terms of reference – UNCCP's Technical Cttee on Refugees – report, 20 August 1949, Part III section E point 2.

¹⁰⁶ UNISPAL, symbol A/1106, Economic Survey Mission for Mideast first Interim report ("Clapp report") – UNCCP – Report, 16 November 1949, section "Prospects for Employment".

¹⁰⁷ UNISPAL, symbol A/AC.25/Com.Gen/SR.10, Mtg. w/ delegation of Israel re. boundaries, refugees, Protocol of 12 May, Partition Plan – UNCCP's General Cttee 10th mtg. (Lausanne) – Summary record, 31 May 1949.

¹⁰⁸ FRUS, 1951, The Near East and Africa, Volume V, Document 371 (784A.00/6–1151), 11 June 1951. This US document from 1951 recapped on the negotiations in 1949 and commented "[w]e (US) had thought it would be an extremely constructive step" if the plan was realised.

¹⁰⁹ Filiu, *Gaza*, 76.

¹¹⁰ FRUS, 1949, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume VI, Document 1029 (867N.01/11–1149), 11 November 1949.

¹¹¹ FRUS, 1950, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume V, Document 307 (684A.85/1–350), 3 January 1950.

¹¹² MENAN, *al-Balāgh*, 24 October 1950.

¹¹³ MENAN, *al-Misri*, 10 May 1952.

¹¹⁴ FRUS, 1952–1954, The Near and Middle East, Volume IX, Part 2, Document 975 (641.74/4–1852), 18 April 1952.

Israel.¹¹⁵ The three events mentioned showed how the status of Gaza remained highly contested from the war until the Egyptian revolution, and those who worked in the area did not have certainty of the continuity of their involvement nor the stability of the area.

Despite the lack of economic prospects and the political uncertainty, plans of economic assistance and development continued to be discussed for Gaza. This section presents the work of AFSC and UNRWA in this respect based on literature. The next chapter will focus on the effort of the Egyptian government as seen in primary sources.

AFSC was engaged by the UN for relief, but its work extended beyond that. Herman pointed out that AFSC created a basic schooling system by the summer of 1949, despite education being out of the UN mandate. There was no funding from UNRPR or UNESCO. It educated about 20% of the refugee children in Gaza and was staffed entirely by Palestinian teachers.¹¹⁶ Several small-scale projects of economic assistance were created. This included a weaving programme,¹¹⁷ a carpentry workshop,¹¹⁸ and a soap production programme,¹¹⁹ providing employment to a small group of refugees with suitable skills. Herman praised the AFSC programmes for ‘respecting this local history and responding to the refugee communities['] needs’.¹²⁰ The schooling system and relief operation of AFSC also employed refugees, numbering eight to nine hundred.¹²¹ Although the programmes boosted employment, sometimes wages were not available.¹²²

¹¹⁵ Filiu, *Gaza*, 81.

¹¹⁶ Herman, ‘Recreating Gaza’, 121-123.

¹¹⁷ Romirowsky and Joffe, *Religion, Politics, and the Origins of Palestine Refugee Relief*, 95, 108, 130

¹¹⁸ Herman, ‘Recreating Gaza’, 113; Romirowsky and Joffe *Religion, Politics, and the Origins of Palestine Refugee Relief*, 130.

¹¹⁹ Herman, ‘Recreating Gaza’, 113-120 gave a detail study of how soap production was engrained in the history of Gaza.

¹²⁰ Herman, ‘Recreating Gaza’, 113, 120.

¹²¹ Romirowsky and Joffe, *Religion, Politics, and the Origins of Palestine Refugee Relief*, 69.

¹²² For examples, some teachers were paid by the AFSC with soap. This was because the little fund for education promised by UNESCO never arrived in Gaza. See Herman, ‘Recreating Gaza’, 117, 121.

The projects were scaled back when UNRWA took over, which is surprising considering its emphasis on works. In its interim report in October 1950, about half a year after it took over from AFSC, it wrote, ‘Gaza has been a most difficult area in which to provide work for refugees [...] the Agency has found it possible to do little beyond small jobs such as the improvement of the water supply and the maintenance of a weaving and garment sewing project started under UNRPR which, when yarns are available, employs roughly 3,100 refugees on a piece-work basis. Materials produced and garments made are for distribution amongst the refugees.’¹²³ When UNRWA submitted its first annual report in mid-1951 there was no mention of any expansion of works programmes in Gaza.¹²⁴ In both reports, the prospect of an employment project in Sinai was described as the hope for refugees in Gaza. This project will be discussed further in the next section. UNRWA also continued to engage in education in Gaza, but Herman argued that UNRWA’s schooling programme posed more restrictions on the students’ gender and vocational orientation.¹²⁵

Finally, it is important to remember that refugees were not passive recipients of economic assistance and development projects. Feldman quoted oral accounts from refugees that the youth among Palestinian refugees in Gaza pioneered education programmes, and later ‘[t]he Quakers and the Egyptian Administration noticed us and helped us.’¹²⁶ Romirowsky and Joffe described how the refugees in Gaza created a market out of rations, and milk was processed into yoghurt and cheese for sale.¹²⁷ On an individual level, Salman Abu Sitta described in his memoir how a refugee

¹²³ UNISPAL, symbol A/1451/Rev.1, UNRWA – Interim report of the Director and the Advisory Commission, 6 October 1950, Part one chapter V point 51

¹²⁴ UNISPAL, symbol A/1905, UNRWA – Annual report of the Director, 30 June 1951, point 30 and 57

¹²⁵ Herman, ‘Recreating Gaza’, 124-125.

¹²⁶ Feldman, *Governing Gaza*, 212.

¹²⁷ Romirowsky and Joffe, *Religion, Politics, and the Origins of Palestine Refugee Relief*, 92.

from Jaffa began from selling a single plate of hummus on the street, and expanded his business so much that he eventually rented a shop and started a restaurant.¹²⁸ All these are examples of how refugees themselves participated in improving their economic prospects through their creativity and work, and invested in the development of the next generation.

This chapter adds to the literature on economic assistance and development in Gaza, by emphasising changes in the attitudes of the UN and Arab states. This allows a more nuanced view regarding how the Egyptian government were influenced by other actors at different times. Building on the context described in this chapter, the next chapter identifies and analyses the plans of the Egyptian government.

¹²⁸ Salman Abu Sitta, *Mapping My Return: A Palestinian Memoir* (Cairo and New York, 2016), 84.

Chapter 6 - The Egyptian Government's Economic Assistance and Development Plans for Gaza

This section traces the plans of economic assistance and development for Gaza implemented by the Egyptian government. After listing the plans that the Egyptian government took active action on, the plans that were suggested but then rejected by the Egyptian government are also briefly discussed.¹²⁹ Most of these plans and the discussion around them are found in the four Egyptian newspapers, and the findings from the press are supplemented with two projects described in the UN archive.¹³⁰

Plans as seen from the Press

This subsection traces the plans for economic assistance and development for Gaza found in newspapers, which were either initiated by the Egyptian government or by another actor and then received approval and actions from the Egyptian government. Sometimes the plans did not come to full fruition in the period studied due to the abrupt end of the regime, but they are included here because of the positive response from the government.

Infrastructure for communications, religious, and health purposes

The Egyptian government funded and constructed infrastructures in Gaza. The first type was infrastructure for communication. In November 1949, *Al-Ahrām* reported the restart of civilian

¹²⁹ There are some further suggestions that received no response from the Egyptian government as seen in the sources, and those are not discussed for they give little information on the Egyptian government's course of actions.

¹³⁰ There is insufficient evidence to tell whether these two projects were reported by the Egyptian press. Even though this research could not locate relevant news articles, it could be due to the incomplete collection in the database, or due to the search method by keywords.

telephone and telegraph services between Gaza and Egypt, funded fully by the Egyptian government.¹³¹ Feldman quoted an Egyptian officer's memo from July 1949 describing business transactions hindered by the lack of communication services.¹³² The restart of services facilitated businesses such as trade between the two areas, allowing smooth conducting of economic activities. An article from 1950 describes the heavy usage of the Cairo-Gaza phone lines and authorities were considering adding more lines, showing the importance of the service.¹³³ Finally, in March 1952, *al-Miṣri* reported that the licenses of Gaza telegram offices were expanded to cover other Arab states and foreign states. This report mentions an additional detail about the connection: the license specified that 'the telegraphs must subject to supervision, like the local telegraphs' (the Arabic word used for supervision, *raqāba*, could also mean 'censorship').¹³⁴ This shows that the provision of telecommunication services was accompanied by security and political concerns, which is unsurprising. In the memo quoted by Feldman, the officer also gave the opinion that the telecommunications service was ready to be resumed then, with the needed facilities and personnel in place. The delay was likely due to political concerns.¹³⁵

Other types of infrastructures were also provided from 1950 onwards. In February 1950, the Egyptian Ministry of Awqaf (religious endowments) funded the restoration of mosques and the performance of rites in Gaza, and provided a monthly stipend for these purposes.¹³⁶ In the same month, it was reported that the Egyptian government helped Palestinian officials in Gaza establish hospitals.¹³⁷ Neither were of economic nature and served to improve the physical and spiritual

¹³¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 15 November 1949.

