Strategic ASSESSMENT

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Strategic ASSESSMENT

The purpose of *Strategic Assessment* is to stimulate and enrich the public debate on issues that are, or should be, on Israel's national security agenda.

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Abstracts

Iran and the Arabs: The Historical Shift in the Balance of Power

Asher Susser

In recent years, as the Arabs have sunk into deeper disarray, Iran's regional stature has risen exponentially. The Iranians have demonstrated impressive determination in the pursuit of their hegemonic design, taking full advantage of the relative unity of the Shiite camp versus the extremely polarized world of the Sunnis. At the same time, Iran has had its shortcomings as well, with its Achilles' heel in Syria, where its allies were fighting a seemingly losing battle. However, the nuclear agreement of July 2015 between the P5+1 and Iran has tipped the scales further in Iran's favor in the balance of power with its Sunni rivals, as has the more recent involvement of Russia in Syria's civil war, in coordination with Iran, on behalf of the pro-Iranian Assad regime.

Keywords: Sunnis, Shiites, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Houthis, Hizbollah, United States, Russia

The Islamic State Surprise: The Intelligence Perspective

Ephraim Kam

In most respects, the emergence of ISIS in the heart of the Middle East was a strategic surprise. To be sure, since 2013 the US intelligence community had identified important components in the organization's strength and behavior. It had warned of the growing threat posed by ISIS, and tentatively suggested that ISIS might try to seize control of territories in Syria and Iraq. It was also aware of the Iraqi army's performance difficulties. However, strategically, the outcome – including the thousands of volunteers rushing to serve in ISIS ranks, the speed with which the organization operated, the collapse of the Iraqi military, and the ISIS success in seizing control of widespread areas – was far from anticipated. The failure to assess the ISIS situation correctly resulted from misunderstanding the significance of the large lawless areas in Syria and Iraq, and perhaps also from the fundamental difficulty in foreseeing the consequences of the regional shocks caused by regime destabilization and the emergence of new actors

in the arena. Moreover, in general, there is never any source that can provide information on what is about to happen. Forecasts are not based on solid information but only on indicators, which by nature are a tenuous foundation and increase the risk that assessments will fail.

Keywords: intelligence, strategic surprise, ISIS, US intelligence community

Bashar al-Assad's Struggle for Survival: Has the Miracle Occurred?

Eyal Zisser

The accomplishments of the rebels in Syria since the summer of 2014 have reignited questions regarding Bashar al-Assad's ability to remain in power, and led many to conclude that only a miracle could save him. Such a miracle took place in September 2015, when Russian forces landed on Syrian soil, accompanied by members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, with the aim of saving the Assad regime. Their arrival occurred against a background of reports regarding a change in the position of Turkey and Saudi Arabia, as well as the United States, on the Syrian question. The war in Syria, however, has a dynamic of its own, and the recent Russian-Iranian involvement, which is still extremely curtailed, may prove to be a recipe for continued fighting in the country. Moreover, any limited accomplishments via Russian and Iranian protection that preserve Bashar's rule over approximately one quarter of Syrian territory will further entrench the division of Syria between Assad and his opponents.

Keywords: Syria, Bashar al-Assad, Russia, Iran, Islamic State

"Generation War": Syria's Children Caught between Internal Conflict and the Rise of the Islamic State

Benedetta Berti and Axel Bea Osete

The Syrian civil war is profoundly reshaping the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region at the demographic, social, political, and economic levels, and the consequences of this bloody conflict will be felt for generations to come. This is especially true when assessing the long term impact of the war's legacy on Syria's youngest generations. The article analyzes both the broader role of children in the ongoing civil war and the war's devastating effect, examining the long term implications for Syria's future stability and resilience. It narrows in on the especially destructive role played by the

Islamic State for Syria's children and youth – again assessing the impact of this trend on both human security as well as international stability.

Keywords: Syria, Iraq, Islamic State, civilians and armed conflict

Reality Test: Strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Process

Nir Hassid

Over the past 20 years, efforts have been made to change the rules and procedures in order to strengthen the process of reviewing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. However, these efforts have not contributed significantly to promotion of the treaty's goals or a strengthened nonproliferation regime. Reforms implemented in the attempt to bypass what are primarily political and technical obstacles only partially facilitate a review process that is sustainable, effective, and more responsive to developments because they do not bridge the gaps between the nuclear states and the other treaty members. Thus despite the reforms, the perpetuation of the treaty's underlying inequality leaves unchanged the political, legal-normative, and economic challenges that prevent its reinforcement, thereby undermining the stability of the entire regime.

Keywords: Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Review Conferences, arms control, rules and procedures

Below-the-Threshold Nuclear Development: The Nuclear Program in the UAE

Yoel Guzanksy

The UAE will be the first Arab state to launch a civilian nuclear program. It can therefore also be expected to be the first state in more than one quarter of a century to join the civilian nuclear club. This essay examines the components of the UAE's decision and the hurdles it faces as it attempts to realize its nuclear program. The Iranian nuclear program is one of the motives for the UAE project, but there are also considerations of prestige and growing energy needs. Thus, the agreement reached between Iran and the P5+1 is not expected to interrupt the UAE program. Moreover, other states are liable to begin developing their own civilian nuclear programs, though without the self-imposed limits assumed by the UAE when it adopted the "gold standard" of nuclear agreements. The UAE itself, under

certain circumstances, might reconsider some of its earlier self-imposed limitations in the nuclear realm in light of the agreement with Iran.

Keywords: UAE, Iran, Saudi Arabia, civilian nuclear program, United States

China and Israel: On the Same Belt and Road?

Galia Lavi, Jingjie He, and Oded Eran

Relations between China and Israel have expanded dramatically in recent years, especially in the economic field. Chinese economic entities have increased their investments in Israeli companies, particularly in hi-tech. Chinese companies engaged in infrastructure have successfully won tenders in Israel, and the Chinese government has invited Israel to take part in two major Chinese initiatives – the One Belt, One Road initiative and the Asian Investment and Infrastructure Bank. This essay looks at the opportunities and challenges Israel must weigh in consideration of its overall relations with China.

Keywords: China, Israel, One Belt, One Road, US-Israel relations

Relations between Israel and the Czech Republic: From Sentiment to Pragmatism?

Irena Kalhousová

The Czech Republic and Israel are considered strong allies. The Czech Republic has supported Israeli positions at some critical moments, even if it meant being in a minority. The roots of the Czech Republic's "special relationship" with Israel lie in the convergence of historical legacy, values, and idealism, as well as realism. Some Czech diplomats, however, argue that their positions are not motivated by a pro-Israeli stance, but rather by the determination to balance the anti-Israeli atmosphere that currently prevails in international institutions. For Israel, a strong relationship with the Czech Republic is motivated less by sentiment, and instead is instrumental and pragmatic. In the future, a new generation of Czech diplomats will probably lack the idealist sentiments of their predecessors who experienced the Communist era. Nonetheless, pragmatic relations based on economic cooperation and shared know-how are in the interest of both the Czech Republic and Israel. Together with a positive Czech approach to Israel, the relationship between the two countries should remain strong in the foreseeable future.

Keywords: Czech Republic, Israel, diplomacy, relations, special relationship, Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, Munich Syndrome, EU

Israel and Apartheid in International Discourse

Michal Hatuel-Radoshitzky

In recent years it appears that Israel's image as the only liberal democracy in the Middle East is questioned internationally with increasing frequency. The analogy of Israel to an apartheid state, which is often an inherent part of this discourse, has far reaching repercussions for Israel's national security. Through the analysis of 137 international press items and 158 UN documents, this article aims to provide concrete data about the Israel-apartheid analogy by proving its existence, defining the period in which it was launched, and tracing its fluctuations over the years.

Keywords: apartheid, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, UN, international press, BDS

Iran and the Arabs: The Historical Shift in the Balance of Power

Asher Susser

In early 2015, an Arab analyst in Abu Dhabi noted wryly that the so-called "Shiite Crescent" mentioned by King Abdullah of Jordan in December 2004, in reference to the arc of Iranian influence from Tehran to Beirut via Iraq and Syria, had "become obsolete…Today, it's a full moon and the Gulf is surrounded."[1] Indeed, as the Iranian-backed Shiite Houthis in Yemen advanced and took control of more of the country, the Iranians acquired leverage and influence beyond the straits of Hormuz all the way to Bab al-Mandab at the entrance to the Red Sea. The Sunnis of the Gulf grew increasingly anxious about the hegemonic design of Iran and its allies and proxies.

Iran's reach was most impressive, but this was thanks less to Iran's intrinsic power than it was to the debilitating weakness of the Arabs. The Arabs find themselves in a deep crisis, racked by revolution, civil war, and mass emigration that have come in the wake of the ignominious political failure of pan-Arabism. This was the culmination of a long process that had its beginnings in the early 1960s, with the dissolution of the promising unity between Egypt and Syria in the form of the United Arab Republic (UAR), followed by the first civil war in Yemen and the disastrous defeat of the Arabs in the 1967 war with Israel, from which the Arabs never entirely recovered.

Eighty years ago, in the late 1930s, two very important books were published in Egypt. One was *Siyasat al-Ghad* (*The Politics of Tomorrow*), by Mirit Butrus Ghali, and the other was *Ala Hamish al-Siyasa* (*On the Margin*

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of Politics), by Hafiz Afifi. Both sought to address Egypt's socio-economic problems resulting from its rapid population growth. By the use of statistical and other data, they "tried to show that unless Egyptian leaders embarked on a rigorous reform program the country courted disaster."[2] Such rigorous reform never really took place in Egypt, nor in the other Arab countries.

All the countries of the Middle East, including the non-Arab countries of Iran and Turkey, have experienced rapid population growth and massive urbanization. Tens of millions have abandoned the rural areas for the cities, invariably contributing to social dislocation, political radicalization, and instability. Turkey experienced years of intensive political violence and military interventions in the political system between the early 1960s and the early 1980s, leading eventually to the political takeover of the Islamist AKP in 2002. Iran underwent revolutionary regime change in 1979 with the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty and the rise to power of the regime of the ayatollahs and the formation of the Islamic Republic. Generally speaking, however, Turkey and Iran – judging by GDP per capita, for example – have thus far fared much better than most of the Arab states (with the exception of the wealthy Arab oil producers), due primarily to their very long history as effective sovereign states, with more or less homogenous populations in terms of religion that are linked for the most part by a common language.[3] Turkey has had a very long history of Western-style modernization, and Iran, though joining the process of modernization later than Turkey, also had the blessing of oil wealth to help it get by.

The Arabs are in the throes of a deep socio-economic and political crisis, whose end is nowhere in sight. The process of Western-style modernization has not produced the expected power, prestige, and prosperity, and Arab nationalism and messianic pan-Arabism have ended in dismal political failure.

For its part, however, the Arab world cannot sustain its population. Though growth rates are declining, the Arab population is growing faster than the region can accommodate. In 2000 the population of the Arab states from Morocco to the Gulf was 280 million; it is presently some 380 million, and is projected to reach approximately 460 million by 2025.[4] The regional predicament might best be summed up in the question, who will supply the jobs, money, electricity, and water for another 80-90 million people?

Moreover, the Arabs are in the throes of a deep socio-economic and political crisis, whose end is nowhere in sight. The process of Western-

style modernization has not produced the expected power, prestige, and prosperity, while Arab nationalism and messianic pan-Arabism ended in dismal political failure. Arabism, at least in theory, if not always in practice, was a secular ideology that sought to unite the people, whether Muslim, Christian, or other, on the basis of the language they spoke. The failure of pan-Arabism was therefore also the failure of this crucial platform for the secularization of Arab societies.

The difficulties encountered by the process of modernization in Middle East countries, including Turkey and Iran, have been accompanied by a widespread return to the warm embrace of neo-traditionalism – political Islam and religious sectarianism (and in some countries, tribalism as well). This was not only true in the domestic politics of Middle East states, but also in inter-state relations that are largely controlled by sectarian alliances between Sunni states against their Shiite rivals. It was no longer a question of monarchies versus republics or pro-Soviet states against their pro-American rivals, which was a feature of the distant past.

Nowhere were these transformations more salient than in the recent crisis in Yemen. In the Yemeni civil war in the early 1960s the republicans, supported mainly by Egypt, battled the royalists who were backed primarily by the pro-American monarchies of Saudi Arabia and Iran. In those days, the Zaidi Shiites, the Houthis of today, were mostly royalist, while the Sunnis were mostly republican. The Saudis and Pahlavi Iran were on the same side of the ideological divide in support of the royalist Shiites of the time. The relevant political fault line then was between the so-called "progressives" in the Arab world led by Nasser's Egypt, and the "reactionaries," the pro-Western monarchies. The sectarian divisions of the present, in which Shiite Iran and its Shiite allies, in their support of the Zaidi Shiites of Yemen, are arraigned against the Sunni states, were irrelevant in the 1960s. In contrast, the former royalist Shiite allies of the Saudis in the 1960s have now become their mortal sectarian enemies.

The twentieth century was for the most part the century of pan-Arabism and the formation of the Arab state. The late twentieth century and the beginnings of the twenty-first century ushered in a new era in Middle East history, in which pan-Arabism has long faded into the background and many Arab states are struggling to survive in unified sovereign entities.

