

## INTERPRETING THE 2013 MILITARY COUP IN EGYPT FROM THE NEW GEOPOLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

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**ABSTRACT:** Geopolitics has been a tool for many leaders throughout history to understand the world and then to determine its own policies, but it has always been interpreted from the western point of view. In contrast, the 'Barakah Circle theory of IslamicJerusalem' is relatively new and shows that much of the world is not western-centred. Indeed, while domestic politics are often used as a guide to explain the military coups, an understanding of the external causes of the Egyptian case is crucial in seeing the big picture. According to the Barakah Circle theory, Egypt is the central and main power of the Arab region, with the theory then explaining that if politics is a game, one of the most effective players of this game is Egypt. The coup and the destructive initiatives there have therefore been supported by the West and are the product of great efforts to transform freedom into captivity. This research will focus on this theory that seeks to shift our views on geopolitics from the western perspective to the other side and through this theory, will explain the 2013 military coup in Egypt.

**KEYWORDS:** Barakah Circle Theory, Egypt, IslamicJerusalem, Military Coup.



### 2013 Mısır Askeri Darbesinin Yeni Bir Jeopolitik Perspektiften Yorumu

**ÖZ:** Jeopolitik, tarih boyunca birçok liderin dünyayı anlama ve politikalarını belirleme aracı olmuş ve her zaman batının bakış açısından yorumlanmıştır. Oldukça yeni olan "Beytulmakdis Bereket Daireleri Teorisi" dünyanın kalbinin batı merkezli olmadığını göstermektedir. Buna ek olarak, iç politika genellikle askeri darbeleri açıklamak için bir rehber olsa da, Mısır olayının dış nedenlerini anlamak büyük resmi görebilmek için anlamlıdır. Bu teoriye göre, Mısır Arap bölgesinin merkezi ve ana gücüdür ve teori eğer politika bir oyunca, bu oyunun en etkili taşlarından birinin Mısır olduğunu göstermektedir. Oradaki Batı tarafından desteklenen tüm darbe ve yıkıcı girişimler özgürlüğü esarete dönüştürmek için büyük çabaların ürünüdür. Bu araştırma jeopolitik konusundaki görüşlerimizi batı perspektifinden farklı bir yana kaydıran bir teoriye ve bu teorinin 2013 Mısır askeri darbesini açıklamadaki yeterliliğine odaklanacaktır.

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## INTRODUCTION

By this time, when considering geopolitics, it always started with the ideas and theories of western-based schools and scholars like German, English, and American. El-Awaisi has opened the door to completely different ideas with his '*the Barakah circle theory of Islamicjerusalem*'. The Egyptian military coup, on the other hand, is one of the most unfortunate events in the Arab World, which includes many internal and external dynamics. In fact, how the fact that a democratically elected leader can be sent to prison with a military coup in the name of democracy. In other words, it is one of the best cases that have revealed that everything is possible when the interests of the West are contradicted. The most important thing that pushes me to investigate the Egyptian military coup is how the theory has made Egypt a unique country. The first step of liberation begins with the emancipation of Egypt, and this research has been carried out in order to make sense of the military coup and the games over Egypt, which, with el-Sisi as president, moved away from liberation.

The Egyptian military coup is the most proper and up-to-date example of how a coup was financed by the numerous powers, and how international legitimacy was given to a coup leader by the respective organisations in the world. This is the most important question which is emphasised when great powers do this kind of help to the el-Sisi government and their coup, and they never withdraw their support in this process and reflect this process under the name of '*democracy restoration*' to the whole world. When the reasons for coup are examined, it is observed that the *Barakah Circle Theory* and coup reasons correspond to each other.