¹³² Feldman, *Governing Gaza*, 183.

¹³³ *Al-Ahrām*, 1 October 1950.

¹³⁴ MENAN, *Al-Miṣri*, 20 March 1952.

¹³⁵ Feldman, *Governing Gaza*, 183.

¹³⁶ MENAN, *al-Balāgh*, 8 February 1950; *al-Muqattam* 11 February 1950.

¹³⁷ MENAN, *al-Muqattam*, 15 February 1950.

well-being of the local community. Both events were reported very briefly, with little information on the decision-making processes. Again, Feldman's study of archival material provided insights. She quoted a letter from 1949 by the governor-general of Gaza to the Ministry of Awqaf. The mosques in Gaza were formerly maintained from Jerusalem. With the war, it could provide neither furnishings nor salaries to its staff and needed financial assistance from the Ministry.¹³⁸ The measure reported is thus likely a response to the request from Gaza, not an initiative by the Egyptian government.

Promoting Education

In March 1950 and February 1952, the Egyptian government led the establishment of an orphanage (providing necessities and education to Palestinian orphans) and a secondary school respectively.¹³⁹ The article on the orphanage quoted an official stating that 'they (the children) were orphaned for the defence of the Arab nation, and the nation is responsible for adopting and nurturing them.' It was also stated that the orphanage was established with support from the local Gaza government, the Egyptian Red Crescent and the Quakers.

Besides building schools, there were additional efforts from the Egyptian government to promote education in Gaza. In September 1949, the Egyptian Ministry of Education sent an education delegation to Gaza.¹⁴⁰ Education experts were again sent to Gaza in 1950 and 1952: in 1950, as part of the Egyptian administration's plan to encourage advancement in schools in Gaza, the government and several refugee girls' schools in Gaza held an exhibition to showcase the

¹³⁸ Feldman, *Governing Gaza*, 200-201.

¹³⁹ MENAN, al-Miṣrī, 4 March 1950; *al-Muqaṭṭam*, 26 February 1952.

¹⁴⁰ MENAN, *al-Muqaṭṭam*, 20 September 1949.

students' craftworks, and an Egyptian supervisor from the Ministry of Education was sent to oversee it. She praised the Palestinian students for performing at a higher level than their Egyptian counterparts.¹⁴¹ In 1952, as part of the plan mentioned above to construct a secondary school, the Egyptian Ministry of Education agreed to send experts to Gaza and determine what is needed for completing this project. Besides sending experts, there was also evidence of inter-ministry cooperation to guarantee education. In June 1952, The Egyptian Ministry of War and Navy (which administered Gaza) wrote to the Egyptian Ministry of Education informing them that the secondary school was almost completed, but more schools and about a hundred more teachers were needed before the beginning of the next school year. Existing schools still could not accommodate all children.¹⁴² The effort Egypt made to educate local and refugee children in Gaza was praised by the Arab League's representatives in May 1952.¹⁴³

Another way the Egyptian government supported education in Gaza was by opening up its examination system to Palestinian students. The Egyptian education curriculum was used in Gaza, and when the results of an Egyptian public examination were announced on *al-Muqattam* in 1951, candidates from Gaza were shown.¹⁴⁴ The fact that Palestinian students were taking exams in Egypt also demonstrates that the nature of education for Palestinian students changed as displacement prolonged. It was not a temporary measure, and the students integrated into the education system of the host country.

¹⁴¹ MENAN, al-Miṣrī, 14 May 1950; *al-Muqattam*, 26 February 1952.

¹⁴² MENAN, *al-Balāgh*, 2 June 1952.

¹⁴³ MENAN, al-Miṣrī, 17 May 1952.

¹⁴⁴ MENAN, *al-Muqattam* 22 September 1951.

Feldman mentioned that UNRWA was responsible for serving refugees and Egypt for serving locals in Gaza. The separation is less clear, however, when it comes to funding.¹⁴⁵ It seemed that the separation was also challenged in practical matters, with the Egyptian government clearly playing a role in supporting the education of refugee children. Romirowsky and Joffe quoted a letter from a Quaker worker that described the Egyptian government taking over instruction at the AFSC schools in Gaza.¹⁴⁶ Since UNRWA also took on education, it seemed that there were parallel efforts from the two sides. The overlapping effort was probably justified by the widespread recognition of the importance of education, with Rosenfeld calling education for Palestinians ‘human development’.¹⁴⁷

Facilitating Gaza-Egypt trade

The general trade between Gaza and Egypt was restricted at the beginning of the Egyptian administration, and different actors argued for a relaxation of trade policies to improve the economy of Gaza.

The term ‘customs barriers’ (*hawājizu al-jumrakiyya*) was mentioned several times in the requests to ease trade restrictions between Egypt and Gaza. The barriers were direct restrictions on the movement of some goods combined with a high fee at customs that in effect limited the exchange of other goods. In March 1950, when Palestinian officials in Gaza visited Cairo to congratulate the new Prime Minister Nahhas Pasha, they took the opportunity to meet with the Egyptian Ministry of War and Navy and recommended the cancellation of these barriers.¹⁴⁸ In

¹⁴⁵ Feldman, *Governing Gaza*, 160.

¹⁴⁶ Romirowsky and Joffe, *Religion, Politics, and the Origins of Palestine Refugee Relief*, 136.

¹⁴⁷ Rosenfeld, ‘From Emergency Relief’, 286.

¹⁴⁸ MENAN, al-Miṣrī, 4 March 1950.

August that year, the APG in Gaza wrote to the Egyptian government requesting them to lift barriers, using an economic and developmental argument that this would bring industrial and agricultural growth in Gaza.¹⁴⁹ The economic argument was repeated twice in the subsequent editorials of the paper *al-Muqattam*. The newspaper stressed that refugees did not want only relief but wanted to trade and make a living from their produce.¹⁵⁰

Late 1950, two articles published three days apart appeared to contradict each other: *al-Muqattam* reported the complaint of refugees in Gaza. The Egyptian government agreed to lift the barrier, but officers on the ground did not implement it.¹⁵¹ Three days later, *al-Miṣri* reported that the Egyptian ministries were going to study the removal of customs barriers, as recommended by an Egyptian customs official sent to investigate the situation in Gaza. The *al-Miṣri* article included a quote from an Egyptian minister, who worried that lowering or cancelling customs charges would give the impression that Egypt was preparing to incorporate Gaza politically.¹⁵² There was confusion in the press over whether the barriers were about to be or had already been lifted. The reason for the confusion is unclear. *Al-Muqattam*'s article might give a clue: 'They (refugees) are not asking for something new; they were just asking for the implementation of what was agreed upon, be it in the League's conferences or in individual Arab countries.' The 'League' probably referred to the Arab League; thus, the confusion probably arose from the discrepancy between a general approach agreed by the Arab League and the particular policy in Egypt. It was more likely that the customs barrier was indeed still in place in late 1950, because in the following year, newspapers reported the administrative and legislative bodies of Egypt forming a majority opinion

¹⁴⁹ MENAN, *al-Muqattam*, 7 August 1950.

¹⁵⁰ MENAN, *al-Muqattam*, 8 August 1950; *al-Muqattam* 28 August 1950.

¹⁵¹ MENAN, *al-Muqattam*, 4 September 1950.

¹⁵² MENAN, *al-Miṣri*, 7 September 1950.

to lift the barriers. It was agreed that Gaza should not be treated as other foreign countries in economic matters (this will be elaborated on later), and the state council began considering legislation to this effect.¹⁵³ It is unclear whether legislation passed within the period studied in this research, but there was certainly an official acknowledgement of the need for such a policy. The expected preferential trade policies would have benefited the economy in Gaza.