The twentieth century was for the most part the century of pan-Arabism and the formation of the Arab state. The late twentieth century and the

beginnings of the twenty-first century ushered in a new era in Middle East history, in which pan-Arabism has long faded into the background and many Arab states, from Libya to Sudan and from Yemen to Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon are struggling to survive in unified sovereign entities. There is no state of Palestine yet, but it already has two sub-sections in the making.

Islamic Politics: Between Sunnis and Shiites

The return to the comforting embrace of religion tends by its very nature to exacerbate sectarian loyalties and divisions. When Sunni Muslims radicalize and religious belief becomes the decisive marker of collective identity, all the other sects and denominations tend to do just the same in the name of their own self-defense. Shiites and the various non-Muslim minorities thus also withdraw into the protective shell of their communal identities and allegiances.

Sunni and Shiite radicalism have their sectarian uniqueness. Moreover, these specific characteristics have important influences on the nature of the Sunni-Shiite competition and on the balance of power between Iran and the Arabs. Sunni radicalism and Shiite radicalism differ in a variety of ways, the most critical of which is in their respective major guiding principles. As John Esposito has pointed out, the common denominator that emerged in traditional Sunni political thought was that "the minimal requirement for an Islamic government was not the character of the head of state but rule according to the *Shariah*."[5] Modern Sunni radicals therefore placed the emphasis on the essential implementation of the *sharia* (*tatbiq al-sharia*). Following in the footsteps of leading modern mid-twentieth century Sunni thinkers such as the Pakistani Abu Ala al-Mawdudi and the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb, as far as the radicals were concerned, society could not be truly Islamic unless it was founded on religious law. As Mawdudi argued, societies that did not function in this way were inherently illegitimate and *jahili*[6] by nature. Conversely, Shiite radicals of the Khomeini school placed the emphasis on the character of the ruler who was to oversee the implementation of the *sharia*. Thus, the main Shiite focus was on the principle of *wilayat al-faqih* (or *velayat-e faqih*, in Persian), the guardianship of the jurisprudent, rather than on the application of the *sharia*.[7]

When Sunni Muslims radicalize and religious belief becomes the decisive marker of collective identity, all the other sects and denominations tend to do just the same in the name of their own self-defense.

Pan-Arabism was a unifying umbrella for all speakers of the Arabic language irrespective of their religious denominations, at least in theory, if not always in practice. Sunni radicalism, on the other hand, is by its very nature extremely divisive. Sunni radical thought has invariably been characterized by institutional vagueness. It was never made quite clear exactly who and by what means implementation of the *sharia* would actually occur. There is no recognized Sunni central clerical authority to pass judgment on such matters. There have been a myriad of organizations and militias in the Sunni world that claimed the right to promote their views on the implementation of the *sharia*, whether by democratic persuasion or by force, including beheadings, mass executions, the enslavement of women, the demolition of archaeological sites, and a variety of other acts of barbarism. Predictably, the self-appointment of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of the Islamic State (in Iraq and al-Sham) as caliph in June 2014 was accepted by some, but rejected by most.

The multitude of Sunni organizations – such as the Islamic State, Jabhat al-Nusra, al-Qaeda, Ahrar al-Sham, the Muslim Brotherhood in the different Arab states, salafi groups that are jihadist, and others that are not – sometimes fight together, and on other occasions against one another. These and scores of others are the enemies of all non-Sunnis – the Shiites (whether Arabs or not) and the various non-Muslim minorities: the Alawis, the Yazidis, and the Christians of the different denominations. They are also the enemies of various Sunni regimes, which might be radical Islamist themselves – such as the Saudis, or not, like the Hashemites in Jordan. Overall, Sunni political Islam aggravates the sectarian differences that pan-Arabism sought to inherit. Sunni radicalism is diffuse, multi-polar, and extremely divisive, reminiscent at times of the Hobbesian state of "war of all against all," thereby threatening to dismantle the religiously heterogeneous Arab states of the Fertile Crescent like never before since these states came into being a century ago.

The political vacuum created by this internal disintegration was most inviting to the Iranians, who had a number of relative advantages over the Arabs. Since the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, the Iraq of Saddam Hussein was the effective gatekeeper of the Arab East, on the frontier with Iran of the ayatollahs. But the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the overthrow of Saddam radically changed the regional balance of power in Iran's favor. The so-called de-Baathification of Iraq essentially meant the dethroning of the Sunnis, who lorded over Iraq through the machinery of the Baath

party, and the empowering of the Shiite majority in Iraq. After all, the ruling Baath party in Iraq was a political machine for Sunni supremacy and the marginalization of the Shiites. Sunni supremacy had been the rule in Iraq for centuries, from the Abbasid Caliphate through the Ottoman Empire to modern day Iraq, whether under the Hashemite monarchy since the 1920s, or the Baath since the late 1960s. Virtually overnight Iraq was transformed by the de-Baathification of the post-Saddam era from a Sunni-dominated state into a Shiite-controlled natural ally of Shiite Iran that is a springboard for enhanced Iranian regional influence.

This process was further facilitated by the political advantages inherent in the Shiite doctrine of *wilayat al-faqih*, as developed by Ayatollah Khomeini. The Khomeini concept identified the supreme religious authority in Iran with the head of state, and thus the Supreme Leader of Iran was also the supreme religious authority of the Shiites. Though the Khomeini thesis was never accepted unequivocally by all Shiite clergy and there are many rivals to the Khomeini doctrine, it has been accepted by most Shiites in Iran and among many elsewhere in the Middle East. Therefore, as opposed to the chaotic multi-polar world of Sunni radicalism, Shiite radicals tend to accept Iranian centralized spiritual authority and political leadership. Hizbollah in Lebanon, Shiite militias in Iraq, and even the Houthis in Yemen are willing collaborators with Iranian hegemonic design, directed effectively by the instruments of the Iranian state, especially the Revolutionary Guards (Pasdaran).

Among the Sunnis there is no similar authority or leadership. The Saudis would like to play that role but they are not politically or militarily capable of doing so. Many of the radicals were hostile to the Saudis, and even leading Sunni states, like Egypt and Turkey that were in the same camp with Saudi Arabia, did not necessarily share their interests on all matters. Turkey has taken a much more conciliatory attitude toward Iran than the Saudis. Neither Turkey nor Egypt was as enthusiastic as the Saudis in the pursuit of the war option in Yemen. The military regime in Egypt and the Islamist government in Turkey have had a tense relationship ever since the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and they have not seen eye to eye regarding the Syrian quagmire.

Iranian Constraints: The Syrian Achilles' Heel

Despite these advantages, the Iranians were not all powerful with the upper hand at all times. Indeed, the Iranians have had their limitations too, even

as they have demonstrated admirable determination in the pursuit of their objectives. They have not been averse to the use of force or subversion through the Shiite populations in neighboring states. They were similarly willing to invest huge sums of money, even in times of financial stress, in the service of their regional interests, not to mention their relentless pursuit of a nuclear capability, even in the face of international sanctions and diplomatic pressure. On the other hand, Iran was a regional power, but no more. In global terms Iran was a minor power whose impressive regional stature was mainly a function of the weakness and disarray of its Arab neighbors. Iran's GDP per capita was only one third of Saudi Arabia's and half of Israel's.[8] Economic sanctions as well as remarkably low oil prices weighed very heavily on the Iranian economy.

In Yemen, as in Bahrain in 2011, where the Saudis and their Gulf allies have chosen to use force against presumably pro-Iranian Shiites in areas that were on their doorstep, the Iranians have not been able to resist effectively. The Shiite rebellion in Bahrain was suppressed. In Yemen, after what seemed like an unstoppable Houthi advance through much of the country in 2014, even as far south as the port city of Aden, Saudi-led military intervention has been relatively successful. With the Saudis attacking from the air, backed by UAE ground forces advancing northwards from Aden and an effective US naval blockade, the Houthis have been pushed back and there is little the Iranians seem to be able to do about it.[9]

However, it was the civil war in Syria that was Iran's veritable Achilles' heel. The war did not go well for Iran's client, the Assad regime, which suffered serious setbacks in early 2015 in different parts of the country, from Idlib in the north to Tadmur (Palmyra) further south. Having already taken control of much of the country, the opposition forces came perilously close to the very heartland of the regime in the northwestern coastal region. The regime found itself fighting desperately for its survival, at great human cost – on all sides.

In Iraq, unlike Syria, Iran's allies, the Shiites, are the majority population, and Shiite militias there have been instrumental in the successful Iranian-guided effort to defeat ISIS in places like Tikrit and elsewhere, gradually pushing them out of some of their Iraqi strongholds. But even there the fight is far from over, as gains for ISIS in Ramadi have shown. Iran's allies in Syria, the Alawites who were the backbone of the regime, were just some 12 percent of the population. They were exhausted by the fighting, and suffered serious problems of morale and manpower. There were defections

in the senior echelons of the regime and a variety of mysterious deaths that suggested considerable internal dissent at the top. Assad was increasingly dependent on Iran and on Shiite fighters from Iran's Revolutionary Guards and elsewhere, especially Hizbollah from Lebanon and Shiite militiamen from Iraq and Afghanistan. The fighting was difficult, and the Assad regime was at a numerical disadvantage.

Yet despite the heavy cost the Iranians seemed determined to continue the struggle. In addition to the manpower they mobilized on Assad's behalf, they were said by diplomatic sources in Beirut to be propping up the regime with some one to two billion dollars per month.[10] This was a huge sacrifice for the cash-strapped Iranian government, and an indication of the great strategic importance that Tehran attaches to Syria. The loss of Syria for Iran would be a major strategic setback. Syria provides the essential link with Hizbollah; a Syrian loss could seriously undermine the Shiite militia's power base in Lebanon. Moreover, Syria also provides Iran with a second potential front with Israel along the Golan. Indeed, both Lebanon and Syria offer the Iranians, in collaboration with Hizbollah, critically important outposts on Israel's borders from where to attack Israeli civilians with tens of thousands of rockets at any time of Tehran's choosing. Such rocketry was intended to deter the Israelis from attacking Iran's nuclear project, or to force Israel to pay a very heavy price if it were to decide on such a military option. Most recently, in late May 2015, an Iranian military official threatened that Iran and Hizbollah had 80,000 missiles ready to "rain down on Tel Aviv and Haifa."[11]

The fight for Syria between Iran and its allies and the Sunni camp was therefore at the very heart of the struggle for regional hegemony. For decades after the creation of Lebanon in the 1920s, the question was whether Lebanon was a Maronite Christian-dominated pro-Western state or part and parcel of the Sunni Arab world. With the demographic and political decline of the Maronites, that question was decided by the mid-1970s. Now the question has become whether Lebanon is still part of the Sunni Arab world, or has it been irreversibly sucked into the Iranian-Shiite camp, thanks to Hizbollah's predominance in Lebanese politics. If the Iranians lose in Syria there is every chance that these questions would eventually be decided against them.

Actions by Russia in collaboration with Iran in the fall of 2015 and the large consignments of Russian equipment and military personnel to Syria have been one of the most impressive demonstrations of power projection

by the Russians since the end of the Cold War. Flying through Iran and Iraq to the Latakia area in Syria, the Russian action is indicative of the vital importance the Iranians and their allies, the Russians in this case, attach to the preservation of the Assad regime in Syria and their willingness to take concrete action to protect their interests.

Conclusion: Iran, the Arabs, and Israel

The negotiations between the US and the other great powers and Iran on the nuclear issue came at a critical juncture, with Iran pained by the international sanctions regime and Iran and its Syrian allies facing serious difficulties and setbacks in the Syrian civil war. Since the negotiations were led by a US administration that seemed more anxious than Iran to reach an agreement, the end result was the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action concluded in Vienna in July 2015. The agreement ensures the termination of the sanctions regime, but in the long run, it does not necessarily prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons if and when it so desires. Irrespective of the fact that Tehran reaffirmed in the agreement (twice) "that under no circumstances will Iran ever seek, develop or acquire any nuclear weapons,"[12] the great fear of the Sunni states and Israel is that the agreement, which leaves Iran's nuclear infrastructure intact, allows the Iranians, after a certain hiatus, to pursue their hegemonic design with ever greater determination and ever increasing resources and room for maneuver, despite their commitments in the agreement. No one among the Arabs, except for ISIS and its ilk (hardly the desired partners of the Sunni regimes), would be there to hold the Iranians back. If, generally speaking, the balance of power between Iran and the Arabs was shifting in Iran's favor for decades, following the nuclear agreement this was still the case, only more so.

> This failure of secular pan-Arabism paved the way for the rise of Islamic politics, which has in turn given a new lease on life to sectarianism and to sectarian conflict in the region, pitting Sunnis against Shiites, and the Arabs – Sunnis, for the most part – against Shiite Iran.

This situation creates an entirely new strategic environment for Israel. In recent decades the Arab world has undergone a major structural shift as a result of the steady decline of the Arab states, their failure to modernize successfully, and the dismal failure of pan-Arabism. The non-Arab states of the Middle East, Turkey, Iran, and Israel have become the major regional powers. This failure of secular pan-Arabism

paved the way for the rise of Islamic politics, which has in turn given a new lease on life to sectarianism and to sectarian conflict in the region, pitting Sunnis against Shiites, and the Arabs – Sunnis for the most part – against Shiite Iran.

