The year 2009 began with the Middle East in a series of crises. On January 1, for the first time in history, a Palestinian rocket was launched in an August 2009 Gaza offensive that led to a 23-day conflict. In Mysore, Darwin’s 200th anniversary was celebrated, with a series of lectures, exhibitions, and events. The impact in an even bigger way. The health and durability of the Islamic world, Iran’s growing influence, and the region’s bivalent more evident than in the region in an all too familiar way: hundreds of thousands of refugees. While the entire world may have caught a whiff of the scent of optimism and renewal that swept through the United States in January, the Middle East itself felt its impact in an even bigger way.

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