More information is available for a specific type of trade: the import of fruits from Gaza to Egypt. The first relevant article was a short piece dated 8th September 1948. It briefly stated that the authority for supplies in Gaza approved the export of a certain number of grapes from Gaza to Egypt, which would certainly lower the prices on the Egyptian market.¹⁵⁴ This permission was likely an exception to a general ban on exporting Gaza fruits to Egypt, since the approval was seen as newsworthy. Early 1950, *al-Muqaṭṭam* began calling for the Egyptian government to lift the ban on fruit imports from Gaza. Its first article stating this opinion was published in January 1950. It gave two arguments: the export was seen as a way for Gaza to develop its economy and relieve the poverty of farmers there; it was also a way to supply the Egyptian public with affordable fruits. The same article stated that the new Wafd government that came into power in the same month was expected to approve the export soon.¹⁵⁵ A month later, it was reported that a trade authority in Egypt requested permits for exporting 260,000 boxes of oranges from Gaza to Egypt, to lower the fruit price in Egypt. The Egyptian authority responsible for import and export stated that these oranges did not require permits ‘like some other material that is exported from Gaza’.¹⁵⁶ This statement is ambiguous, and from the following article published by *al-Muqaṭṭam* in June 1950, it

¹⁵³ *Al-Ahrām* , 19 August 1951; MENAN, *Al-Miṣri*, 22 August 1951; *Al-Ahrām* , 7 September 1951.

¹⁵⁴ MENAN, *Al-Muqaṭṭam* , 8 September 1948.

¹⁵⁵ MENAN, *al-Muqaṭṭam*, 19 January 1950.

¹⁵⁶ MENAN, *al-Balāgh*, 17 February 1950.

was clear that the export was in fact not allowed. *Al-Muqaṭṭam* again criticised the ban of fruit import from Gaza in this article titled ‘A prune in Gaza is sold for 1.5 millime in Gaza, and we buy it in Egypt for 15 piastres. Necessity to open the door of importing fruit to lower the crazy price.’ In the Egyptian currency system, one Egyptian pound equalled 100 piastres or 1000 millimes, and the prune price in Egypt was a hundred times that in Gaza. This article also cited the government’s justification of this ban: the fruits from Gaza were infested with worms and diseases. *Al-Muqaṭṭam* refuted the claim by quoting the research of plant scientists, who found no such problem with the Gaza fruits.¹⁵⁷ *Al-Muqaṭṭam* followed this with three articles carrying similar arguments,¹⁵⁸ one of which cited a reader’s letter from Gaza, confirming what *al-Muqaṭṭam* described and agreeing that lifting the ban of fruit import would help the people of both Egypt and Gaza.¹⁵⁹

A change in the Egyptian government’s approach happened sometime between late 1950 and early 1951. *Al-Ahrām* reported in December 1950 the decision of the minister of trade and production to send an agriculture team to Gaza and Lebanon to study the import of fruits, as part of the effort to lower the high fruit prices in Egyptian markets.¹⁶⁰ *Al-Muqaṭṭam* reported in the same month that the Egyptian ministries were working together to overcome difficulties in importing Gaza oranges to Egypt, similarly for combating high prices.¹⁶¹ On 31st December 1950, it was reported that the Egyptian Senate decided upon three matters: to exempt Gaza citrus fruits from customs fees; to check the citrus fruits in Gaza city; and the rates for moving them to Egyptian

¹⁵⁷ MENAN, *al-Muqaṭṭam*, 27 June 1950.

¹⁵⁸ MENAN, *al-Muqaṭṭam* 3 August 1950; *al-Muqaṭṭam*, 16 September 1950.

¹⁵⁹ MENAN, *al-Muqaṭṭam*, 30 June 1950.

¹⁶⁰ *Al-Ahrām* 19 December 1950.

¹⁶¹ MENAN, *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, 21 December 1950.

harbours. This amounted to the lift of the import ban.¹⁶² An article published later in late January 1951, again by *al-Muqattam*, explained this change. The import was a countermeasure against Egyptian merchants who refused to sell their fruits at the government-fixed price. The Egyptian government assigned cooperative societies to buy citrus fruits from Gaza instead and sell it in Egypt at the fixed price. The newspaper praised the Ministry of Supply for this act benefitting Egyptians and Palestinians in Gaza alike, even though the policy came too late. It also called for an extension of the import permission, regardless of whether the local merchants cooperate or not.¹⁶³ By late 1951, the import seemed to have regularised: an article published in September reported the Egyptian government announcing plans to set up steaming stations in Gaza to sanitise and inspect fruits prior to their delivery to Egypt.¹⁶⁴ Another article in December described how the Egyptian cooperative societies had to change their orders from Gaza merchants to prevent the British from seizing their oranges.¹⁶⁵

Gaza oranges were also sold to Saudi Arabia and London.¹⁶⁶ Despite that, farmers in Gaza were still forced to sell their fruits domestically at a low price.¹⁶⁷ This proves that foreign export was not enough to absorb the production, and the proximity of the Egyptian market was crucial to the trade. This policy brought economic assistance to the Gaza region, by creating gainful employment for farmers, merchants, porters etc.

¹⁶² MENAN, *Al-Balāgh*, 31 December 1950.

¹⁶³ MENAN, *al-Muqattam*, 25 January 1951. See also MENAN, *al-Muqattam* 27 January 1951 and *al-Balāgh* 4 February 1951, which also praised the policy but focused on how it benefited Egyptians.

¹⁶⁴ *Al-Ahrām* 7 September 1951.

¹⁶⁵ MENAN, *al-Balāgh*, 13 December 1951.

¹⁶⁶ MENAN, *Al-Muqattam* . 19 January 1950.

¹⁶⁷ MENAN, *Al-Muqattam* , 27 June 1950.

Sending experts to study the development of Gaza and provide help

The Egyptian government sent experts to Gaza to study and report the socio-economic situation there, as well as to recommend plans to develop the strip. The idea of forming a technical committee to study the economic situation in Gaza was first mentioned by *al-Miṣri* in September 1950, but it was not clear whether the committee was actually formed.¹⁶⁸ A year later in August 1951, both *al-Balāgh* and *Al-Ahrām* reported that the Ministry of National Economy sent a committee to Gaza to study ways to improve the socio-economic situation there, and the committee returned with a report. The problems identified were the poverty of the population and the lack of resources in Gaza. Several recommendations were discussed involving reviewing Egypt-Gaza tariff, providing material support, and sending experts to help.¹⁶⁹ Similar recommendations were again reported to be under discussion a month later.¹⁷⁰ Among these recommendations, a further article in January 1952 by *al-Muqaṭṭam* showed that the recommendation to provide expert help was adopted. The Egyptian Ministry of Finance requested the Ministry of Agriculture to send technicians to Gaza to develop agricultural land there.¹⁷¹

*Working with UNRWA on an employment project in Sinai*¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ MENAN, *Al-Miṣri*, 7 September 1950. It is possible that the committee mentioned here is the same committee as the one described in the next section working with UNRWA, but this seemed unlikely for three reasons: First, the committee working with UNRWA was led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and usually described as the committee headed by ‘Abd al-Rahman Haqa, therefore this committee composed of representatives of various ministries do not fit the same description. Second, the committee working with UNRWA had a clear focus on employment, while this committee did not have such a focus. Third, the committee working with UNRWA involved Sinai, but not the other committee.

¹⁶⁹ MENAN, *Al-Balāgh*, 16 August 1951; *Al-Ahrām*, 18 August 1951.

¹⁷⁰ *Al-Ahrām*, 7 September 1951.

¹⁷¹ MENAN, *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, 11 January 1952.

¹⁷² While this project did not take place in the Gaza strip, it was specifically targeting the refugees in Gaza, and began as a discussion that involved Gaza. Therefore this project is included.

The employment of refugees was discussed in the press before the Sinai project. *Al-Ahrām* reported that the Egyptian government and UNRWA made an agreement to organise urban reconstruction plans in Gaza to employ refugees in September 1949.¹⁷³ The newspaper *al-Muqattam* pointed out in August 1950 the need to provide employment to refugees after the Clapp mission found no development opportunities in Gaza.¹⁷⁴

In October 1950, three newspapers published articles about an Egyptian committee devoted to studying short-term employment projects in Gaza and Sinai for Palestinian refugees.¹⁷⁵ At that time, the nature of the project was still under discussion, and each newspaper gave different accounts: *al-Balāgh* mentioned that the project will take place in both areas, *Al-Ahrām* described only work prospects in Sinai, and *al-Miṣri* only mentioned Gaza. The parties involved also varied between accounts: the *Al-Ahrām* article treated this project as an Egyptian initiative separated from the efforts of the UN. It wrote, ‘there is some hope that some Arab refugees in the Gaza area will be allowed to work in the Sinai Peninsula. And it is expected that the UN will soon tackle the refugee problem as a whole.’ The *al-Miṣri* article published four days later, however, stated that the Egyptian committee would submit its recommendations to the UN to secure necessary funding for the project. What is especially interesting is the hinted involvement of the British government. *Al-Ahrām* reported, ‘Relevant departments in London expressed much satisfaction at the expected approval from Egypt to allow Arab refugees to cultivate land in al-^cArīsh (an area in the Sinai Peninsula).’ The same article also mentioned the Egyptian hesitation: ‘the *Al-Ahrām* office learnt that the Egyptian government has not made the final decision in this matter, and its officials have

¹⁷³ *Al-Ahrām*, 18 November 1950.