In 1979 two major events shook the Arab world to its core: Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel and the ayatollahs came to power in Iran, resulting a year later in the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War. For eight years Iraq fought a desperate war against Iran, ostensibly protecting the Arab East from potential Shiite-Iranian expansionism. As Egypt departed from the Arab order of battle, war with Israel was no longer a realistic option. The conflict with Israel receded steadily in importance as the fear of Iran was on the rise. Jordan followed Egypt and made peace with Israel in 1994. Since 1973, i.e., for over forty years, Israel has not been engaged in war with any of the Arab states. Israel as the major concern of the Arabs was replaced by Iran and the Shiites, in the wake of the rise of Hizbollah in Lebanon and especially after the overthrow of the Baath in Iraq in 2003 and the subsequent conversion of Iraq into the first Shiite-dominated Arab state.

The political and strategic core of the Middle East has shifted from the Arab-Israeli domain to the Gulf, and in this new structure Israel has common cause with key Sunni Arab states against Iranian hegemonic design. The evolving structure creates new vistas for Israeli foreign policy and opportunities for the reconfiguring of Israel's place in the Middle East. Israel is no longer the lonely eternal outsider confronting the Arab collective, but one of a local informal alliance of likeminded countries, who rest on the friendship of the US and seek to protect themselves from the ambitions and subversion of Iran and its proxies.

As the balance of power between the Iran and the Arabs shifts in Iran's favor, so Israel and key Arab states, like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates, have more strategic common ground than ever before. As events in Syria, Bahrain, and Yemen show, the Iranians have their limitations too. It is, therefore, quite conceivable for Israel and various Arab states to collaborate, together with the US, to constrain and contain Iran's regional ambition.

Notes

1 "The Iran-Saudi Rivalry," *The Economist*, April 7, 2015.

2 P. J. Vatikiotis, *The Modern History of Egypt* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), pp. 309-10.

3 Turkey's population is composed of 80-85 percent Sunni Muslims and 70-75 percent speakers of Turkish. Iran is composed of 90 percent Shiite Muslims and over 50 percent Persian speakers.

4 Arab Human Development Reports (AHDR)-United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Data for the Arab States, Population, total both sexes, http://www.arab-hdr.org/data/indicators/2012-3.aspx; Barry Mirkin, *Arab Spring: Demographics in a Region in Transition*, United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Arab States, Arab Human Development Report Research Paper Series, 2013, p. 12.

5 John Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, 4th ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998), p. 31.

6 The *jahilliyya* in Islamic tradition is the period of ignorance and barbarism that preceded Islam and the revelation of the Prophet. A jahili society was therefore a non-Islamic and obviously illegitimate society in accordance with Mawdudi's concept of the "new jahiliyya."

7 For more details see Yvonne Haddad, "Sayyid Qutb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival," Charles Adams, "Mawdudi and the Islamic State," and Michael Fischer, "Imam Khomeini: Four Levels of Understanding," in *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, ed. John Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 67-133, 150-74; Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, pp. 30-31, 131-52; Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 188-213.

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The Islamic State Surprise: The Intelligence Perspective

Ephraim Kam

In most respects, the prominence of the Islamic State (still often referred to as ISIS, in reference to its original name as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) in the Middle East theater was a strategic surprise. The group's rapid command of center stage, especially in Syria and Iraq, occurred primarily in mid-2014. Less than a year before, no government or intelligence community in the nations most affected by ISIS predicted the force, scope, or speed of its emergence. Some in the United States and perhaps in the Middle East considered certain aspects related to its evolution, but not even one actor seems to have envisaged that by the middle of 2014, the organization would control one third of Syria and one quarter of Iraq, infiltrate into other countries, and threaten the future of states, the stability and survivability of regimes, and the way of life of large population groups.

This essay examines the reasons for the strategic surprise surrounding the emergence of ISIS, in light of the assessments and attitudes of the US administration and intelligence community. This examination is primarily based on the threat assessments published in 2013-2015 by the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the State Department's intelligence body, and the Director of National Intelligence. It also relies on public statements – some anonymous – by administration and intelligence officials. While perhaps a somewhat altered picture would emerge from the US intelligence community's classified assessments and messages to the administration, there would likely be no radical differences. In addition, we do not have enough information about the assessments of other intelligence communities involved, yet presumably most if not all

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of these communities were likewise surprised by ISIS's sudden rise in the Middle East.

The Emergence of the Islamic State: The Essence of the Surprise

The strategic surprise of the emergence of ISIS on the Middle East stage consists of several layers. First, ISIS emerged as an organization that early on threatened its close and distant environments more than any group before it. Therefore, it was impossible to learn from historic precedents how to relate to the doctrine, methods of operation, and trends of an organization such as ISIS in order to try to stop it at an early stage.

Second, the organization's capabilities were a surprise, as these too were unprecedented. ISIS is more than a terrorist organization, as it combines a terrorist organization's capabilities with the military capabilities of a small army. It has acquired advanced weapon systems, including tanks and artillery, captured from the Iraqi and Syrian armies. Its command level includes Sunni officers from Saddam Hussein's army who have demonstrated the ability to train and deploy forces the size of companies. The organization seized control of unprecedented financial resources – the outcome of the occupation of oil assets and banks, as well as extortion money. The manpower reserves at its disposal kept growing, as tens of thousands of volunteers streamed to Syria and Iraq from Europe, the Middle East, and Muslim nations. This phenomenon – the arrival of so many volunteers to fight on behalf of a relatively new organization – was unknown in the past.

Third, the organization's intentions were surprising. Intelligence and administration sources did not sufficiently recognize the possibility that ISIS intended to seize rapid control of large areas, stay in them, and expand their conquests – including to large cities such as Mosul – while linking Syria to Iraq and erasing the border between them. From ISIS's perspective, joining Syria and Iraq was not merely an operational necessity; it was part and parcel of its leader's vision to restore the Islamic caliphate, a vision directly threatening the future of local regimes and representing the magnet attracting the thousands of young people streaming to Syria and Iraq to enlist. The significance of the caliphate vision was understood only at a later stage, after ISIS had already burst onto the scene in Syria and Iraq.

Finally, along with underestimating ISIS's capabilities, the administration and intelligence community had an inflated view of the Iraqi army's capabilities. The Iraqi security forces were built, trained, and armed by the US military after the 2003 conquest of Iraq. By 2014, the ranks of the

Iraqi security forces had swelled to 650,000 personnel, 280,000 of whom were in the army and the rest in various branches of the police. But when ISIS made its first significant move in Iraq in tandem with its June 2014 seizure of Mosul, the second largest city in the country, some five divisions of the Iraqi army collapsed within 48 hours and stopped functioning as military units.

Thus the combination of erroneous assessments of ISIS's intentions and capabilities, its rapid progress, and the insufficient awareness of the Iraqi army's weaknesses led to a failure of the early warnings that ISIS might become only an advanced version of al-Qaeda and that its limitations might enable attempts to stop it at an earlier stage. In practice, the organization seized control of vast tracts of land in Syria and Iraq, most of which it still retains – despite the efforts of its enemies and the international coalition established to contain and destroy it.

Intelligence Warnings

The debate over who was responsible for failing to issue adequate warnings about ISIS began in the United States in mid-2014. On September 18, 2014, Gen. James R. Clapper, Director of National Intelligence, claimed that his personnel had in fact reported on ISIS's growing strength and its capabilities and daring. They had also warned of the weaknesses of the Iraqi army, but did not properly foresee its lack of resolve to fight. "What we didn't do was predict the [Islamic State's] will to fight…In this case, we underestimated ISIL and overestimated the fighting capability of the Iraqi army…I didn't see the collapse of the Iraqi security force in the north coming. I didn't see that. It boils down to predicting the will to fight, which is an imponderable."[1] President Barack Obama used Clapper's statement to ascribe most of the blame for the failure to the intelligence community. As early as August 2014, Obama asserted that intelligence assessments had not anticipated ISIS's advance in Iraq and Syria accurately. At the end of September, Obama admitted that the United States had not properly understood developments in Syria that turned that country into a destination for jihadists from all over the world. The President specifically used Clapper's explanation: that the intelligence had underestimated ISIS and overestimated the capabilities of the Iraqi army.[2]

Obama's finger-pointing aroused a wave of protest among intelligence and political figures who claimed he was avoiding taking personal responsibility for his own mistakes and instead scapegoating the intelligence community.

The CIA rejected the accusation of an intelligence failure in Iraq, claiming that anyone who had read all of the agency's assessments on ISIS could not have been surprised. An intelligence official stated that ISIS had been under surveillance for years, and that the intelligence agencies had provided warnings about its growing strength and the increasing threat it represented; the decision makers had also been warned of the emerging problems with the Iraqi military, so that there was no reason to be surprised when it collapsed.[3] Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Michigan), chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, declared: "This was not an intelligence failure. This was a policy failure."[4] The White House was forced to respond by saying it had not accused the intelligence community of failure, but was only trying to explain how hard it was to anticipate a foreign force's will to fight.

In the midst of the public debate in the United States about the ISIS surprise, the fog surrounding the intelligence community's warnings of the ISIS threat was partially lifted. As early as July 2013, DIA Deputy Director David R. Shedd claimed that al-Qaeda affiliated groups were gaining strength in Syria. "It is very clear over the last two years they have grown in size, grown in capability, and ruthlessly grown in effectiveness...They will not go home when it is over. They will fight for that space. They are there for the long haul."[5] The 2013 State Department strategic assessment issued in April 2014 presented a similar picture of a growing ISIS, which was then al-Qaeda's branch in Iraq – until it broke off from the organization in January 2014. According to this assessment, in 2013 ISIS increased the lethality, complexity, and frequency of its attacks in Iraq and demonstrated improved capabilities in planning, coordinating, and conducting widespread effective attacks.[6] In late 2013, the intelligence community grew increasingly concerned by the deteriorated security situation in Iraq, in part in light of the transfer of ISIS forces from Syria to western Iraq since the spring of 2013. Sources in the intelligence community warned that ISIS was becoming a force to be reckoned with in northern and western Iraq and was starting to attack cities and kill members of the Iraqi government and army.[7]

Beginning in early 2014, after ISIS conquered Fallujah and part of Ramadi, some 70 miles from Baghdad, the number of warnings increased. Administration officials assumed it would be possible to stop ISIS and eventually drive it back, but sources in the intelligence community warned that this assumption was flawed.[8] In the annual intelligence assessment presented to the Senate in February 2014, DIA Director Gen. Michael T.

Flynn stated that ISIS would apparently try to seize areas in Iraq and Syria in order to show its strength, just as it had done in Fallujah and Ramadi, and to show it could maintain strongholds in Syria. However, its ability to maintain control of the area would depend on the organization's resources, support from the local population, and the responses of the Iraqi security forces and various Syrian opposition groups.[9] In practice, ISIS's moves went much beyond this cautious assessment. Its major breakout in Iraq occurred in June 2014, when thousands of Sunni jihadists crossed the border from Syria into western and northern Iraq, conquered Mosul, and seized control of large areas of both Syria and Iraq.

Where Did They Go Wrong?

The United States was familiar with the Islamic State for years. ISIS was the incarnation of the al-Qaeda branch in Iraq, a declared and defiant enemy of US forces stationed in Iraq until late 2011. There is no doubt that the intelligence community knew that starting in 2013, the threat presented by ISIS in both Syria and Iraq to critical US interests and various states in the Middle East was growing. As early as 2013, intelligence agencies issued warnings that the Syrian crisis had strengthened the organization and encouraged it to expand its operations toward Syria at the same time that it was dramatically stepping up its terrorist attacks against government and military targets in Iraq.[10]

In other words, as of 2013, the intelligence community was in fact identifying important components in the strength and conduct of ISIS. Nonetheless, this is insufficient to negate the general sense – even within the community itself – that both the decision makers and the intelligence community were taken by surprise and failed to properly assess the consequences of ISIS's moves. While the intelligence community did indeed warn of the possibility that ISIS would try to seize and retain control of territories, the Director of National Intelligence expressed reservations about this actually occurring, pointing out that most jihadists would be unable to seize and maintain widespread areas as long as there was local, regional, and international support for repelling them, and that the growth in the jihadists' numbers would apparently be offset by their lack of cohesion and an authoritative leadership.[11] Admiral Michael Rogers, Director of the National Security Agency (NSA), claimed that the intelligence community did not accurately assess the rate at which ISIS transitioned from a terrorist organization to a group focused on seizing territory; he

said that the intelligence community spoke of the possibility but with insufficient emphasis.[12]

Moreover, several pieces of evidence indicate that even after ISIS forces streamed into Iraq from Syria and conquered Fallujah and Ramadi in early 2014, decision makers considered this a problem that could be handled and failed to pay enough attention to the warnings issued by the intelligence community. In a television interview in January 2014, a few days after ISIS seized control of Fallujah, President Obama dismissed ISIS as being "the JV team."[13] Administration officials admitted that they did not focus sufficiently on ISIS's territorial ambitions, instead viewing its activities as a response to the Iraqi government's hostile policy toward Sunnis. Some were concerned primarily by the possibility that jihadists making their way back to Europe would then form terrorist cells on the continent, but were not worried about their efforts to control territories seized in Syria and Iraq.[14]

In hindsight, it is clear that both the intelligence community and the decision makers did not fully understand the implications of the crisis in Syria and Iraq for ISIS's growth and methods of operation. They failed to realize that the vast vacuum created in both countries could not stay empty for long and that the central governments' inability to govern large tracts of land was an open invitation to an organization such as ISIS to fill the vacuum, construct its force, and grow in strength, in order to seize control of the lawless regions. In addition, the Obama administration's longstanding focus on toppling Assad may well have encouraged a perception of the various jihadist organizations as an important tool to help bring down the regime, thereby contributing, at least initially, to clouding the danger and threat they presented.[15]

The situation in Iraq also played a role in the threat mscalculation. Because ISIS was an al-Qaeda offshoot in Iraq, it was at first viewed as the parent organization's heir and expected to focus on showcase attacks rather than on seizure of territory. Furthermore, in the last few years that the US troops were in Iraq, the al-Qaeda proxy there was significantly weakened thanks to a series of blows dealt it by the United States. Therefore, the ISIS threat was seen as limited, even as it was intensifying.