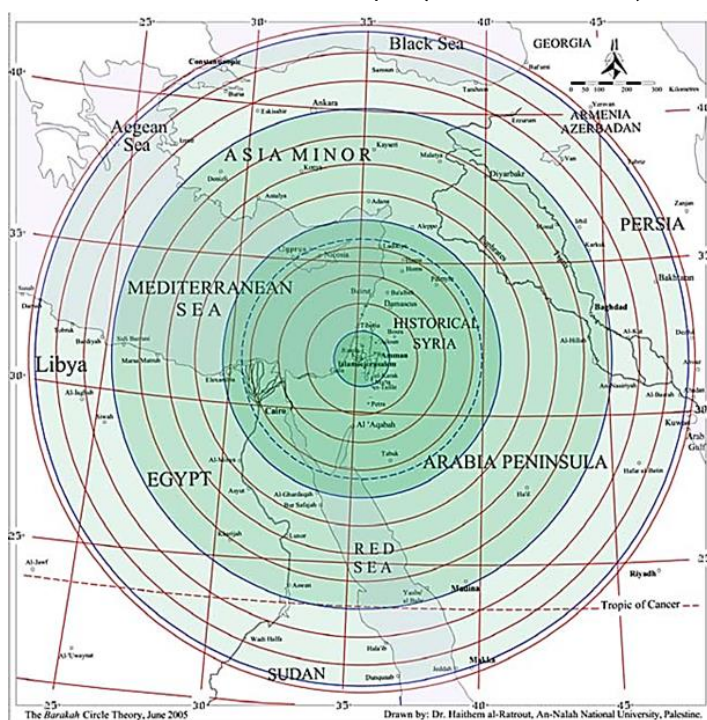
This article is divided into seven main sections. The first and last part comprises of introduction and conclusion part. In the second part, the theory will be explained in general terms. The third section is related to general information about the 2013 military coup in Egypt. In this section, the process of coup will be explained. Then, in the fourth section, the causes of the coup, mostly external reasons, are emphasised. The reason for discussing the effects of external factors here is to avoid disconnection between the theory and event and to keep the connection dynamic at all times. The fifth section shows the reactions of world to Egypt coup. In the last section, the connection between theory and the case study will be explained and the effects of the theory on presenting the events will be discussed.

## THE BARAKAH CIRCLE THEORY OF ISLAMICJERUSALEM

'*The Barakah Circle Theory of Islamicjerusalem*' authored in 2005 by Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi, offers a Muslim contribution to geopolitics beyond the western-centred geopolitical theories. The theory has some basic dynamics and comprises three circles: The first circle is Geographical Location and Boundaries of Islamicjerusalem, the second circle is Al-Sham and Egypt and the third one is

to Makkah: From (*Min*)...To (*Ila*)... (El-Awaisi, 2007). In this section, general information about theory will be discussed.

Firstly, the first component of the first circle is to establish and define the boundaries of IslamicJerusalem (El-Awaisi, 2007, 25). According to the research ‘IslamicJerusalem is not just a small or mere city surrounded by walls or another urban settlement, but a region which includes several towns, cities, and villages’ (El-Awaisi, 2007, 25; El-Awaisi 2007a). (‘IslamicJerusalem might be translated into the Arabic language as ‘*Bayt al-Maqdis*’ (El-Awaisi, 2007, 11)’. Moreover, ‘the centre of the *Barakah* to meaning in IslamicJerusalem, al-Aqsa Mosque, and the *Barakah* move in circles around that Mosque’ (El-Awaisi, 2007, 28).



Map 1: The Barakah Circle Theory of IslamicJerusalem (El-Awaisi, 2007, 33)

Secondly, according to theory, the abundance or *Barakah* of IslamicJerusalem expands into circles and the second circle involves such countries as a large part of Egypt, al-Sham, Cyprus, and the city of Tabuk in Arabia. Moreover, in this part of the theory, unlike the old research, revealed a new argument and argues that “*Al-Ard Al-Mubaraka* (the Land of *Barakah*), is not only al-Sham or Egypt but both of them together” (El-Awaisi, 2007, 30). Thereafter, the third circle summarises the twinning relationship between Makkah and IslamicJerusalem (El-Awaisi, 2007, 31). Furthermore, the third circle covers Eastern Muslim countries as all parts of Hijaz, Turkey, and Iraq; a part of Libya and a large part of Egypt and a small piece of Iran, Sudan, and Kuwait.

Additionally, the theory emphasised the importance of these countries for the integrity of Bayt al-Maqdis. Map 1 shows that all circles and relevant countries with the theory.