¹⁷⁴ MENAN, *al-Muqattam* 8 August 1950.

¹⁷⁵ *Al-Ahrām*, 27 October 1950; MENAN, *al-Balāgh* 30 October 1950; *al-Miṣri* 31 October 1950.

formerly stated that cultivatable land within the Egyptian border should be reserved for Egyptian Bedouins.’ The Sinai project can be traced to an earlier time when comparing the news articles to other documents. A UNRWA report from October 1950 wrote ‘[i]t is hoped that considerable land development and allied works projects may develop in the adjoining Egyptian territory of Sinai. The matter has been discussed with the Egyptian Government, and, at the time of writing, is under consideration by an inter-departmental committee of that Government.’¹⁷⁶ This proves that discussion of the Sinai project had well begun when reported in the Egyptian press. A British Foreign Office communication from June of the same year, cited by El-Abed,¹⁷⁷ also mentions the Sinai employment plan: ‘the suggestion that something may be done for the refugees in Sinai *came from the Egyptians themselves*’ (author’s emphasis). This pushes the beginning of the project even earlier and suggests that it was an Egyptian initiative.

The project continued to feature prominently in the newspapers throughout November. On 1st November 1950, *Al-Ahrām* reported that the Egyptian committee sent a sub-committee to Gaza to study short-term projects that could be done there to improve the life of refugees. The same article described that the UN funding would go to the Sinai Peninsula to fund productive projects to benefit refugees, because all proposed projects in Gaza are non-productive. The Egyptian minister of foreign affairs was in the United States to confirm such arrangements.¹⁷⁸ About a week later, *Al-Ahrām* and *al-Miṣri* reported projects in Gaza had been approved, including housing,

¹⁷⁶ UINISPAL, symbol A/1451/Rev.1, UNRWA – Interim report of the Director and the Advisory Commission, 6 October 1950, Chapter V Point 49 (3)

¹⁷⁷ El-Abed, *Unprotected*, 39.

¹⁷⁸ *Al-Ahrām*, 1 November 1950.

schools and hospitals which would be constructed first; and projects in Sinai were under further study.¹⁷⁹

The projects were not mentioned again until the spring of 1951. In late March and early April, *Al-Ahrām* printed two articles about the first steps of the Sinai project: experts from America and Egypt would test the soil of Sinai to see what would be planted there. It also described the steps expected to follow, such as the construction of waterways and housing.¹⁸⁰ The construction and agriculture works were seen as great employment opportunities for the refugees. Strangely, the topic was since then dropped from all newspapers. The last relevant article found was in *al-Muqaṭṭam*. In an opinion piece criticising the Egyptian policy in Gaza, dated 10th May 1951, it wrote that the Sinai project is still ‘on paper’ and the Egyptian government should work on finding opportunities in Gaza instead.¹⁸¹

The project did not materialise. Although the failure of the project was not reported in the press, it could be traced in UNRWA’s documents. Its second annual report published in June 1952 stated ‘[t]he Agency spent months and almost \$100,000 in surveys (in the Sinai Peninsula) but the best experts available could not find suitable soil in combination with adequate water. Surveys have been suspended until other sites are suggested.’¹⁸² The Egyptian monarchy was overthrown a month after. Newspaper reports suggest another reason for the failure of the Sinai project. In August 1951, *al-Muqaṭṭam* reported that the US and UK government wanted to make Sinai Peninsula a camp for the forces of the UN; yet the Israeli government disagreed and claimed that

¹⁷⁹ *Al-Ahrām*, 7 November 1950; MENAN, *al-Miṣri*, 9 November 1950.

¹⁸⁰ *Al-Ahrām*, 22 March 1951; *Al-Ahrām*, 8 April 1951.

¹⁸¹ MENAN, *al-Muqaṭṭam*, 10 May 1951.

¹⁸² UNISPAL, symbol A/2171, UNRWA – Annual report of the Director, 30 June 1952, Part IV section B point 64.

its natural border extended to Sinai.¹⁸³ In May 1952, amidst the rising British-Egyptian tension, *al-Muqattam* quoted a speech on the importance of Sinai to Egypt and argued for the necessity to ‘construct Sinai and populate it with a well-chosen group from the Nile valley’.¹⁸⁴ Territorial contention and rising security pressure increased the volatility in Sinai, which probably removed the possibility of settling Palestinian refugees there.

It should be noted that after the change of regime, there was discussion of a similar plan to resettle refugees in Sinai through the diversion of Nile water. That plan also did not materialise.¹⁸⁵

Plans as seen from UNISPAL

On top of what was described in the press, two plans of a more political nature were raised by the Egyptian government to the UN agencies. Although neither came to pass, they are described here to provide a full picture of the efforts made by the Egyptian government for economic assistance in Gaza. Relevant material from the FRUS archive is also cited.

The first proposal was officially submitted by Egypt to the UNCCP on 24 October 1949. It suggested allowing the Palestinians who fled to the Gaza strip but owned land just outside the Egypt-controlled area, and those originating from the close-by but Israel-controlled Beersheba, to return and cultivate their land.¹⁸⁶ This would relieve the pressure for relief and development in Gaza, allowing those with land nearby to feed themselves and make a living from their land. AFSC

¹⁸³ MENAN, *al-Muqattam*, 7 August 195.; I did not find documents from UNISPAL that supported this report.

¹⁸⁴ MENAN, *al-Muqattam*, 19 May 1952.

¹⁸⁵ Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, 49

¹⁸⁶ UNISPAL, symbol A/AC.25/Com.Gen/SR.54, Report to the Conciliation Commission re. establishment of a Joint Cttee on Gaza refugees (includes terms of reference) – UNCCP’s General Cttee 53rd mtg. (Geneva) – Summary record, 17 February 1950; FRUS, 1949, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume VI, document 1006 (501.BB Palestine/10–2449), 24 October 1949.

records cited by Cheal showed that the number of refugees from the mandate-era Gaza and Beersheba region made up 56% of the refugee population in the Gaza strip,¹⁸⁷ thus this proposal would have been relevant to many of the refugees in Gaza. Both UNISPAL and FRUS records showed that the proposal was not discussed until February 1950. A letter from the US delegation to the UNCCP shed light on why the proposal returned to the discussion agenda. UNCCP worked to establish direct discussion between Israel and the Arab states without success due to opposition from the latter. To overcome the failure, it proposed another way of negotiation – that of resolving disagreements through ‘mixed committees’ with members from both sides. The Egyptian proposal for Gaza was chosen to be the first issue discussed under a mixed committee, because UNCCP hoped that this would pressure the Arab states into accepting this arrangement: ‘it would be very difficult for Egypt to refuse, inasmuch as the Committee’s terms of reference will be based on Egypt’s own proposals regarding refugees in the Gaza strip.’¹⁸⁸ Yet two matters prevented further progress: Israel considered that an agreement reached with Egypt under a separate UN body, the Mixed Armistice Commission, had resolved the problem (while Egypt did not agree and wished for further discussion);¹⁸⁹ and the two countries had different prerequisites to accepting a mixed committee which could not be reconciled.¹⁹⁰ By March, it seemed that while mixed committees were still pursued, the Egyptian proposal was dropped.¹⁹¹ In July 1950, *Al-Ahrām* reported a similar plan to settle some refugees in Gaza and the demilitarised zone between Egyptian and

¹⁸⁷ AFSC Archives, "Operational Report of AFSC," December 1949, quoted in Cheal, ‘Refugees in the Gaza Strip’, 140.

¹⁸⁸ FRUS, 1950, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume V, Document 372 (357.AC/2-2750), 27 February 1950.

¹⁸⁹ UNISPAL, symbol, A/AC.25/IS.46, Exchange of letters between UNCCP and Israel/Joint committee on Gaza refugees – UNCCP – Letters, 23 February 1950.