All of this was compounded by the fact that US intelligence capabilities in Iraq were compromised. In their years of activity in Iraq, US troops had constructed a large intelligence network that drew a good picture of the various militias and organizations active in the country. According to one report, the CIA station in Baghdad was, at that time, the biggest CIA station

in the world, with hundreds of operators and researchers. Following the departure from Iraq in late 2011, intelligence coverage shrank as the need was reduced and the CIA presence was scaled back. Consequently, the CIA lost many of its contacts with tribal leaders – including Kurdish leaders who had information about ISIS activity and movements – and with it much of its ability to issue warnings about projected ISIS activity. In addition, the more that the United States was perceived in Iraq as weak, especially after withdrawing its troops from the country, the less willing Iraqi sources were to cooperate and provide intelligence.[16] Furthermore, once it withdrew its troops, the United States stopped its aerial sorties over Iraq. They were renewed in 2013, but only sporadically due to Iraqi sensibilities. The attempt to establish a joint intelligence center with the Iraqis yielded only modest results.[17] Moreover, the problem of intelligence coverage did not extend to Iraq alone. In 2014, administration officials claimed that intelligence gathering in the countries where ISIS was active was limited.[18]

However, beyond the difficulties in understanding the implications of the situation in Syria and Iraq, there is no doubt that one of the severe surprises stemmed from the overestimation of the Iraqi security forces. The US intelligence community and defense establishment were aware of the flaws in the Iraqi army's performance. According to the DIA assessment of early 2014, the Iraqi security services were incapable of stopping the rising tide of violence in the country, in part because they lacked intelligence, logistical equipment, and other high quality capabilities. The forces lacked cohesion and suffered from manpower shortages and bad morale, and their level of training, equipment, and supply was low. The security forces showed the ability to secure certain sites, operate checkpoints, and exhibit a presence on the street, but this was not enough to suppress ISIS and other internal threats. Furthermore, they were hard pressed to operate in areas with a Sunni majority or mixed populations and were vulnerable to terrorist attacks.[19] For its part, the State Department's assessment of the Iraqi security capabilities was somewhat more positive, believing they had made some strides in fighting ISIS. But even in its opinion the deterioration in Syria was making it increasingly difficult for Iraqi forces to defend the Iraqi-Syrian border or prevent the increasing amount of arms smuggling between the two countries.[20]

Yet despite its awareness of these significant weaknesses, the administration, security establishment, and intelligence community were all surprised by the rapid collapse of the Iraqi army. The army alone, not

counting the police, was ten times the size of ISIS, and was constructed and trained by the United States over several years. Because most of its troops were Shiite, the expectation was that they would demonstrate both the will to fight and a reasonable level of resolve in battling a Sunni organization. This did not happen, and it was not understood that the ethnic division in the Iraqi government, establishment, and security forces would impinge on the resolve of the army to defend the country. Its collapse within 48 hours and its inability to defend a large central city like Mosul were not foreseen, which raised questions about the possibility of ever reconstructing this force. Two other factors perhaps made it difficult to assess the Iraqi army's capabilities correctly. One was the fact that the responsibility for force construction lay with the US Central Command rather than with intelligence, so that the intelligence community lacked the tools to properly assess the Iraqi army's will to fight. The other was that the Obama administration did not pay sufficient attention to the warnings about the weaknesses of the Iraqi security forces because it had already withdrawn its troops from the country and had no desire to get bogged down again in the Iraqi quagmire.[21]

Yet another component in the ISIS surprise was the speed with which the organization acted. Even though the intelligence, security, and political echelons had by the spring of 2014 realized that ISIS presented a growing threat, they failed to grasp the speed with which the organization was able to move troops back and forth between Syria and Iraq as needed. It took the United States time to understand the meaning of the obliteration of the Syrian-Iraqi border and the fact that ISIS had turned northeastern Syria and northwestern Iraq into one territory in which it operated at will with a significant ability to surprise its enemies. Thus, in September 2014, White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest said that "everybody was surprised to see the rapid advance that ISIL was able to make from Syria across the Iraqi border and to be able to take over such large swaths of territory in Iraq did come as a surprise."[22]

Conclusion

Assessing the stability and survivability of regimes and examining the ramifications of regional unrest stemming from regime destabilization are difficult tasks for the intelligence community. The problem is compounded when these upheavals take place in several countries simultaneously, where

what happens in one affects another and generates unprecedented side effects, such as the emergence of ISIS.

Part of the assessment and forecasting difficulty is that no source, no matter how good, can report what will happen. Any strategic surprise connected to the outbreak of war or a strategic terrorist attack such as 9/11 is one that is very hard to predict, and there are many consequent intelligence failures. But there are people – at least on the side of the enemy – who, by virtue of their roles in or near the circle of decision makers, do know what is about to happen: if, when, where, and how a war will start or a terrorist attack will be carried out. In such cases, the problem for the intelligence community lies in reaching those individuals and extracting the relevant information from them in time. This is a very complex task and those charged with it often fail, but in theory – and sometimes in practice – it is doable.

By contrast, phenomena such as regional upheavals, regime destabilization, or the emergence of ISIS are not merely the results of some leader or group of leaders making a decision. They are the consequence of deeply rooted and at times intangible processes that are years in the making, on which leaders may try to build and steer developments in what they think are favorable directions. This means that a forecast of their development or an assessment of their significance does not rely on solid information but rather on indicators – an understanding of the forces involved, including their intentions, capabilities, and history; intelligence about the mood on the other side; and at times, gut feelings and intuition. This is a problematic foundation, increasing the risk that assessments of such issues could be wrong.

The surprising emergence of ISIS on the Middle East stage was the result of two factors: the growing strength of jihadist terrorist organizations of a new type, along the lines of al-Qaeda and the terrorist attacks in the United States in September 2001 (which also involved an intelligence assessment failure), and the vast ungovernable swaths of territory in Iraq and Syria that allowed radical Islamist organizations, first and foremost ISIS, to grow and flourish. Each of these factors is in itself difficult to decipher from an intelligence perspective – let alone when they converge and compound one another. ISIS's significant capabilities were to a large extent affected by the collapse of the Iraqi and Syrian regimes and armies, and the intentions of the new and innovative organization – fashioned on

the basis of considerations, motivations, and objectives it determined for itself – were not sufficiently understood, at least not initially.

Nonetheless, the assessments of the US intelligence community about ISIS were not entirely wrong. In 2013, the intelligence community began to issue warnings on the growing threat and even pointed out – albeit cautiously and with reservations – the possibility that the organization would try to seize control of territories in Syria and Iraq. The US defense establishment was aware of the Iraqi army's functional difficulties. It may be – as some political and intelligence figures have claimed – that the decision makers did not pay enough attention to the intelligence community's warnings about ISIS. But certainly in the end, at the strategic level, the outcome was not anticipated: the tens of thousands of volunteers streaming to ISIS, the speed with which the organization operated, the collapse of the Iraqi army, the success by ISIS in seizing vast tracts in Syria and Iraq and acquiring substantial financial and military means, and the emergence of organizations linked to ISIS in other countries such as Egypt and Libya.

At any time would it have been possible to prevent the strategic surprise linked to ISIS's bursting forth on the scene? The unique aspect of the organization and its connection to the surprising upheavals in the region did not leave the US intelligence community much opportunity for a correct assessment of all the developments related to ISIS. But at least one aspect of the affair needs to be reexamined. Assessing the Iraqi security forces' will to fight was not within the purview of the intelligence community. The problem is familiar from other aspects of intelligence assessments. Intelligence analysts are asked to assess the enemy's military capabilities but to a large extent those also depend on one's own capabilities; however, assessing one's own capabilities is not part of the mandate of the intelligence community, which is often insufficiently familiar with them. This difficulty may be mitigated by breaking the walls between the intelligence community and the operational community and expanding cooperation and information exchange. This would bring vital information outside the scope of responsibility of each sector to the attention of both elements.

Notes

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Bashar al-Assad's Struggle for Survival: Has the Miracle Occurred?

Eyal Zisser

The summer of 2014 marked the beginning of a turn in the tide of the civil war in Syria. The accomplishments of the rebels in battles against the regime tilted the scales in their favor and raised doubts regarding Bashar al-Assad's ability to continue securing his rule, even in the heart of the Syrian state – the thin strip stretching from the capital Damascus to the city of Aleppo, to the Alawite coastal region in the north, and perhaps also to the city of Daraa and the Druze Mountain in the south.

This changing tide in the Syrian war was the result of the ongoing depletion of the ranks of the Syrian regime and the exhaustion of the manpower at its disposal. Marked by fatigue and low morale, Bashar's army was in growing need of members of his Alawite community who remained willing to fight and even die for him, as well as the Hizbollah fighters who were sent to his aid from neighboring Lebanon. The rebels, on the other hand, proved motivated, determined, and capable of perseverance. Indeed, they succeeded in unifying their ranks, and today, in contrast to the hundreds of groups that had been operating throughout the country, there are now only a few groups operating – all, incidentally, of radical Islamic character. Countries coming to the aid of the rebels also included Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, who decided to topple the Assad regime and showed determination equal to that of Bashar's allies – Iran, Hizbollah, and Russia.

At the end of the day, however, the Syrian regime has revealed an extraordinary ability to survive. Despite the blows it has sustained, it has not collapsed and has even succeeded in preserving the cohesion of its

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civilian government systems, military forces, and security systems, along with the support of different segments of the Syrian population. More important, the regime remains in control of the regions that appear to be critical for a functional Syrian state entity: the capital city of Damascus, other major cities (Aleppo, Homs, and Hama), the Syrian-Lebanese border region, and the coastal region.

Moreover, all those who believed that only a miracle could save Bashar al-Assad have once again witnessed that in the Middle East, "miracles" should indeed be part of assessments and expert forecasts. First signs of such an unexpected development in the Syrian arena appeared on the horizon in July 2015, in reports of secret contacts between Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Russia aimed at striking a regional deal to ensure Bashar's continued rule. A similar shift regarding the Syrian question also began to emerge in the positions of the United States and Turkey, in face of the Islamic State threat. But all this paled in comparison to the September 2015 decision by Russia and Iran to send military forces to Syria on a scale that would ensure the continuation of the Syrian regime, even if it fails to bring the long war in Syria to an end.[1]

The Syrian Revolution: From the Damascus Spring to the Islamic State Summer

In March 2011, Arab Spring fever spread to Syria when a limited local protest of peasants beset by socioeconomic hardship evolved into a large scale popular uprising against the Bashar al-Assad regime, ultimately becoming a bloody civil war with no end in sight. As days, weeks, and months passed, the struggle in Syria assumed an ethnic, and even worse, religious character of a holy war, comprising Islamic groups within Syria and volunteers who poured into the country from throughout the Arab and Muslim world to fight the infidel Alawite regime in Damascus, which is also the ally of the Shiite camp in the Middle East, led by Iran and Hizbollah.[2]

Three major phases can be identified in Syria's descent into civil war, which led to the collapse of the state and the dissolution of Syrian society:

Phase One: "The Damascus Spring," from March 2011 to March 2013. This phase was characterized by the slow and graduated but ongoing loss of regime assets such as manpower and territory, primarily in rural regions and the periphery. Yet despite its losses in life and resources, the Syrian regime remained standing, even though its plummeting status suggested

that the fall of the regime was inevitable, and possibly only a matter of days or weeks.