Finally, after long studies, El-Awaisi has reached some conclusions. It is possible to summarise these as follows. *'Who rules Bayt al-Maqdis, command the second circle, who rules the second circle, command the third circle, who rules the third circle, command the globe'* (El-Awaisi, 2016, 51). According to theory, the question that how can Bayt al-Maqdis be liberated, could be answered as Egypt and Syria must first be liberated, then, they should be unified. Finally, liberation of Bayt al-Maqdis from foreign invasion will come. The importance of the theory on Egypt and the controversy about she will be discussed in the sixth section under the title of *'Correlation Analysis between the Theory and Case'*.

### THE 2013 MILITARY COUP IN EGYPT

One of the most staggering events in recent times is the 2013 military coup in the Arab World. When the events that happened in Egypt in 2013, was examined properly, the events in Egypt was a 'veto coup' by the military not protecting the legitimate government in the event of a civil disorder (Aslan, 2013). The causes of the coup can be discussed in two parts, internal and external reasons. This article mostly focuses on external causes rather than internal causes.

The uprising in Tunisia in 2011, the 30-year authoritarianism in Egypt was also affected very quickly. As a result of the willingness of the Egyptian public and the work of the 'Muslim Brothers', Hosni Mubarak administration was forced to resign. After the resignation of Mubarak in February 2011, Egypt went to the election in May-June 2012. The election was concluded the victory of Mohamed Morsi, the candidate of the Muslim Brothers, with 13,230,131 votes, or 51.73 percent of the valid votes and he became the first democratically elected president of Egypt (the Carter Center, 2012, 61). Morsi was able to stay in the administration for only a year. In 2013 protesters filled city squares demanding the ouster of the elected president.

Morsi came to power promised to head a government *'for all Egyptians'* (BBC News, 2015). But according to the critics of Morsi, he failed in the country management process and 'public opposition to Morsi began building November 2012 when, wishing to ensure that the Islamist-dominated constituent assembly could finish drafting a new constitution, the president issued a decree granting himself far-reaching powers' (BBC News, 2015). In addition to this, political disputes between the military and Morsi, the institutional interests of the army, the world view of the military and economic problems are the main internal reasons behind this coup. President Morsi was dismissed and imprisoned with a military coup on July 3, following mass demonstrations on 30 June 2013, showing the reason the structural economic problems of the country and the support of the Western states and the Gulf countries (Ataman and Shkurti, 2016, 58).

When el-Sisi read the coup statement, there was Al-Azhar's Chief Imam Ahmed el-Tayeb, Coptic Pope Tawadros II and opposition leader Mohamed ElBaradei along with him. Moreover, the leaders of the Tamarod movement and the Salafist Nur Party spokesman supported the coup (Kurt, 2016, 38). This group both legitimises the coup and it also provided significant support by great powers for the elimination of the Muslim Brothers from the religious, social and political spheres (Ataman and Shkurti, 2016: 58).

### **INVISIBLE CURTAIN BEHIND THE 2013 MILITARY COUP IN EGYPT**

2013 Egyptian coup is a military coup organised by Western countries and monarchs of the Gulf States which want to establish a system of pro-status quo by the domination of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East (Ataman and Shkurti, 2016: 57). The first question to be asked is what has changed in Egypt in a year, which, after the Morsi administration, had the most effective election process in its life and chose its leader? Then, another question to be asked, why did the Western countries and Gulf states (mainly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)) fall afoul of Morsi?

The Palestinian issue was one of the significant factors that influenced Egypt's foreign policy over the long term. Relations between Egypt and the Palestinians started with the 1952 Egypt Revolution. Gamal Abdel Nasser was seen by many Palestinians as someone who could defeat Israel. During the Nasser period, due to Nasser's effort, 'The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) was formally launched in Jerusalem on 2 June 1964. This came after the first Arab League summit in Cairo in January 1964, called for the creation of an organisation to represent Palestinians' (Mapping Palestinian Politics, 2018). After the Nasser period, Anwar Sadat signed the Camp David Accords and his agreement led to the anger in the Arab World and the removal of Egypt from the Arab League for a period. After Sadat, Hosni Mubarak continued the peace process and has maintained relations with Israel. On the other hand, when Morsi became president, even if he did not make any speech that Camp David would end, the great powers began to see Camp David be finalised. One of the most important reasons for this is that Morsi's speeches and prayers are against Israel at every opportunity. Moreover, another reason is Muslim Brothers and Hamas relations; "HAMAS was formed in late 1987 as an outgrowth of the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brothers" (United States Department of State Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, 2005). Starting from this definition that used to the government of United States describe HAMAS, there was no possibility of a disconnected relationship between the Muslim Brothers and HAMAS. HAMAS is currently included in the list of Israel and America's terrorist organisation, which is quite contrary to the interests of these countries.