¹⁹⁰ UNISPAL, symbol A/AC.25/Com.Gen/SR.55, Blocked Arab accounts; establishment of joint cttees – UNCCP’s General Cttee 55th mtg. (Geneva) – Summary record, 9 March 1950.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

Israeli borders, and attributed the plan to the British government. The Egyptian officials rejected it by saying that the Clapp report had shown that to be impossible, and doubted whether it was genuinely a British proposal or just a rumour.¹⁹²

The second proposal was recorded on two separate occasions in 1949, and addressed the possibility for Egypt to accept some refugees from Gaza if its territory could be readjusted. The first mention was found in a letter from the Arab delegations to the UNCCP, dated August 1949. It expressed the Egyptian opinion that it could not settle refugees on its existing territory due to its internal population pressure. ‘When its eastern frontiers have been readjusted, however, the Egyptian delegation would be prepared to study the question in the light of the prevailing situation and within the framework of international technical and financial aid.’¹⁹³ This proposal should be understood in light of an Israeli proposal to incorporate the Gaza strip and in exchange give part of South Negev to Egypt, raised a few months before.¹⁹⁴ In December 1949, the Ambassador of US in Egypt reported the opinion of an Egyptian royal court official that ‘If Egypt... could obtain in lieu of Gaza area the section which includes Beersheba and extending to Dead Sea, Egypt might settle those refugees there.’¹⁹⁵ Such territorial adjustments did not occur, and the plan to settle refugees within these new territories also dissipated.

¹⁹² *Al-Ahrām*, 30 July 1950.

¹⁹³ UNISPAL, symbol A/AC.25/AR/17, Arab response to UNCCP questionnaire of 15 August 1949 – Letter and memo to UNCCP from Arab delegations (Lausanne conference), 29 August 1949, Section B point 13.

¹⁹⁴ FRUS, 1949, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume VI, Document 697 (867N.01/5–2749), 27 May 1949.

¹⁹⁵ FRUS, 1949, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume VI, Document 1077 (867N.00/12–1449) 14 December 1949.

Rejected Plans

There were also plans raised by other actors but ultimately received rejection from the Egyptian government. They are worth discussing because the choice to reject and the justification for the rejection give clues to the factors considered by the Egyptian government.

An idea that was repeatedly raised and rejected across the five years is the economic incorporation of Gaza into Egypt. This idea was economic oriented, but certainly carried political implications. The first article expressing this view is found in *al-Miṣri* in March 1950.¹⁹⁶ It reported that ‘representatives of the people of Gaza’ asked for incorporation, stressing that it would only be a temporary measure and the goal was to ease the material lives of the Palestinians in Gaza. This argument was repeated by the head of the Palestinian National Bloc (a political party) in Gaza, quoted in *Al-Ahrām*’s article published in April 1951. He stressed that incorporation was to ‘protect the existence of the refugees’.¹⁹⁷ In August of that year, a committee of Egyptian statisticians, sociologists and economists representing various Egyptian ministries visited Gaza. Their report argued that incorporation is the only solution to the economic problems in Gaza. They stated that the idea was supported by the people of Gaza ‘big or small, rich or poor, with or without official responsibilities’.¹⁹⁸

While the proponents stressed the economic benefits of incorporation, the Egyptian government’s rejection was based on political implications. *Al-Miṣri*’s report in March 1950 quoted the response of the Egyptian government to the representatives. It stated that Egypt had entered the war to fight Zionist occupation, and Egypt cannot make the same mistake of

¹⁹⁶ MENAN, *Al-Miṣri*, 12 March 1950.

¹⁹⁷ *Al-Ahrām*, 1 April 1951.

¹⁹⁸ MENAN, *al-Miṣri*, 16 August 1951.

occupation.¹⁹⁹ In August 1951, the committee's recommendation for incorporation was again rejected. Both *Al-Ahrām* and *al-Miṣri* reported the response of the Egyptian government. *Al-Ahrām* reported the justification of rejection as that incorporating Gaza was against the highest Egyptian principle, even if the residents themselves requested it.²⁰⁰ The arguments reported by *al-Miṣri* stressed that Egypt was only entrusted with Palestinian land until the resolution of the Palestinian issue.²⁰¹ Instead, Egypt would adopt a special treatment of not treating Gaza like other foreign countries in trade, as mentioned in an earlier subsection. The article of *al-Miṣri* quoted a telegram the paper received from the Trade Chamber of Gaza, saying that the refusal to incorporate Gaza was a 'death sentence' to all its residents. The Chamber also pleaded 'do not throw the people into the arms of communism in the name of highest principles, and do not let history record that Egypt saved Gaza politically and then killed it economically'. The argument of communism spreading was in fact first raised by the committee mentioned above, and then adopted by the Gazans.²⁰²

Observations

The following four observations demonstrates the characteristics of the economic assistance and development plans the Egyptian government accepted for Gaza.

First, the discussion of plans of economic assistance and development for Gaza began in Egypt around mid-1949 and received the most attention in the years 1950 and 1951. This timeline

¹⁹⁹ MENAN, *al-Miṣri*, 12 March 1950.

²⁰⁰ *Al-Ahrām*, 19 August 1951.

²⁰¹ MENAN, *al-Miṣri*, 22 August 1951.

²⁰² *Al-Ahrām*, 18 August 1951.

aligns with the finding from the previous chapter - an economic solution emerged in early 1949 but was accepted by the Arab states only later, and peaked at the beginning of UNRWA's operation.

Second, economic solutions were stressed. To make a simple categorisation while acknowledging the complex nature of each plan, half of the eight projects had an economic focus (telecommunications, trade, experts, and employment), two were political (negotiation with Israel on allowing return and adjusting borders), and two were social (education and infrastructure). Moreover, the economic plans caught the most attention from various actors and generated the most discussion in the press, be it Egyptians, Palestinians, or international actors. There were extensive reports in the press regarding the negotiation on trade and employment plans, as well as the rejected economic incorporation plan. This inclination towards economic plans could have several explanations. First, it aligns with the international focus at the time, as discussed in the last chapter. The Egyptian government's plans were matching with the international economic approach to the refugees' displacement, and notably the Egyptian and Palestinian people seemed to hold the same belief. Second, as the military power administering Gaza, the Egyptian government had different power and functions there from AFSC and UNRWA. Because APG was not widely recognised, it represented the Gaza strip at the international level. It had arguably the strongest influence over Gaza's economy, exemplified by the change of local currency from Palestinian pounds to Egyptian pounds in 1951.²⁰³ It also oversaw the border of the Gaza strip and controlled all movement of goods and people. Therefore, while AFSC and UNRWA served to improve the daily situation of the refugees, the Egyptian government was held accountable for the

²⁰³ Ibid.

structural issues of the strip, and only it could carry out (or be a partner in) plans that affect the economy of the whole strip.

Third, the plans adopted by the Egyptian government followed an assumption of ‘trickle-down effect’. This means that its plans would only directly benefit a small sector of the population, and it was assumed that their improvement would trickle down to those who were not beneficiaries of the policy.²⁰⁴ This is especially observed in the trade relaxation and the sending of experts to promote industry or agriculture. The vast majority of the strip’s population were destitute refugees, who neither owned land in the Gaza strip nor had the capital to participate in cross-border trade. The plans probably benefited the better-off locals before benefitting the poor locals and the displaced population. This observation aligns with Filiu’s comment that around 1950, ‘[e]conomically productive activities, whether agricultural, commercial or in small-scale industry, continued to be the preserve of the indigenous population.’²⁰⁵ The tension between Gazan elites and refugees was also noted by other scholars.²⁰⁶ It can be argued that the improvement of trade and agriculture would then allow employment of the have-nots and improve their livelihoods. Still, there is no evidence that the trickle-down effect indeed happened, and the press continued to lament the sufferings of refugees and poor Gazans throughout the period studied. The Egyptian government’s plans are different in this respect from the projects of AFSC and UNRWA. In the organisations’ employment projects, appropriate skills rather than material ownership affected the chances to benefit from programmes.

²⁰⁴ Yan Tan, ‘Development-induced Displacement and Resettlement: An Overview of Issues and Interventions’, in: Tanja Bastia and Ronald Skeldon (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Migration and Development* (London 2020), 373-281, 378.

²⁰⁵ Filiu, *Gaza*, 79.

²⁰⁶ Feldman, *Governing Gaza*, 74, Roy; *The Political Economy of De-development*, 129; see Lesch, ‘Gaza: Forgotten Corner of Palestine’, 58 for the persistence of this tension after 1967.