Phase Two: "The Bashar Spring," from May 2013 to June 2014. This phase was characterized by improvement in the state of the Syrian regime, to the point that Bashar al-Assad seemed to have a good chance of surviving the war and continuing to rule from his palace in Damascus. This recovery in the standing of the Syrian regime was assisted by the mobilization of Hizbollah, under Iranian orders, to come to Bashar's aid. The regime's achievements assumed greater importance in light of the rebels' failure to unify their ranks and foster an agreed upon military and state leadership to lead them to decision on the battlefield. The process of Islamic radicalization that overcame the rebel camp also appeared to play into Bashar's hands, as many within Syria and elsewhere now regarded him as the lesser of two evils, in comparison to radical groups such as the Islamic State and Jabhat al-Nusra (the Support Front).[3]

Phase Three: "The Islamic State and Jabhat al-Nusra Summer," from June 2014. This phase has consisted primarily of scales tipping in favor of the rebels, and seizure by the Islamic State of large parts of northern Iraq and eastern Syria. During the same period, a group of rebels operating in western Syria, most notably Jabhat al-Nusra, succeeded in dislodging the regime from its stronghold in southern Syria (the districts of Daraa and Quneitra) and the north of the country (the Idlib district).

The rise of the Islamic State in eastern Syria and Jabhat al-Nusra in western Syria was characterized by three significant, interrelated, and mutually reinforcing processes. The first was the consolidation of ranks within the rebel camp. During the first years of the revolution, hundreds of armed groups lacking coordination and central leadership were engaged in fighting both the regime and one another. Western and Arab countries failed in their attempt to "create" leadership bodies such as the National Council (August 2011) and the National Coalition (November 2012), as well as in their efforts to create military umbrella organizations such as the Free Syrian Army (July 2011) and later, the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Syria (September 2012) and the Islamic Front (November 2013). However, in the past year, the rebel groups operating in Syria have come together, albeit within a radical Islamic framework leaving no room for the existence of groups that do not identify themselves as Salafi Islamist. In eastern Syria, the Islamic State has crushed all its rivals, emerging as the single operational force in this area. Elsewhere, however, the Kurdish forces,

particularly the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its military wing, the People's Protection Units (YPG), are also active, operating primarily in the Kurdish enclaves in northeastern Syria. In western parts of the country, Jabhat al-Nusra emerged as a prominent leading force, but one that exercises pragmatism and is willing to cooperate with other Salafi Islamist groups, most prominently Jaysh al-Islam (the Army of Islam), led by Zahran Alloush, and the Ahrar al-Sham movement under the leadership of Abu Hamia al-Hamawi.[4]

The second significant process was the mobilization of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey, and, to a certain extent, Jordan, in an effort to bring about the collapse of the Assad regime. These countries increased coordination among themselves, as well as financial and logistical aid and assistance in training the rebels. Above all, they compelled their allies within Syria to cooperate with one another. In conjunction with the United States, these countries also set up operational headquarters in Jordan and Turkey to coordinate the fighting of a significant portion of the rebel groups in southern and northern Syria, and this has introduced logic and a systematic element that the rebellion lacked up to that point. Nonetheless, in contrast to fighting in southern Syria, where it was possible to identify the guiding and moderating hand of Jordan and possibly also the shadow of Israel, in northern Syria the Turks refrained from restraining the various rebel groups. This explains the prominence of radical Islamic groups – led by Jabhat al-Nusra – in this region, which was already known as a religiously devout area with a conservative tradition.[5]

In a third process, a result of these factors, the Syrian regime experienced an ongoing decline in strength. To be sure, minority groups, including Christians, Druze, and of course Alawites, as well as members of the Sunni middle and upper class in the major cities, continued to see Bashar al-Assad as a preferable alternative in light of the increasing power of the radical Islamic groups within the rebel camp. Overall, however, most either lacked the ability or the desire to fight for him on the battlefield. The resulting skyrocketing rate of desertion and evasion of military service required the Syrian regime to take special measures to track down and arrest offenders. It likewise forced the regime to rely on members of Bashar's own sector, whether as soldiers in the military or paid volunteers in the militias he established, such as the National Defense Forces (Quwat ad-Difa'a al-Watani). The regime also incorporated Hizbollah fighters, and even Iraqi and Afghan Shiite volunteers, into its military effort. Nonetheless, the

campaign in Syria has been, and remains, an accumulation of limited battles with tactical significance, waged by a few hundred fighters on each side, in numerous confrontations throughout the country, which makes it increasingly difficult for the regime to mobilize a force capable of defeating the rebels at each of these points of battle.[6]

The Fighting Fronts

From the summer of 2014 onward, the Syrian regime found itself facing two primary fighting fronts:

The eastern front: In the summer of 2014, the Islamic State swooped in from the desert and seized control of significant parts of northern Iraq and eastern Syria. Since then, the organization has worked to establish its rule in the al-Jazeera region (eastern Syria – the az-Zor, al-Hasakeh, and al-Raqqa districts), while also striving to destroy the still remaining regime enclaves in eastern Syria, such as the cities of al-Tabaka and Abu Kamal (which it conquered in the summer of 2014), and the cities of al-Hasakeh and Deir az-Zor, which became standing targets of its attacks, although efforts to take them have thus far ended in failure. At the same time, the Islamic State has attempted to dislodge the Kurds from their enclaves in northern Syria, such as Kobani (Ayn al-Arab), but have been stopped by Kurdish fighters of the People's Protection Units, which are apparently benefiting from US support.[7] In central Syria, Islamic State fighters succeeded in May 2015 in conquering the city of Tadmur, which constitutes the gateway into central Syria from the desert toward Homs (a distance of 155 km) and Damascus (a distance of 210 km). Finally, in early April 2015, Islamic State fighters managed to establish control over a number of suburbs of Damascus and, in the course of May and June 2015, to advance to the eastern foothills of the Druze Mountain (the villages of Bier al-Kasab and al-Qasr).[8]

The southern and northern front**:** During the final months of 2014, Jabhat al-Nusra and its partners seized control of most of southern Syria – the rural areas of the Daraa and Quneitra districts and the district of Damascus rural areas (Rif Dimashq). The rebels surrounded the cities of Daraa and Quneitra and also seized control of most of the Syrian Golan Heights. In the north, the rebels succeeded in seizing control of most of the territory of northwestern Syria, first and foremost the Idlib district. In the course of March-April 2015, the rebels conquered Idlib, the district capital, followed by the cities of Jisr al-Shughur and Arihah, which control the roads from Aleppo and Idlib to southern Syria and the coastal region.

These achievements provided them with a safe region along the Turkish border, which enabled them to increase the pressure on Aleppo. It also provided them with a starting position toward the Syrian coast.[9]

The Syrian regime called Hizbollah fighters to its aid in the spring of 2015 with the aim of strengthening its control in the Syrian-Lebanese border region (the al-Qalamoun mountains) and the western approach to Damascus (al-Ghouta al-Gharbiya), and the town of al-Zabadani, through which the roads from Damascus run to the north (toward Homs and Hama) and the west (toward Beirut). These regions, which are important for morale and for securing an essential lifeline for the Syrian regime and Hizbollah alike, cover an area of 800 square kilometers (out of Syria's total area of 185,000 square kilometers).[10]

The Regime Hangs On

Despite the blows it has sustained, the regime is still standing. The governing systems and state institutions continue to function – even if only partially – in the areas under its control and beyond, and to provide social, welfare, and economic services (education, health, food, electricity, and water supply). It has even paid the salaries of civil servants in regions under rebel control, and continues to maintain unity – of the regime and the security elite, the governing and party systems, and the army units and security forces. In addition to the minority religious groups, the Sunni population in Syria's major cities remains loyal to the regime, or has at least refrained from opposing it.

Nonetheless, reports from Syria indicate increasing concern among members of the coalition of social forces that constitute the foundation of the regime in Damascus regarding its fate and their own. Thus, behind the scenes protest among Alawites has repeatedly risen above the surface due to the increasing price they are being forced to pay for keeping Bashar in power, to the point of a threat to their future status and very existence in Syrian territory. This protest found expression, for example, on social networks in the summer of 2014, after videos were posted on the internet showing hundreds of Syrian soldiers, including many Alawites, who fell into the hands of ISIS fighters in the fighting for the al-Tabaka airport, being marched naked to their deaths.[11]

Concern has also been visible among members of the Druze in light of the achievements of the rebels, especially after the latter managed to seize control over most of southern Syria to the Druze Mountain, which is now

surrounded on two sides – from the east, by Islamic State fighters, and from the west, by fighters of Jabhat al-Nusra. The Druze have not concealed their concerns regarding a possible situation in which the Syrian regime will no longer be able to protect them and may abandon their stronghold in the Druze Mountain in order to focus its strength on defending the capital city of Damascus. For this reason, the Druze have started to seek alternative sources of assistance for the future, such as Jordan and even Israel.[12] It is therefore no surprise that young Druze (who according to the authorities in Damascus number 37,000) have refrained from enlisting in the Syrian army or militias established by the regime and fighting in their ranks in areas outside the Druze Mountain. At the same time, reports have emerged regarding the local establishment of Druze militias engaged in preparations to defend themselves on the Druze Mountain. The leader of one such effort known as Rijal al-Karama (Men of Dignity), Shaykh Wahid Fahd al-Balous, who is known to have called for members of the sect to disengage from what he regards as their close ties with the Syrian regime, was murdered in September 2015 in the city of Sweida. His supporters have charged the Syrian regime with responsibility for his death.[13]

The Russians are Coming – and with them, the Iranians

The deep processes underway within the Syrian state and society have therefore raised doubts regarding the ability of Bashar al-Assad to remain in power in the long run and have led many to conclude that only a drastic development can save him, such as the collapse of the united front currently demonstrated by the armed rebel groups; mobilization of the United States in favor of Bashar; or cessation of Turkish, Saudi, and Qatari aid to the rebels.

Initial signs of such a development have begun to appear. In September 2015, Russian combat air squadrons and combat soldiers arrived on Syria soil, in addition to members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, who were sent to Syria – possibly in accordance with an Iranian-Russian understanding or agreement – to provide assistance to the Assad regime and ensure Bashar's survival in Syria.[14] The Russian and Iranian forces that have been dispatched to Syria thus far are not enough to restore Bashar's control over most of the territory of the Syrian state, particularly over the eastern regions currently under Islamic State control. They are, however, sufficient to enable him to maintain his control of the Syrian coast, which contains a large Alawite population whose loyalty to the regime is assured under all circumstances, no matter what the cost.

This measure reflects Russian and Iranian recognition of a reality in which the Syrian state of yore has ceased to exist and, on its ruins, an ISIS state has been established in eastern Syria, while Kurdish enclaves exist alongside rebel enclaves in southern and northern Syria, and a hardcore Bashar state, or a "little or vital Syria," continues under Russian and Iranian influence, largely dependent on the goodwill of these two countries.

Indeed, Iranian Revolutionary Guard personnel in Syria appear to be conducting themselves as if they are already in charge. In the Golan Heights, according to Israeli sources, they are working to build themselves a base of operations against Israel and have no hesitation about heating up the border using local cells under the command of Iranian officers, at times against the desire or interest of the Syrian regime itself. On the al-Zabadani and Idlib fronts, the Iranians are conducting negotiations with Jabhat al-Nusra with the aim of relieving a number of Shiite villages of al-Nusra pressure in the Idlib district in exchange for a reduction of Hizbollah pressure on al-Zabadani. All of this occurs as if the Syrian regime no longer exists.[15]

Russian and Iranian involvement in Syria comes against a background of persistent reports regarding contacts between the Syrian regime and a number of its sworn rivals in the regional arena who support the rebel groups in the country. According to one such report, Syrian security chief General Ali Mamlouk paid visits first to Saudi Arabia and then to Egypt. His visit to the Saudi kingdom was part of an Iranian-Russian effort to bring about reconciliation between Syria and Saudi Arabia.[16] This effort was bolstered by developments that have taken place in the regional sphere in recent months, including: the death of King Abdullah in January 2015 and his replacement by his brother King Salman, whose first acts in power included replacing the Saudi political and security elite responsible, inter alia, for Saudi involvement in the war in Syria; the June 2015 Turkish parliamentary elections, which eroded the power of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the motivating force behind Turkish intervention in Syria; and finally, the nuclear agreement concluded by the P5+1 with Iran in July 2015, which resulted in the beginning of a new chapter in relations between Tehran and Washington.

Conclusion

At the end of nearly five years of war in Syria, the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad is still standing, based on powerful apparatuses such as government institutions, the military, and the security services, which, despite the

blows they sustained, have still not collapsed. Nonetheless, Bashar now finds himself with his back against the wall, facing the ongoing depletion of the regime's resources. Iran, Hizbollah, and Russia may be providing him with financial assistance, arms, and ammunition, as well as oil and oil products, but even the forces they have started to send to his aid do not provide him with a solution for the one resource he truly needs: manpower for his army and his militias.

The radicalization, to the point of religious fanaticism, of the rebel ranks initially worked to the benefit of the Syrian regime and, for many in the West, transformed Bashar into the only alternative to Islamic extremism. This sentiment was effectively articulated by CIA chief John Brennan who, in March 2015, warned that Bashar's fall from power could open the gates of Damascus to ISIS.[17] But Islamic radicalism has ultimately proven to be a bonding and motivating force that has worked in favor of the rebel groups and has succeeded in unifying them, which is something that slogans of Syrian nationalism and patriotism failed to do since the outbreak of the revolution.