The second reason for the great powers to be against Morsi is Egypt-Iran relations. "The two countries have not had full diplomatic relations since Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution when Iran cut ties after Egypt gave asylum to the deposed

*Iranian shah in Cairo and made peace with Israel*” (Zhongwei, 2018). But, Morsi, after a long time in Egyptian foreign policy, went to Iran at the Nonaligned Movement Summit in Tehran on 30 August 2012. According to the MENA news agency report, “*Morsi’s visit will be the first such visit by an Egyptian head of state to Tehran since the Iranian revolution of 1979*”. This visit was criticised by many foreign press and writers. For example, Thomas Friedman wrote in New York Times column titled ‘*Morsi’s Wrong Turn*’ (Friedman, 2018). After Morsi visited Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's visit to Egypt caused to focus on these bilateral relations again. Egypt-Iranian bilateral relations were quite unexpected for the Gulf and the United States. Because during the period of Mubarak, there was a foreign policy based on the United State policy, and when Morsi became president, the first signals were given that this policy would change.

### WORLD REACTION TO EGYPT COUP

Gulf and Western countries secretly and sometimes openly supported the military coup. For example, “*one week after the military takeover, the Saudis had put together a package of aid totalling \$12 billion: \$5 billion from the kingdom, \$3 billion from the United Arab Emirates and \$4 billion from Kuwait*” (Nordland, 2013).

Top Recipients of U.S. Foreign Assistance (USD million)	FY 2017 Planned	FY 2017 Spent	FY 2018 Requested
Israel	3,100.0	63.6	3,100.0
Egypt	1,419.3	95.2	1,381.3
Jordan	1,280.0	830.5	1,000.0
Afghanistan	4,301.8	1,357.2	782.8
Kenya	706.1	604.7	639.4
Tanzania	546.6	361.7	535.3
Uganda	398.8	387.2	436.4
Zambia	397.0	253.9	428.9
Nigeria	515.1	508.9	419.1
Iraq	376.6	334.3	347.9

**Table 1: Top Recipients of US Foreign Assistance in 2017**  
Source: American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt, 2018

Additionally, Table 1 shows that “*In 2017, Egypt received USD 1.42 billion in foreign assistance from the US, making it the second-largest recipient of foreign assistance from the US after Israel*” (American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt, 2018). Moreover, Table 2 shows US foreign aids to Egypt between 2014 and 2018. According to data, Egypt receives foreign aid funds from two primary accounts: Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and Economic Support Funds (ESF). In addition, she receives a smaller piece for International Military Education and Training



(IMET), for International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) and for Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining and Related Programs (NADR).

**U.S. Assistance to Egypt (USD million)**

	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017 - Estimate	FY 2018 - Request
FMF	1,300.0	1,300.0	1,300.0	1,300.0	1,300.0
ESF	200.0	150.0	150.0	112.5	75.0
NADR	-	3.1	2.5	3.0	2.5
INCLE	0.3	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
IMET	-	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.8
Other	3.0	5.8	6.3	6.8	6.3
Total	1,503.0	1,454.1	1,454.5	1,419.3	1,381.3

**Table 2: US Assistance to Egypt, 2014- 2018**

**Source: American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt and Congressional Research Services, March 2017; updated June 2018**

When looking at the 2013 coup period, Egypt received \$1,239,659,511 military and \$330,576,763 economic, a totally \$1,570,236,274 aid from the U.S (Sharp, 2018, 24). In light of all these data, it can be easily said that the US government did not interrupt Egyptian aid during and after the coup period. But, according to the Foreign Assistance Act, a US law first enacted in 1961, is clear: It says, in Section 508, that the United States must cut aid to any country “whose duly elected head of government is deposed by military coup or decree” (Fisher, 2013). According to US law, US has to cut the aids to Egypt but she did not. Therefore, there is a dilemma in Egyptian case. This 2013 event have called a ‘restoration of democracy’ rather than a coup by the US government.