Finally, the Egyptian government produced no long-term plans for the strip, but its plans started the increasingly close linkage between the two areas. Egyptian officials expressed explicitly that they did not find long-term development in Gaza possible because the land did not belong to Egypt.²⁰⁷ The Sinai employment plan was the only plan that aimed at creating future economic opportunities for refugees. The permission to trade and import in itself was nothing new, until it came with preferential treatments to exempt from fees imposed on other foreign countries.²⁰⁸ Lesch's comment that '[d]uring the nineteen years of Egyptian rule, the economy of Gaza never developed a viable basis or means of supporting its residents'²⁰⁹ is supported (for the period 1948-1952) by the findings in this section. This also matches Feldman's concept of 'tactical government'. While few practical steps were made toward the long-term future of the Gaza strip, the increasing connection between Egypt and the strip began to be observed. First, the Egyptian government sent its own experts (not in cooperation with the UN) to Gaza and produced various recommendations to improve the socio-economic status of the strip. In early 1952 there were steps towards the implementation of these recommendations. The involvement of the Egyptian government progressed from military occupation towards a stronger recognition of its administrative and economic roles. There was a trend towards slowly overturning the comment of Roy, also cited and supported by El-Abed, that '[d]uring the early years of its military administration, Egypt's policies were designed to centralize authority and power in the military. Little was done to improve the social and economic conditions of the refugee community or of the indigenous (pre-1948) population.'²¹⁰ Second, the decision to not treat Gaza like other foreign countries was significant

²⁰⁷ *Al-Ahrām*, 19 August 1951.

²⁰⁸ Mandatory Palestine exported oranges to Egypt. See Marwan R. Buheiry, 'The Agricultural Exports of Southern Palestine, 1885-1914', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10 (1981) 61-81, 80.

²⁰⁹ Lesch, "Gaza: Forgotten Corner of Palestine," 45.

²¹⁰ Roy, *The Political Economy of De-development*, 66; see El-Abed, *Unprotected*, 40.

as a forerunner of ‘Golden Age’ policies under Nasser’s Arabism. Newspapers criticised the Egyptian government for not allowing Palestinians to take advantage of available opportunities in Egypt, be it for employment, medical treatments, or study.²¹¹ The idea to treat Gaza as not foreign, which emerged in late 1951, signified a change in the situation, even though it covered trade only. After the revolution, Nasser would allow Palestinians to study, to practise their professions, and become employed at the government in Egypt. These steps can all be interpreted as an extension of seeing the Palestinians in Gaza as not foreign.²¹² More far-sighted planning for the Gaza strip arguably began in the final years of the monarchical Egyptian government.

Concluding these observations, the Egyptian government’s plans of economic assistance and development changed in the five years studied. Its unique role in the Gaza strip led to different approaches to economic assistance and development from other actors, but still with a focus on economic solutions.

²¹¹ MENAN, *Al-Misri*, 12 March 1950; *al-Muqattam*, 4 September 1950.

²¹² El-Abed, *Unprotected*, 42-43. She likewise stressed the crucial practice of ‘the exemption of Palestinians from “foreign status”’.

Chapter 7 - Analysis and Conclusion

This final research section considers whether and how the factors introduced in the theory section influenced the Egyptian government in its plans to develop Gaza, especially in accepting or rejecting suggestions from other involved parties.

With reference to literature and sources, the interactions seen in the plans can be summarised as follows:

Table 1 - Actors involved in the Egyptian government's plans for Gaza

Project	Involved actors (besides the Egyptian government)
Infrastructure	Palestinians (governor)
Education	Organisations (AFSC, Egyptian Red Crescent, UNRWA), Arab League
Facilitate trade	Palestinian (APG, officials, refugees), the Egyptian press (<i>al-Muqattam</i>), Egyptian (merchants and public)
Send experts	Egyptians (experts)
Employment plan	UNRWA, Britain, the Egyptian press (<i>al-Muqattam</i>)
Crossing border	Israel, UNCCP
Territorial adjustment	Israel, US, ²¹³ Arab states
Economic incorporation	Palestinians (representatives, party leader, the people, trade chamber), Egyptians (experts, ministerial committee)

This research demonstrated that all plans of economic assistance and development discussed involved some form of actor interaction with the Egyptian government. The explanatory factors presented earlier- resources, colonial influence, regional power politics and security, and the maintenance of regime - are found to be relevant to the Egyptian government's actions in various ways.

²¹³ The general idea of territorial exchange between Israel and Arab states is supported by the US, see FRUS, 1949, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume VI, Document 697 (867N.01/5-2749), 27 May 1949.

The hypothesis that actors with resources would have more influence on the Egyptian government is supported. The Egyptian government sought support from international and charitable organisations for establishing the orphanage. It came up with the idea of employing refugees in Sinai, and invited UNRWA collaboration. Notably, the newspapers emphasised the availability of funding from the UN when first reporting the Sinai employment scheme,²¹⁴ showing that the factor of resources availability was seen by contemporaries as important and newsworthy. Both cases demonstrate that the Egyptian government required external resources for its plans of economic assistance and development. In turn, these collaborating actors gained influence over the projects.

Support for the first hypothesis is also found in the unfulfilled plan of territorial expansion for settling refugees within Egypt. In raising this proposal, the Egyptian government requested not just territories, but also ‘international technical and financial aid’.²¹⁵ This request demonstrates the Egyptian government was aware that it required external resources to implement this proposal. The fact that the aid requested would be used not in Gaza but on Egyptian soil provides two insights. On the one hand, the availability of resources was crucial enough that the Egyptian government invited other actors with resources to participate in its domestic resettlement projects. This is notable since the Egyptian government rejected UN relief for Palestinian refugees within Egyptian territories twice, in 1948 and 1950.²¹⁶ This departure from the usual approach demonstrates the influence of actors with resources. On the other hand, it provides evidence for the hypothesis that

²¹⁴ See MENAN, *al-Balāgh* 30 October 1950; *al-Miṣri* 31 October 1950; *Al-Ahrām*, 1 November 1950.

²¹⁵ UNISPAL, symbol A/AC.25/AR/17, Arab response to UNCCP questionnaire of 15 August 1949 – Letter and memo to UNCCP from Arab delegations (Lausanne conference), 29 August 1949, Section B point 13.

²¹⁶ El-Abed, *Unprotected*, 36.

the Egyptian government welcomed resources for its own use under the pretext of assisting refugees.

Tracing the Sinai project in other primary sources supports the hypothesis that resources for development schemes in Egypt (not Gaza) is a factor the Egyptian government considered. Sources reveal that the development of the Sinai Peninsula was on the Egyptian agenda even before the arrival of Palestinian refugees in Gaza. The press discussed alternative possibilities of settling Egyptian Bedouins²¹⁷ and Egyptians from the Nile Valley²¹⁸ in the peninsula. A telegram in the FRUS archive dated 31st August 1951 also provided proof. It said that UNRWA promised ‘projects [in] Sinai w[ou]ld not overlap Egypt’s own projects such as (transcription marks ‘garble’ here) dam’.²¹⁹ This shows the earlier presence of Egyptian development projects in the area. UNRWA which could provide resources for developing Sinai was thus invited to participate, and gained influence over Egyptian plans of economic assistance and development.

While the hypothesis stands verifiawould, this research finds that the resources factor was not as strong as some other factors. External resources were crucial in sizeable projects like the Sinai plan, but the Egyptian government was capable of independently funding smaller projects, despite its bad economy. In two instances the expenditure is known: In early 1950 the Egyptian Awqaf ministry paid 376 Egyptian pounds to renovate mosques in Gaza and 150 pounds to fund the performance of rites, and also allocated 15 pounds per month for future use in these purposes.²²⁰ An article by *Al-Ahrām* on 20th May, 1952 gave the information that by that time the Egyptian

²¹⁷ *Al-Ahrām*, 27 October 1950.

²¹⁸ MENAN, *al-Muqattam*, 19 May 1952.

²¹⁹ FRUS, 1951, The Near East and Africa, Volume V, document 475 (320.2 AA/8–3151), 31 August 1951.

²²⁰ MENAN, *Al-Muqattam*, 11 February 1950.

government has paid about 200,000 Egyptian pounds to support Palestinian education.²²¹ The amount is insignificant when compared to the annual budget the Egyptian spent on maintaining its presence in the Gaza strip, which reaches several million Egyptian pounds.²²² That would roughly equal the UNRWA expenditure on all relief and works in Gaza in 1950.²²³ Therefore, small-scale Egyptian plans for economic assistance and development need not be influenced by other actors because of resources. One instance of this independence was found in education. After AFSC left Gaza, at least some Gaza schools were taken over by the Egyptian government instead of UNRWA. A former AFSC staff member remaining in Gaza complained that ‘the kids are learning reading, writing and bombing tactics.’²²⁴ Since the Egyptian government had the resources to manage these schools on its own, it could influence the content taught, despite disapproval from international actors.

While Cold War contexts affected the developmental aid the US gave to the Middle East, this study finds no evidence of its effect on the Egyptian government’s plans for Gaza. Cold War rhetoric was instead used in the press by Egyptian experts and Palestinians.²²⁵ They used the spread of communism among refugees to prove the severity of the hardships faced. It was a persuasive device used by Egyptians and Palestinians to advance their recommendations, seeing it as possibly

²²¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 20 May 1952.