The deep-seated processes underway within the Syrian state and Syrian society have therefore raised doubts regarding Bashar's ability to remain in power for the long term and have led many to the conclusion that only a miracle can save him. However, just such a miracle seems to have occurred, following the change in position on the Syrian question among certain regional and international actors.

Iran and Russia have taken another significant step forward by beginning to send military forces to fight alongside Bashar, and the United States, European Union states, and even Turkey and Saudi Arabia are reassessing their positions regarding the future of Bashar al-Assad's rule in Damascus. After all, the actors involved in the Syrian sphere, and the Americans and Europeans in particular, have reached the conclusion that a supreme effort must be made to preserve the institutions of the Syrian state in order to prevent the return of the Iraqi scenario, in which the destruction of the state and state institutions – and the army in particular – is what created the vacuum that facilitated the emergence of the Islamic State. This also explains the commitment of Tehran and Moscow, which are now liable to become embroiled in the Syrian quagmire and a hopeless war with few accomplishments.

The question, therefore, is as follows: is it possible to square the Syrian circle and reach a solution to the crisis that is agreed upon by at least

Russia and the United States, and some of the states in the region, or is Syria doomed to the continuation of war and fighting? If the war continues, Russian-Iranian intervention may prove to be a recipe for prolonging the belligerency and deepening the human tragedy underway in Syria. The price will be the limited accomplishment of preserving Bashar's rule over one quarter of the territory of Syria, which in practice will further entrench the division of the Syrian state.

Notes

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"Generation War": Syria's Children Caught between Internal Conflict and the Rise of the Islamic State

Benedetta Berti and Axel Bea Osete

The Cost of War for Syria's Future: An Overview

Over the past few years Syria has been the epicenter of regional instability. Its violent and bloody civil war has led to a prolonged humanitarian emergency of colossal proportions and facilitated the growth of radical actors such as the Islamic State (IS). Moreover, beyond the present impact of the conflict on the country and the entire Middle East, the legacy of the war will undoubtedly continue to shape Syria's future, long after the guns fall silent. In particular, the impact of the conflict on Syria's children is an especially devastating and long term aspect of the complex war legacy that both regional and international stakeholders will have to confront if they hope to restore a measure of stability to Syria and the Levant.

Like most of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, Syria is a young country; with Syria's children (0-14) and youth (15-24) representing, respectively, roughly 35 and 20 percent of the country's 22 million inhabitants.[1] Not surprisingly, since the initially peaceful popular revolution spiraled into a civil war in 2011, the greatest victim of the hostilities has been the civilian population in general, and Syria's children in particular. Outside of the country, over two of the four million registered refugees are under 18 years of age, while within Syria itself half of the 12 million people depending on humanitarian assistance to survive are children, with over two million of them residing in remote areas where assistance is hard to come by.[2]

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Mapping the toll of the conflict on Syria's children is especially difficult, as the impact is pervasive, affecting not only their psychological and physical wellbeing or their access to basic health care and education, but also deeply impairing their development, and thus their very future. Hence the concern voiced by United Nations Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura: "We are having a whole generation of Syrians, young kids, who have seen only war."[3]

With virtually all parties to the conflict conducting deliberate attacks against civilians, children have also been directly targeted, with over 10,000 documented child casualties, and with reports of children as victims of torture, summary executions, sexual violence, and abductions.[4] Already in March 2014 UNICEF reported that child casualty rates in Syria were the "highest recorded in any recent conflict in the region,"[5] and the situation has not improved since. Moreover, despite being clearly prohibited under international humanitarian law, the longer the war continues, the more children are not only victims and witnesses to the conflict, but also direct participants. According to the United Nations, children under 15 years of age, and as young as eight, have been recruited to join the ranks of different armed factions, both on the pro-government and rebel sides.[6] Similarly, Human Rights Watch has documented the use of children in direct fighting, intelligence operations, suicide attacks, and supply of ammunition to the front line, among other tasks.[7]

Young Syrians find themselves directly involved in the fighting for a number of reasons: in certain cases they voluntarily join to defend a cause they believe in; while in others they may seek to become part of an armed group to fulfill a sense of community and belonging, for example after losing their loved ones in the war. Crucially, as combat gradually becomes one of the few available sources of income, children are pushed to enlist by a lack of opportunity and by the need to survive and help support their families. With armed groups – and especially the relatively well-funded Islamic State – able to pay salaries of as much as $400 per month (with the average monthly payment closer to $100), becoming a fighter is increasingly one of the only options available to many Syrians, including children.[8] In other circumstances, and this is especially true for groups like the Islamic State and Jahbat al-Nusra, children have been trained and enlisted through broader educational schemes. Finally, like in virtually all prolonged civil wars, children have also been forcibly recruited for both combat operations and auxiliary roles.[9]

To be sure, not all factions have espoused the same attitude with respect to the use of child soldiers. For instance, in March 2014, the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces issued the Declaration of Commitment on Compliance with IHL (international humanitarian law) and Facilitation of Humanitarian Assistance, where they publicly declared that they would "refrain from the recruitment of children and the use of children in hostilities,"[10] a principle reasserted by the group's fighting branch, the Free Syrian Army.[11] Similar commitments have also been expressed by the main Kurdish armed group, the Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat's (YPD) armed wing, the Yekineyen Parastina Gel (YPG), and their police force Asayis[12] – although violations of that commitment have been documented over the past few years. For example, in July 2015, Human Rights Watch criticized the YPG for falling short of fully implementing its own guidelines and commitments.[13]

More broadly, children are an especially vulnerable group, and by living in an insecure and impoverished environment, are particular targets for different forms of exploitation, from child labor to sexual violence to recruitment and employment by armed and criminal groups. Child marriage is also an increasingly common phenomenon, both in Syria and within the broader refugee population.[14]

The psychological and developmental scars of long term exposure to the horrors of war cannot be underestimated, nor can the future impact of the lack of access to education. Within the refugee population, providing access to primary and especially secondary and higher education has proven complex, with host governments struggling to accommodate Syrian children. Difficulties that keep Syrian child refugees out of schools include lack of proper documentation, the cost of education, the distance from schools, safety issues, cultural or language barriers, strong differences in the curriculum, and the need for minors to work to support the household.[15] In Syria itself the situation is far grimmer, as roughly three million children are out of school and the educational system has all but collapsed.[16] Enrollment rates have fallen from almost 100 to 50 percent in the past few years, with Syria now having one of the lowest enrollment rates in the world, a trend driven by a combination of the physical destruction of the educational system, the unavailability of

> Schools, far from being a safe space, are – along with hospitals and markets – one of the most targeted locales, struck recurrently by the regime in aerial bombing attacks.

teachers, and the general lack of access to education due to distance, safety, or financial reasons.[17] Furthermore, attending school is a highly dangerous act in Syria: schools, far from being a safe space, are – together with hospitals and markets – one of the most targeted locales, struck recurrently by the regime in aerial bombing attacks.[18]

The situation is desperate and its consequences stretch way beyond the humanitarian dimension. The economic impact of keeping an entire generation of children out of school is enormous. The prolonged lack of access to education will deeply affect not only the personal and professional development of Syria's young generation, but also the broader resilience of their families and communities and, ultimately, Syria's own capacity to recover after the war. Rebuilding both the physical as well as the social educational infrastructure will require extensive funding and efforts and will not occur overnight. Beyond education, the social impact of the deep collective trauma inflicted on an entire generation of Syrians represents one of the most monumental challenges to overcome in the post-war recovery and transition efforts, affecting a wide range of issues, from social cohesion to the campaign against extremism to the success of mass scale demobilization and disarmament programs.

In this context, it is especially important to zoom in on the role of the Islamic State, a group that extensively focuses on children and "reeducation." General H. R. McMaster has described IS actions as "child abuse on an industrial scale" and "a multigenerational" challenge for stability.[19]

Growing Up in the Islamic State

Any assessment of the impact of war on Syria's children must assign particular attention to the Islamic State, first because of the extreme brutality and violence displayed by this organization. The Islamic State has directly targeted and executed children, while also engaging in other gross human rights violations, including torture and summary execution of minors, mass forced enslavement, and sexual violence against girls as young as 10 years old, mostly from the Yazidi religious minority in Iraq.[20]

But the impact of this organization on the children living in the territories it controls is far deeper. The Islamic State's project is indeed first and foremost political: with the proclamation of the caliphate in 2014, the group declared itself to be the only legitimate political system – rejecting preexisting states in the Levant and their borders – and asserting that all Muslims are obligated to accept the religious and political authority of Caliph Ibrahim (referring

to the leader and "caliph" Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi). The group's ambitions, reflected in its battle cry *baqiya wa tatamadad* ("lasting and expanding"), go beyond territorial control and political power and extend to the notion of engineering a new society with distinct social and cultural mores. To achieve these objectives IS has relied on governance and state-building and intensive media and social media branding, as well as on extreme brutality and an overall offensive military doctrine.[21] In the group's quest to create and impose a new socio-political order, destroying its enemies is not enough; it also needs to "reeducate" its subjects. In this context the group has systematically invested in the young generation, providing both education and military training. Indeed, the group both targets and employs children among its rank and file, with the organization at times relying on minors to carry out executions of prisoners and/or suicide operations.[22] The images of young boys beheading or beating prisoners are then heavily promoted by IS through its communication and media channel, using them as a tool to attract and recruit supporters.[23]

Education is seen as a key platform to prepare the future generations to fight "the crusaders and their allies" as well as a core pillar of the caliphate project.[24] In its own documents, the Islamic State goes to great pains to highlight the importance of education – scientific and religious – and engages in discussions on pedagogy, curriculum design, and revision of the educational system.[25] Taking control of existing educational institutions and either closing them or placing them under the control of their education branch, Diwan al-Ta'aleem, is one of the first actions IS implements after taking over a city or village.[26] Controlling the educational infrastructure also allows the new IS authorities to review and reshape the existing curriculum, making sure it reflects their understanding of Islam and erasing any subject – such as human rights, arts, or political science; or concepts, such as nationalism or "borders" – that they deem illegitimate.[27] To carry out its plans, the caliphate relies on teachers who joined IS from abroad, while also employing local teachers, provided they take a *bayʿa* (pledge of allegiance), adopt an "Islamic dress code" (in IS terms), and attend ad hoc *sharia* courses.[28]

In the Islamic State's quest to create and impose a new socio-political order, destroying its enemies is not enough; it also needs to "reeducate" its subjects.

Training camps likewise play a key role in the formation of the next generation of mujahidin.[29] Although camps are not exclusively for children, it is believed that 60 percent of the participants in such camps are under

18.[30] For example, in Aleppo the UN reported "hundreds of boys as young as 10 years of age."[31] Younger recruits in IS training camps can be orphaned, abandoned, or abducted children,[32] but many young participants also join voluntarily, often recruited in refugee camps, through public speeches, sermons,[33] or on the internet.[34] They are promised "salaries, mobile phones, weapons, a martyr's place in paradise and the 'gift' of a wife upon joining ISIL."[35] Institutions such as the Central Cub Scouts of the Caliphate insure that the military and religious training is also combined with a pervasive sense of community, identity, and belonging, thus strengthening the IS grip on the minds of its young recruits. Spending time far from home and the family network also further contributes to draw children further into the IS worldview and ideology.[36]

Children are heavily used in the group's public branding; with young recruits in training camps portrayed as an army loyal to al-Baghdadi and the caliphate, prepared to continue fighting against the disbelievers and apostates.[37] As a trainer in one of those camps declared, "This generation of children is the generation of the caliphate...the right doctrine has been implemented in this children. All of them love to fight for the sake of building the Islamic State."[38] Needless to say, the combination of exposure to brutal IS tactics, combined with the active part in military training (or even fighting) and the overall socialization in the caliphate's educational system will have long term consequences for the "day after" in Syria, as the country will inevitably have to face the challenge of integrating the "cubs of the caliphate."

Exposure to brutal tactics, an active role in military training (or even fighting), and the overall socialization in the caliphate's educational system will have long term consequences for the "day after" in Syria, as the country will inevitably have to face the challenge of integrating the "cubs of the caliphate."

Generation War: The Urgency of Investing in Syria's Children

The Syrian civil war, in its massive brutality, is molding Syria's young generations. Today's children suffer physically and psychologically, are targeted and employed by armed groups, and are terrorized and kept out of school by the regime. Tomorrow, the legacy of war will continue to shape their existence, as they will have to rebuild their lives while scarred by heavy psychological traumas but sporting limited educational and professional skills. A severely damaged educational infrastructure and a destroyed economy further

worsen the prospects for Syrian children.[39] This will of course impact not only on Syria's own stability and recovery, but also the recovery of the surrounding region, not only in terms of forced migration but also with respect to fostering both radicalization and criminal activities.

In this context, it is especially important to understand the long term effect of IS and its targeting of children. The group has developed a strategy that not only employs children for military operations but molds them as the new model citizens of the caliphate. Thus it has developed an extensive indoctrination campaign aimed at children that combines exposure to violence, religious orthodoxy, and military training. The curriculum in IS schools and universities couples religious education with languages and sciences; the group is aware of the need to educate its youth in areas fundamental for the future expansion of the caliphate. This ambitious indoctrination campaign represents a future threat to both regional and global stability. In a post-Islamic State environment, the reintegration of the children of war in a post-caliphate society will be an enormous challenge for both domestic and international stakeholders.