The idea that cutting American aid could jeopardise the Camp David agreement is important because, with the signing of this agreement, Egypt received much help in 1979 compared to the previous years (Table 3). And if America cuts out aids, it could pose a direct threat to Israel and also the US interests.

Year	Military	Economic	Annual Total
1978	\$ 183,000	\$943,029,000	\$943,212,000
1979	\$1,500,379,000	\$1,088,095,000	\$2,588,474,000
1980	\$848,000	\$1,166,423,000	\$1,167,271,000

**Table 3: US Assistance to Egypt, 1978-1980 (Sharp, 2018, 23)**

International organisations as the UN and EU also welcomed the coup, as the US European Union's foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton firstly visited el-Sisi 14 days after the July 3 coup. Moreover, el-Sisi gave sessions in the United

Nations General Assembly. These events have made a major contribution to gaining international legitimacy of el-Sisi.

### **CORRELATION ANALYSIS BETWEEN THE THEORY AND CASE**

'The Barakah circle theory of Islamicjerusalem' and '2013 military coup in Egypt' are quite dependable with each other. In doing this analysis, it is first necessary to underline the predictions of the theory about Egypt. First of all, Egypt is a very unique state for the theory. Because it is the only country that within in the second and third circle. This feature makes Egypt the centre of power in the Arab region and also this feature of Egypt can be pushed to the highest level or contrary, deepest level like it happened in 2013.

According to El-Awaisi, there are five main reasons why Egypt is the centre of power in the Arab region. The first one is, it is the only country within the second and third circles. Second, Egypt is a country to locate in Asia and Africa. Thanks to two continents, it has very rich historical roots and lot of civilisations were there. It is the fruit basket for the world, means that Egypt has very fertile land. The final reason is it has huge population which means it has rich 'human resources'. Therefore, if you control Egypt, you have big control over the world.

The theory shows three option for preventing Egypt from becoming a world leader and to eliminate the obstacle against Israel. First, one is occupied Egypt (and Syria), after this destroy them, then bring Egypt (and Syria) under control. Egyptian military coup fully achieves these three options. When Egypt's foreign policy in el-Sisi period is examined, the fact that there is no nonconcurrence with America and Israel and it proves the correctness of this prediction of the theory. Furthermore, distinctly the military coup, the ongoing Syrian civil war that began in 2011 is the best example of this prediction.

The great powers have seen Morsi's administration as completely opposed to Israel. This is the most important reason behind the military coup. With this coup, they destroyed Egypt and have assisted el-Sisi, a leader who was more compatible with their policies. This article will not discuss if el-Sisi is a good leader for Egypt or not. However, this situation is highly unlikely to be a good step for the liberation of *Bayt al-Maqdis*.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Barakah Circle Theory of Islamicjerusalem that is comprised of three circles, gives new perspectives on geopolitics. Theory-based on Qur'anic verses and Hadith. The most general and significant result of the theory is, "Who rules *Bayt al-Maqdis*, command the second circle, who rules the second circle, command the third circle, who rules the third circle, command the globe". Moreover, there are some key countries for the theory such as Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Turkey. But Egypt has a key significance among them. Besides its inherent characteristics, its importance for theory is that it is the only country in the second and third circles.



The theory emphasised the importance of a powerful Egypt for Islamic Jerusalem. It also argued that the first condition for *Bayt al-Maqdis* to be free was the emancipation of Egypt. The impact of the coup in Egypt in 2013 was enough to destroy Egypt. This coup was supported by the Western and Gulf states. Because, as the theory suggests, it is very important to weaken Egypt for a strong Israel and a powerful America and the Gulf.

This article focused on supporting the impact of external forces. The internal causes of the coup are not discussed. However, if examined deeply, similar forces may be reflected in the internal causes. This creates the other research question. To sum-up, the general conclusion is that the case and the predictions of the theory are compatible with each other. In order for *Bayt al-Maqdis* to be free, Egypt must get rid of its chains as soon as possible.

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