²²² The annual Egyptian expenditure in Gaza was reported by *al-Muqattam*: on 15 June 1950, it claimed that the annual expenditure of Egypt on Gaza was seven million Egyptian pounds. Then on 29 May 1951, it claimed that the annual expenditure was “close to three million pounds”, and on 17 July the figure became “varying between two to three million pounds”. While these changing figures had no credible sources and are unlikely to be accurate, they still reflect the huge financial commitment Egypt had simply to maintain its presence in Gaza. MENAN, *al-Muqattam*, 15 June 1950; 29 May 1951; 17 July 1951.

²²³ UNISPAL, symbol A/1905, UNRWA – Annual report of the Director, 30 June 1951, Chapter VI, sections B and H. The value of UNRWA relief distribution in Gaza was 1,568,000 Egyptian pounds, while the cost of works was 36,355,000 USD, converted to around 1,039,000 Egyptian pounds. The exchange rate is taken from other statistics within the report.

²²⁴ Romirowsky and Joffe, *Religion, Politics, and the Origins of Palestine Refugee Relief*, 136

²²⁵ MENAN, *al-Miṣri*, 16 August 1951.

effective in eliciting a response from the Egyptian government. In practice, communism among refugees was not found to be a concern of the Egyptian and western governments, and had no effect on the plans of economic assistance and development.

In terms of human and technical resources, the hypothesis is not well supported. The only instance human and technical resources seemed to have mattered was the failed plan of territorial expansion for resettlement. In the proposal, the Egyptian government asked for international technical aid. As for other plans, the UNRWA survey team for the Sinai project involved both international and Egyptian experts,²²⁶ and the Egyptian educational or technical committees sent to Gaza were composed entirely of Egyptian experts. There was no evidence that the Egyptian government preferred western experts over its own and active sought their help. There was even international recognition of the capabilities of Egyptian technical experts, as seen in this quote in *al-Balāgh* attributed to Clapp, ‘Egypt is at a higher level than the rest of the Middle Eastern states included in this project (designed by the ESM). [...] Egypt has its own big projects as well as skilled technical experts.’²²⁷ There are probably elements of flattery in Clapp’s quote given in a press event as he departed Egypt, as no similar comment is found in the submitted Clapp report. The recognition of Egyptian technical expertise would not be surprising, however. The long colonial history of Egypt meant that many of its experts received western-styled education and working experience, locally or abroad. Even if the racialised perception of expertise suggested by Kothari was present, it was still probable that neither the Egyptian government nor other international actors perceived a marked difference between the capabilities of Egyptian and western experts in the issues of Gaza. There is therefore no strong evidence to support the

²²⁶ *Al-Ahrām*, 22 March 1951; *Al-Ahrām*, 8 April 1951.

²²⁷ MENAN, *al-Balāgh*, 13 December 1949.

hypothesis that actors providing human and technical resources to Egypt would be more influential, since there was no expressed need for such resources.

The second hypothesis is related to colonial relationship between Britain and Egypt, and it is not well supported. This research found only the Sinai employment plan to be linked to this factor. Explicitly, there is the *Al-Ahrām* article in October 1950 on the Sinai plan, about the approval of ‘relevant departments in London’ of Egypt’s expected plans of employment.²²⁸ The journalist drew attention to this by placing it at the beginning of the article, hinting that Egypt’s permission for refugees to work in Sinai was a result preferred, and very likely encouraged, by the British government. Implicitly, the rising British-Egyptian tension in 1951 might have partially led to the failure of the project. The Egyptian government was receptive to the encouragement of the British government to employ refugees in Sinai, but it is a plan that Egypt itself initiated. Apart from that, British influence from long-established colonial ties did not seem to affect Egyptian plans of economic assistance and development in Gaza.

The limited influence of Britain based on colonial relationships may be explained by the turbulent Anglo-Egyptian relationship at the time. The negotiation over treaties which determined whether British control over Suez would continue was prioritised over the consideration of Palestinian refugees. Therefore, even though the US Department of State observed that ‘Great Britain is the only major foreign power whose degree of interest in the liquidation of the refugee question is sufficient to insure any significant participation in its solution. (Attention should be called in this respect to Great Britain’s close treaty relations with Egypt...),’²²⁹ in practice the

²²⁸ *Al-Ahrām*, 27 October 1950.

²²⁹ FRUS, 1949, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume VI, document 533 (501.BB Palestine/3–1549), 15 March 1949, annex 2, point 3

British influence over matters of the Palestinian refugees administered by Egypt is limited. This does not mean, however, that this colonial relationship had completely waned. When the US government persuaded Egypt to consider the Israel proposal to exchange Gaza for southern Negev, the Egyptian government sought opinion from the British Ambassador in Cairo. The British recommendation was given as the reason for rejecting the US persuasion.²³⁰ This incident demonstrates that British influence over Egypt in the Palestinian issue remained present, even though it was not directed towards economic assistance and development for Gaza.

The third proposed factor was regional power politics and security. It was reported that the Arab League praised the Egyptian effort in promoting education, but there is no evidence that the plans of other Arab receiving states influenced the plans of the Egyptian government. Instead, antagonistic relationships held more influence, and blocked the two proposals submitted to the UN from being accepted. The Egyptian proposal to allow refugees to return to farm their land was only partially agreed by Israel under the Mixed Armistice Committee. Israel saw that the agreement already ‘represents the greatest degree of fulfilment that can be given to the Egyptian requests referred to in your letter’ and rejected further discussion.²³¹ That was likely due to security concerns linked to Palestinians returning within the Israeli armistice line. The second plan regarding territorial readjustment, raised in late 1949, was largely contingent on the success of Israel’s Gaza proposal which would then allow for an exchange of land. This also coincided with Jordan’s attempt to gain control over Gaza. The FRUS archive recorded a comment from Israeli officials that ‘Gaza is now wanted by Abdullah (King of Jordan) and hence is not bargaining point

²³⁰ FRUS, 1949, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume VI, document 793 (501.MA Palestine/6–2549), 25 June 1949.

²³¹ UNISPAL, symbol, A/AC.25/IS.46, Exchange of letters between UNCCP and Israel/Joint committee on Gaza refugees – UNCCP – Letters, 23 February 1950, letter 2.

between Egypt and Israel'.²³² In this case, the matter was not whether the Egyptian government was receptive towards the influence of Jordan and Israel, but that the proposals were simply unable to be implemented without their agreement.

The evidence that regional actors influenced Egyptian plans for Gaza because of regional power politics and security concerns is found elsewhere. When relaxation of trade and economic incorporation of Gaza was suggested, the Egyptian government's argument for rejecting the recommendations was that Egypt would not want to appear as though preparing to politically incorporate Gaza. In the words of an Egyptian minister: '(lifting trade barriers) might be seen by *other countries* as a customs union that Egypt strives to establish, to pave way for politically incorporating this area into Egypt' (author's emphasis).²³³ This discourse demonstrates the Egyptian government's concern that its plans to economically assist and develop Gaza may trigger the suspicion of other countries. This suspicion would most likely arise in Jordan and Israel which contested for control over the strip, and would view the political incorporation of Gaza to Egypt negatively. The hypothesis is verified by how the Egyptian government was consciously avoiding provoking its regional rivals and thus limiting its plans for Gaza. This attitude probably softened with time in view of how the trade barrier was eventually lifted, but economic incorporation continued to be rejected. This is a relatively strong factor, overriding the desire of the Palestinians in Gaza for incorporation.

The last factor, maintenance of the Egyptian regime amidst internal instability, also proved relevant. In multiple cases the Egyptian and Palestinian publics succeeded in influencing the plans

²³² FRUS, 1949, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume VI, document 1057 (867N.00/12-549), 5 December 1949, point 3.

²³³ MENAN, *Al-Miṣri*, 7 September 1950.

of the Egyptian government: the request for religious infrastructure and funding was approved, trade was opened up, and preferential trade treatment was given when economic incorporation was rejected.

It did not seem, however, that the direct provision of economic assistance and development plans to Gaza was the main channel to appease the public and maintain the regime. The public was more concerned about the matter of peace. See the following two quotes by a US diplomat: ‘(the Arab states wanted) to place them[selves] in position to say to their people that peace has been imposed upon them by Big Powers. Prime Minister of Egypt said almost that to me.’²³⁴ Later that year he wrote again that ‘[a]ll Arab rulers reluctant make first open move (at the peace talk with Israel) for fear being branded traitor. All seeking face saving device which talks through United Nations might provide.’²³⁵ Besides peace, territorial concession was also a core concern of the public, with a British diplomat stating that granting Negev to Israel ‘would rob Arab ... of any concessions which they could present to their home populations. This...would probably result in downfall of Arab governments...’²³⁶ Negative public sentiments regarding the Palestinian issue were believed to be capable of toppling the regime, but mainly in regard to peace and territory, not to the situation of refugees. Failing to provide timely economic assistance and development plans in Gaza was criticised but not enough to lead to unrest.