In general, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers is a key challenge in any post-war recovery period; but the situation in Syria is especially dire and, if history is any guide, the stakes are immensely high. An interesting parallel is the impact that prolonged war, geopolitical interests, violence, and massive displacement had on the Afghani population during the decade of war against the Soviet Union. That situation allowed for the establishment of the Taliban movement, while the instability that followed the USSR withdrawal in 1989 facilitated the group's official rise in Afghanistan. An important lesson to learn from this development is how the international community's failure to respond to the humanitarian crisis that enveloped Afghanistan after 1989 generated extensive consequences for local, regional, and global security.

After the Soviet withdrawal the world rapidly lost interest in war-torn Afghanistan, despite the role played by the UN and mostly private NGOs in delivering limited aid:[40] United States aid in 1994, the year the Taliban officially emerged, was only $3.5 million.[41] Children, once again, seemed to bear the brunt of the situation, trapped between a collapsed economy, widespread insecurity, and a destroyed public education system with its lowest official record of registered pupils.[42] Meanwhile, in Pakistan, home to over 3 million Afghani refugees,[43] under-investments in public education, an over-crowded system, and the Pakistani government's lack

of interest in integrating Afghanis in the mainstream educational system led many refugee families to rely on local religious schools, or madrassas, for their children's education.[44] The number of madrassas skyrocketed from 2,500 in 1980 to 39,000 by the late 1990s.[45] Religious schools offered free education, room, and board – enticing incentives for the overwhelmingly poor refugee population. At the same time, many of these schools received little to no government oversight and offered a highly restricted religious education, with numerous schools in the Northwest Frontier province close to the fundamentalist Deobandi current. In some cases, children also received military training. It is no surprise, then, that the Taliban movement originated from this milieu, with many of these students – lacking the necessary cultural and economic skills to engage in endeavors other than religious activities – joining Mullah Mohammad Omar's movement and its self-stated goal to restore peace and security to the country.[46] In this context, the international community's lack of commitment to post-1989 reconstruction further facilitated the growth of the movement and the swelling of its ranks.

If the rise of the Taliban movement in post-Soviet jihad Afghanistan serves as a case study, it is easy to see how the failure to address the fate of Syrian children will continue to haunt the world for generations to come. To tackle this enormous long term security challenge, the international community will have to invest beyond the military realm, commit itself to the day after, and invest in complex and long term social, cultural, and educational approaches to de-radicalization and socialization. An obvious prescription is to increase the investment in education.

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Accordingly, investing in education, both in Syria as well as within the refugee population, should be one of the international community's foremost priorities. Investments are needed to support the educational infrastructure as well as to boost remedial and vocational education to allow children to slowly make up the time they have been forced to spend out of school. Currently this is not happening: only 20 percent of the total funding requested for education by the UN in its 2015 Syria Response Plan 2015 was met by late September 2015. Similarly, while the funds allocated to education and children in the case of Syrian refugees vary from country to country, according to

all available indicators Syrian children have fallen behind, from school enrollment to access to basic healthcare. Recognizing the importance of education, increasing investments, and beginning to devise and implement long term programs is imperative for Syria and the future of its population. Moreover, investing in education is only half of the equation: equally important is tackling the deliberate attacks on schools and educational infrastructure, which over the years have transformed schools from safe to dangerous spaces.

Even this, however, is far from enough, as many of the problems faced by children – from child labor to sexual exploitation to recruitment of children by groups like the Islamic State – are intrinsically connected to the broader dynamics of conflict and displacement, and therefore can only be addressed in that greater context.

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Reality Test: Strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Process

Nir Hassid

This article deals with the decisions on strengthening the process of reviewing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), specifically, how these decisions influence the treaty and the robustness of the nonproliferation regime, with the regime constituting one of the NPT's key elements, and the NPT being a critical norm within the context of the regime.[1] Strengthening the NPT refers to all the measures and joint decisions in the framework of the Review Conferences that make it possible to deal more effectively with the individual and collective needs of the NPT member states concerning the challenges of nonproliferation.[2] These measures are intended to strengthen the regime; among the most important are incentives for transparency, through sharing of information; reciprocity, through issuing regular and reliable reports; and enhanced cooperation, via structural adaptation of the NPT's operating mechanisms and implementation of decisions made in its framework.

The 45 years that the NPT has been in force reflect the depth of differences in concepts and interests among its member states with respect to the core objectives outlined in the NPT (preventing nuclear proliferation, nuclear disarmament, and the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes).[3] This article looks at the general and procedural aspects used in the process of reviewing the NPT, and the various proposals raised to overcome the review challenges that result primarily from technical and political obstacles. The technical level includes proposals of a procedural and structural nature, in an attempt to bolster cooperation among the NPT member states and render the various mechanisms operating in its framework more effective.

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The political aspect includes an outline of the common goals, the reciprocal relations between the member states for the sake of reinforcing the NPT, and above all, the issue of compliance and interpretation of the NPT clauses.

An examination of the proposals over the years to strengthen the review process shows that the attempts to make it more effective have not led to progress in achieving the goals of the NPT, due to the economic, legal, and normative constraints perpetuating the technical and political obstacles. In other words, the reforms that sought to improve the review process and make it more effective – particularly in the framework of the Review Conferences – have been of little significance in strengthening the NPT. This refers to the review cycle – all actions taken in the various international forums to prepare the next Review Conference in the framework of the UN and its institutions, and includes the Preparatory Committees and the Review Conferences themselves.[4] The barriers from the legal aspect have persisted, and the ability to implement normative changes over time that can be anchored in the framework of the NPT, so that they will define binding action or expected behavior, remains limited. In the economic aspect, not increasing the budget framework for the NPT mechanism makes it impossible to finance the administrative support units essential for regular and optimal activity during the review process periods. Furthermore, the results of this procedure have not reduced the member countries' political and diplomatic maneuvering room, nor have they increased their level of commitment to meet the stated goals, while being called to account for their actions or avoidance of taking action to progress toward the goals.

Background

The Review Conferences mechanism (also known as follow-up conferences) was first defined in the NPT framework so the member countries would assess the need for changes in the NPT in view of evolving situations, thereby overcoming lacunae in the NPT.[5] In the legal aspect, these conferences are authorized to make decisions about the proper interpretation of NPT clauses, and accept changes or amendments in order to improve operations.[6] However, a *review* of the NPT is different from an *amendment* procedure: an NPT review refers to the process of assessment and adaptation carried out by the NPT member states, while the amendment procedure refers to making specific changes in the NPT clauses and what is permitted by the treaty; it appears that there is a certain reluctance to change the wording or rules of the NPT, since the amendment procedure is difficult to execute.[7]

For this reason, in the prevailing international situation, the member states use the Review Conferences to formulate agreements on various issues by reaching understandings and agreement on the interpretation given to the NPT clauses – reflected in the writing of the Final Act document for the Review Conference, which usually includes the member states' *final declaration*.[8] The aim is to achieve consensus on the wording of the final declaration, whose importance is mainly symbolic, and which constitutes an expression of unity and unanimity among the member countries on the promotion of the NPT and its goals.[9] These declarations have no legal validity in themselves, but they have legal weight, mainly with respect to the authority to interpret the NPT clauses.[10] The wording of the final document usually appeals to the broadest common denominator in order to satisfy all the NPT member states, which detracts from the ability to institute changes that make any substantive difference and will strengthen the NPT.[11]

In general, the Review Conferences are political in essence, despite the importance of their legal dimension,[12] which makes them important in shaping the balance of power in the international arena.[13] It appears that in the context of the NPT, the Review Conferences are hard pressed to cope with the multidimensional challenges in the nuclear sphere, mainly because of the dichotomy between nuclear weapons states (NWS) and non-nuclear weapons states (NNWS) inherent in the NPT.[14] Of the nine Review Conferences that were held at five-year intervals between 1975 and 2015, at only four of them was a final consensus document formulated for the Conference (the final document for the 1995 Review and Extension Conference was not brought up for a vote by the member countries; it was approved by Conference President Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala). This contrasts with the corresponding Review Conferences for other non-conventional weapons, which have formulated a final document, despite the special challenges: the seven conferences for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), held in 1980-2011,[15] and the three Review Conferences for the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), held in 2003-2013 (two of which also included a political declaratory document committing the member countries to the convention).[16]

> The clear limitations of the NPT Review Conference in reaching and advancing joint decisions significantly undermine the ability of this mechanism to resolve disputes and foster consensus in the nuclear sphere.

The clear limitations of the NPT Review Conference in reaching and advancing joint decisions significantly undermine the ability of this mechanism to resolve disputes and foster consensus in the nuclear sphere. For example, one of the NPT's main challenges during the review period pertains to the question of nuclear disarmament (NPT Article 6), for which the nuclear weapons states are responsible. However, these states have not acted with the necessary diligence and transparency to implement this provision,[17] even though at the same time the non-nuclear weapons states are subject to inspection and verification by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Department of Safeguards.[18]

Strengthening the Review Process

The need to bolster the review process arose in the framework of the Review Conference decisions over the past 20 years, beginning with the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.[19] The decisions made on the subject included a more pragmatic approach during this period, in an attempt to bring about a sustainable and more responsive review of developments.[20] At the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, a decision document for strengthening the review process was accepted for the first time, mainly by arranging the activity of the Preparatory Committee – a procedure followed to this day.[21] The idea underlying the decision is designed to adapt the Preparatory Committees' activity to the Review Conferences' three main committees, so that they will make progress on the principles, goals, and implementation of provisions of the NPT, and promote its universality.[22] The decision also included giving the Review Conferences a dual mandate: to draw up recommendations for the future, to be assessed during the following review period, and to conduct a retroactive assessment of how decisions were implemented during the preceding review period.

In the final document, which was approved by consensus at the 2000 Review Conference, it was agreed that subsidiary bodies would be formed as needed to supplement the Conferences' work.[23] It was agreed that the work of the Preparatory Committee heads would also include consultations with representatives of the national delegations to the Conferences; the inclusion of non-governmental organizations in the discussions; the preparation of reports, summaries, and recommendations; and work streamlining processes. The Preparatory Committees began to operate based on these decisions. According to this format, discussions and decisions about procedural matters and ways of strengthening the NPT take place at the

first two meetings. At the last meeting before the Review Conference, concrete discussions are conducted about the NPT's challenges, with the aim of formulating a consensus document that will include the Conference's recommendations and the agenda for the discussions ahead of the Review Conference.

At the 2010 Review Conference, it was agreed to encourage the participation and aid of former Review Conference presidents and committee heads for the purpose of enabling them to provide concrete assistance. It was also decided to appoint a staff officer to act independently in the framework of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and coordinate meetings between the NPT members.[24]

At the Review Conference that took place in April-May 2015, the only attention paid to strengthening the review process was a working paper submitted by the Japanese government,[25] based on a working paper submitted to the Preparatory Committee in 2012 with the participation of Australia and other countries.[26] According to the Japanese document, strengthening the review process to date included a reference to procedural matters, such as shortening the meeting times and establishing a (technical) administrative support mechanism. At the same time, these topics are not as substantive as the need to enhance the principle of transparency, which supports the verification and irreversibility mechanisms: verification cannot be accomplished without transparency, and countries will be unsure that the goals are being irreversibly achieved (referring to nuclear disarmament). Japan therefore proposed beginning with a reporting obligation that would provide a clear picture of the status of the military nuclear devices of nuclear weapons states according to a "standard reporting format." On the basis of this format, it will be possible to obtain concrete quantitative information about nuclear disarmament activity and high quality information concerning measures taken to reduce the dependence on nuclear devices in the framework of the security and military apparatuses, in doctrine and in policy.

Overall, it appears that the working documents submitted over the years by the member states as

It appears that the working documents submitted over the years by the member states as recommendations for strengthening the review process dealt mainly with maintaining the existing structures (in other words, the Review Conferences and Preparatory Committees), while providing alternatives for streamlining work in those frameworks.

recommendations for strengthening the review process dealt mainly with maintaining the existing structures (in other words, the Review Conferences and Preparatory Committees), while providing alternatives for streamlining work in those frameworks.[27] In this way, the proposals avoid the need to amend the NPT and alter the areas of responsibility and reciprocal relations between the NPT agencies and the UN Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency.[28]

Problems Arising from Strengthening the Review Process

The review process documents obtained by the Review Conferences and states over the years, including working documents submitted and summaries of discussions and decisions, show that the same technical-political obstacles surveyed above are contained in three main economic, legal-normative, and political dimensions resulting from the significant strengthening of the NPT review process.

In the economic aspect, the proposals made for promoting a special secretarial-administrative support mechanism for the NPT that will operate continuously in its framework were not accepted because of budgetary reasons, including the costs of operations and employment of personnel,[29] even though other weapons control conventions exist in which there is a successful model of support units (such as the Ottawa Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention) supporting inter-office work, coordination between countries and organizations in civilian society, the preparation of documents and analyses, logical support, and so on. The absence of a support mechanism for the NPT makes it difficult to pool the relevant operations for the regular functioning of all the operating entities (states, international institutions) and interested parties (non-governmental organizations) in the NPT framework.