Besides, the correlation between appeasing Egyptian and Palestinian publics and providing economic assistance and development to Gaza was not so straightforward. While Egyptians

²³⁴ FRUS, 1949, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume VI, document 495 (501.BB Palestine/2–2849), 28 February 1949.

²³⁵ FRUS, 1948, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume V, Part 2, document 740 (501.BB Palestine/11–948), 9 November 1948.

²³⁶ FRUS, 1948, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume V, Part 2, document 775 (501.BB Palestine/11–1848), 18 November 1948, point 6.c

sympathised with the plight of Palestinian refugees, they were themselves living in poverty and instability. Referring to the large sum of money Egypt spent on maintaining its presence in Gaza, *al-Muqattam* argued, ‘seven million pounds every year taken from the blood of the Egyptians [...] should first be used to strengthen the army [...] on projects disrupted for lack of funds [...] on combating high prices [...]’²³⁷ This was meant to criticise the Egyptian refusal to pull its troops from Gaza, and not to criticise the aid given to refugees there. Still, to develop Gaza while Egypt was economically weak meant diverting scarce resources taken from the Egyptian public toward the Palestinians. With the needs of the Egyptian public unmet, their primary concerns likely were with their own living situations.

This connects to another way the maintenance of the Egyptian regime influenced the government’s plans for Gaza, but not in the way hypothesised at the start of the research. The permission to import fruits was argued for a full year, before being implemented to combat the prices pushed up by Egyptian merchants. The availability of cheap and accessible fruits in Gaza was used by the Egyptian government to increase supply and lower the price. At the same time, using Gaza fruits against local merchants was met with support for the benefits it brought to both Egyptian and Palestinian populations. In this case, the Egyptian government responded to the public demand to open up trade, with stabilising the regime as a factor. However, it was not only to directly satisfy public demand for trade, but to tap into resources it could use to solve another internal problem (of fruit prices), therefore killing two birds with one stone.

Contemporary actors saw Gaza as a burden to Egypt. The then US secretary of state noted, ‘any strategic advantages ... obtained ... by Egypt w[ou]ld appear to be outweighed by

²³⁷ MENAN, *al-Muqattam*, 15 June 1950.

administrative burden and enormous financial requirements involved ... particularly since nature of area precludes execution of self-sustaining settlement projects.’²³⁸ Others believed Egypt controlled the area as a bargaining chip, as an AFSC staff member wrote, ‘[Egypt had an] obscure notion that ‘possession’ of 200,000 Gaza refugees is some sort of lever in international bargaining.’²³⁹ This case of fruit imports shows that Gaza could also be a source of governing tools and resources to the Egyptian government. The ambiguity of the status of the strip and the tactical governance adopted there provided unique opportunities to the Egyptian government. The land was at the Egyptian government’s disposition, with little commitment required.

The tactical rule over Gaza as a flexible tool for the Egyptian government is not only observed in the case of the fruit trade. Chapter 5 discussed the relocation of British troops from Suez Canal zone to Gaza. *Al-Miṣri* reported that the Egyptian government first disagreed with this proposal, since Gaza is Palestinian and must remain in Arab hands.²⁴⁰ Yet merely four months later, *al-Miṣri* reported that the Egyptian minister of foreign affairs supported the relocation of British troops to Gaza, as long as the troops are not on Egyptian land.²⁴¹ The ambiguous ownership of the land allowed the Egyptian government to define the nature of the land variously. It could stress the nature of the land either as ‘Arab’ or ‘not Egyptian’, whichever the circumstances required. This provided discourses it could use to justify its actions, and Gaza became a tool to relieve the tension with Britain.

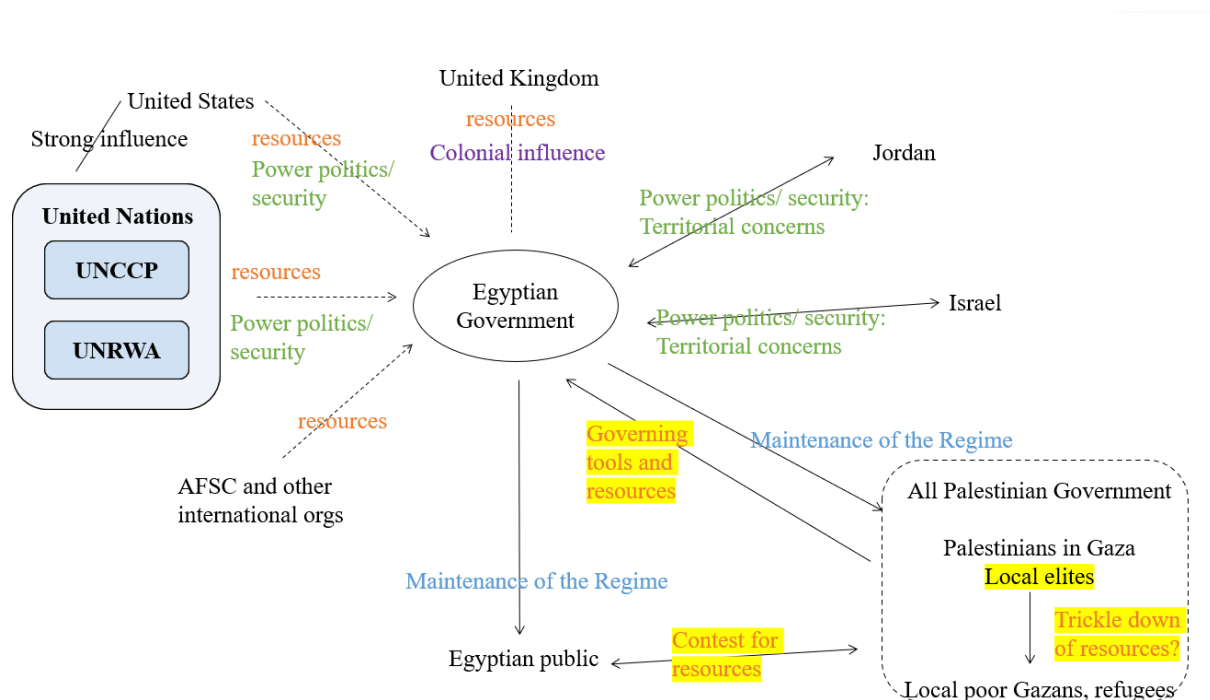
²³⁸ FRUS, 1949, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume VI, document 804 (501.MA Palestine/6–2549), 30 June 1949.

²³⁹ Romirowsky and Joffe, *Religion, Politics, and the Origins of Palestine Refugee Relief*, 139.

²⁴⁰ MENAN, *Al-Miṣri*, 20 January 1952.

²⁴¹ MENAN, *Al-Miṣri*, 10 May 1952.

The tactical nature of the Egyptian administration in Gaza explains two observations from the previous chapter. First, it was a possible cause for providing for the increasingly close linkage of the two areas, starting from trade and economy. The general relaxation of trade policies that came about half a year after the success of the orange import showed that plans to economically assist Gaza were gaining momentum, probably because it proved to be flexible and mutually beneficial. Second, it explains the inclination towards trickle-down effect. With Gaza as a source of governing tools and resources, it was more important to co-opt the influential elite families, who owned the land and connections useful to the Egyptian government. It also required less commitment and investment to appease a few families than to improve the lot of all the refugees and the poor locals, matching the tactical nature of the rule.



This research fills a gap in the literature on the plans of economic assistance and development in Gaza by the Egyptian government during the years 1948 to 1952. Various steps to provide facilities, support education, improve the economy through trade, and create employment were planned and taken. There is a tendency toward more active responses from the Egyptian government and closer relationships between the two areas with time. This challenges scholars' criticism of insufficient action from the Egyptian government, which did not consider the changes in the Egyptian government's attitude. A criticism of lack of actions from the Egyptian government implies the expectation that it should have done more. However, literature on the tactical and uncertain nature of the administration would instead support the expectation that not much would be done. It is indeed the later more proactive attitude from the Egyptian government that is noteworthy for going beyond expectations.

This research also shows that regional and internal factors had stronger influence over the Egyptian plans of economic assistance and development in Gaza. This stands in contrast to the strong influence of the west in works of similar nature by international organisations. It also expands the understanding of the tensions among Palestinians and between Egyptian and Palestinian publics. It highlights how Gaza provided governing resources to the Egyptian. This provides an additional perspective to the tactical rule of Egypt over Gaza, as well as to its relationship with other actors.

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