The proposals for strengthening the review process that have been accepted and implemented do not at all bridge the discriminatory inequality between the nuclear weapons states and the other countries.

In the legal-normative aspect, the proposals for strengthening the review process that have been accepted and implemented do not at all bridge the discriminatory inequality between the nuclear weapons states and the other countries. The process thus perpetuates a double standard for claims that the nuclear weapons states are not fulfilling their obligations under the NPT versus claims about the other

states fulfilling their obligations. This occurred at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, in which it was decided to extend the validity of the NPT with no time limitation. In effect, this perpetuated the differences in status in the NPT framework.[30]

In this aspect, and in the broader context of strengthening the review process, three additional possibilities have been raised over the years – including, in an attempt to evade amendment of the NPT, by promoting three new multilateral conventions to be included in a regime for preventing nuclear weapons proliferation.

The first began in the framework of the fourth NPT Review Conference in September 1990, which took place in the shadow of a proposal by a number of countries for amendments in the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) that would turn it into a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).[31] The UN General Assembly ratified the treaty on September 10, 1996, but it did not go into effect, because eight of the 44 countries possessing nuclear technology (including the United States and Israel), whose membership constitutes a prior condition for its validity, did not ratify it.

The second refers to the 1993 UN General Assembly resolution for the enactment of the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT), which passed unanimously, with the Conference on Disarmament responsible for drawing it up.[32] As of now, however, it has not yet been put into a convention, mainly due to objections by the some of the nuclear weapons states.

The third refers to the draft Nuclear Weapons Convention presented by Malaysia and Costa Rica at the NPT Review Conference in April 2000.[33] While the participating countries reached no agreement on accepting the draft convention, a decision was reached by consensus at the Conference on "13 Practical Steps" toward disarmament as an alternative to the convention.[34] In 2007, after seven years in which no significant progress on the matter took place, Malaysia and Costa Rica submitted a revised draft convention that included a comprehensive ban on developing, testing, producing, transferring, storing, using, and threatening to use nuclear weapons. This draft was submitted to the NPT Preparatory Committee in Vienna[35] and to the UN General Assembly,[36] but it too has thus far failed to result in any convention.

In the political aspect, the political-diplomatic room for maneuver of the member countries has not become smaller, and has not contributed to advancement of NPT goals. In the question of interpreting the NPT articles, mainly in the context of the issue of nuclear disarmament, there

is a bone of contention that arose already when the draft convention was formulated.[37] On the one hand, the nuclear weapons states assert that they have made systematic progress in fulfilling their commitments, as reflected in the drastic reduction in their nuclear weapons stockpiles and other arms control arrangements, such as the reduction in strategic weapons by the United States and Russia (in the framework of the New START Treaty).[38] On the other hand, complaints have been raised that the nuclear weapons states are dragging their feet in order to keep their stores of nuclear weapons and upgrade the quality of the remaining stores, which poses a challenge to the entire nonproliferation regime.[39] This dispute reflects the problems involved in the absence of transparency in reporting by the nuclear weapons states, as pointed out by the Japanese government in the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

The issue of eliminating weapons of mass destruction from the Middle East constitutes another prominent example of a political measure that began in 1974 at the initiative of Iran and Egypt.[40] It was never put into effect, although it was eventually anchored as a binding decision at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.[41] Concerning this issue, which led to the failure of the 2015 Review Conference, the United States asserted that Egypt and the Arab League countries, mainly Egypt, were making cynical and manipulative use of the Conference as a platform for themselves to promote narrow political interests, while their insistence on settling this issue did not allow maneuvering room and flexibility and was unrealistic.[42] Furthermore, flexibility and maneuvering room are what enable mainly the nuclear weapons states to promote or obstruct initiatives inconsistent with their interests – such as the US anxiety about turning the PTBT into a CTBT at the 1990 Review Conference, and thwarting the Middle East disarmament initiative at the 2015 Review Conference.[43]

The legal foundation for cooperation in the NPT framework is the member states' agreement to accept restrictions in the expectation of reciprocity with respect to the participation and behavior of other countries binding themselves to the NPT.

Conclusion

Despite expectations that the NPT review process will be strengthened by organizing the activity of the Preparatory Committees, the process has yielded only partial success in matters pertaining to administrative and procedural organizations of the Review Conferences. While establishing support

agencies for the Conferences and organizing the Preparatory Committee's activity constitute reinforcement for more effective activity at the Review Conferences, recommendations such as establishing a special support agency for the NPT (not based on UNODA), issuing reports, and disclosing all of the Conferences' discussions for public scrutiny have proven unsuccessful. Prolonged disputes between the nuclear weapons states and the other NPT members prevent any possibility of formulating significant recommendations discussion at the Review Conferences.[44]

As for promoting a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, a draft Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty, and a Nuclear Weapons Convention, it appears that as long as these initiatives do not ripen into binding treaties in their formulation or enter into force (EIF), they weaken the NPT review process, because they do not help bridge the various interests, and even highlight conflicting interests. The legal foundation for cooperation in the NPT framework is the member states' agreement to accept restrictions in the expectation of reciprocity with respect to the participation and behavior of other countries binding themselves to the NPT.[45] It appears that in the past 20 years, normative weakness is increasing, whether within the NPT – such as the handling of North Korea and Iran – or outside it, in weighing the possibilities of acquiring nuclear capability, such as in Turkey, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, which are liable to lead to a breach of the nonproliferation regime.[46] Whatever the reasons, normative weakness that has not been offset within the framework of strengthening the review process reflects the weakness of the NPT in coping with states that challenge it, and in overcoming the antagonism between the NPT member states.

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Below-the-Threshold Nuclear Development: The Nuclear Program in the UAE

Yoel Guzanksy

Background

The interest in nuclear energy on the west side of the Gulf was kindled by Iran's desire, beginning in the 1970s, to develop a nuclear program; the establishment of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization; and the start of construction of two nuclear reactors in Bushehr, which was later frozen once the revolution broke out. In May 1978, after several years of debate, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar signed an agreement to build a joint nuclear reactor, but the plan never came to fruition. Kuwait planned to build nuclear reactors on its own soil to generate electricity; this plan too was never realized. In those years, Saudi Arabia began monitoring seismic activity in the kingdom, an initial step in determining the most suitable locations for nuclear reactors. It seems that in addition to Iran's nuclear development, the motivations underlying these preliminary moves included Israel's and Iraq's nuclear efforts and the high oil prices at that time. The reasons none of these plans were executed are apparently linked to the Three Mile Island accident in Pennsylvania in March 1979, Israel's attack on the nuclear reactor in Iraq in 1981, and the drop in oil prices.

The renewed interest in nuclear development among the Gulf states was closely related to the momentum surrounding nuclear development in Iran; this was made explicit at the Gulf Cooperation Council summit in December 2006 in Riyadh. Since then, these nations have investigated the use of nuclear technologies for a range of applications with different rates of intensity and success. When it comes to international law and nonproliferation norms, all six states adhere to the directives of the International Atomic

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Energy Agency, and in recent years three of them – the UAE, Kuwait, and Bahrain – have also signed the IAEA Additional Protocol, allowing closer supervision of their nuclear activities.

The Arab Gulf states – Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, and Bahrain – share an official policy that strives to keep the Middle East in general and the Gulf in particular free of weapons of mass destruction. But as early as 2004, they proposed a sub-region free of nuclear weapons in the Gulf.[1] This represented something of a turning point from their previous approach, which had emphasized a nuclear-free zone encompassing the entire Middle East, very similar to the Iranian-Egyptian initiative presented to the UN General Assembly in 1974.[2] Unofficial discussions on the issue were held, but the initiative failed because of disagreement between the Arab states and Iran, which had made its participation conditional on Israel dismantling its nuclear capabilities and US forces leaving the Gulf.

Given their desire to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue, the Gulf states presented a new initiative in 2007, which proposed that Iran become a member of the regional nuclear fuel bank in exchange for stopping its uranium enrichment program.[3] Iran, however, announced it had no intention of stopping its enrichment activity. The failure of this initiative in tandem with the growing realization of Iran's power and resolve to continue developing its program played a role in the motivation of several Arab Gulf states to develop their own civilian nuclear programs, while stressing that this in no way contradicted their fundamental position on a nuclear-free zone. This stance reflects the oft-repeated saying that the states have a right to strive for nuclear technologies within the framework of IAEA supervision. This was also expressed in the most recent, semi-official Saudi initiative on behalf of a WMD-free Middle East.[4]

The UAE's nuclear program – the most advanced among the Arab nations – is in large part a response to Iran. Yet in addition, it may still serve as a desirable alternative model for civilian nuclear development for the entire Middle East.

Although the declarations made by all six Gulf states link their renewed interest in nuclear development to a rising demand for sources of energy, it is difficult to doubt that a key motivation underlying the trend is the Iranian nuclear program. It is hardly a coincidence that Iran's resolve to continue its nuclear program overlapped with the Gulf states' renewed efforts to develop an infrastructure and knowledge in the field. Similarly, the UAE's nuclear program – the most advanced among the Arab nations – is in large part a

response to Iran. Yet in addition, it may still serve as a desirable alternative model for civilian nuclear development for the entire Middle East.

Energy Needs, Prestige, and Regional Status

The UAE possesses the world's seventh largest oil reserves, with an estimated 100 billion barrels (with more than 90 percent of the federation's oil reserves located in Abu Dhabi).[5] The low cost of producing oil and gas, the fact that energy is highly subsidized, the accelerated rate of development, and population growth have all contributed to very high rates of consumption of electricity. In fact, the UAE has one of the highest per capita consumption of energy in the world.[6]

Although it has some of the largest oil reserves on the globe, the UAE is intent on varying its mix of energy sources, currently based entirely on fossil fuels (the UAE's high consumption of electricity has forced it to import gas from its neighbors).[7] Aside from investing in solar energy development, the federation has allocated some $40 billion to production of electricity from nuclear reactors. Once constructed, it is estimated that these reactors will add 5.6 GWs to the electric grid. The annual consumption of electricity in the nation is expected to climb to more than 40,000 MWs by 2020, reflecting a cumulative compound growth of roughly 9 percent since 2007.[8]

The importance of ensuring new energy sources in the UAE stems from the dramatic increase in the nation's consumption and the need for additional desalination plants, transportation development, and an accelerated infrastructure construction program. Yet despite the dramatic increase in electricity consumption, the rate of the UAE's investment in the production and development of energy sources remained static in 2005-2010. Furthermore, despite its investments in renewable energy, such as wind and solar power, it seems that renewable energy can provide only up to 7 percent of the nation's demand for electricity.[9]

Thus, given the high demand for electricity, the UAE has begun looking for energy sources that can meet its rapidly growing needs. Because a total elimination of the heavy subsidies on energy products is liable, under extreme conditions, to damage the federation's political stability, the regime prefers to export its gas and oil and use alternate energy sources to provide for its civilian electricity needs. To this end, in January 2009 the UAE signed a "123 agreement" for civilian nuclear cooperation with the United States, opening the door for activity by US and international companies in the federation. The same year, the UAE also signed the IAEA Additional

Protocol, which expands the supervisory regime, thereby signaling that it was serious about its intentions and committed to full transparency.[10] One of the key paragraphs in the "123 agreement" bans plutonium processing and uranium enrichment. The existence of this paragraph, in addition to Abu Dhabi's commitment to transparency and IAEA regulation, helped allay US concerns and secure Congressional approval. Those limitations on fuel cycle activities also helped the administration label the agreement the "gold standard" for similar agreements in the future.[11]

One of the ways in which the agreement between the United States and the UAE was made possible was through the passage of the 2009 Federal Law Regarding the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy. While creating the foundation for a local civilian nuclear development framework, the law also helped achieve official conformity with certain conditions stipulated by the "123 agreement," e.g., the ban on any planning, development, or construction of an enrichment or processing facility on UAE soil. In January 2010, the Emirates' Nuclear Energy Corporation announced that a consortium headed by South Korea's Electric Power Corporation had won a $20 billion contract to construct four APR1400-type reactors. After visiting the UAE in 2011, the IAEA noted that the nation's nuclear program was progressing satisfactorily and was in compliance with IAEA guidelines, and that it could serve as a role model for other nations seeking to develop a civilian nuclear energy program.[12]

The "123 agreement" opened the door to international cooperation for the UAE. From 2010 until 2015, such agreements were signed with the United Kingdom, Australia, Finland, Canada, Argentina, Japan, Russia, and France, among others, focusing on the transfer of technology, experts, nuclear materials, and instruments. For example, in March 2010, Abu Dhabi co-founded, with the United States, an academic institution called the Gulf Nuclear Energy Infrastructure Institute to train regional manpower in fields relevant to nuclear research. Similarly, Australia, which has the largest uranium reserves in the world, agreed in July 2012 to provide the UAE with reactor fuel sufficient for the first 15 years of operation of the nuclear power plant.[13]

Unlike other nations for which the disaster in Fukushima provided a reason to cancel or suspend their programs, the UAE is forging ahead. Ironically, the cornerstone laying ceremony at the site selected for the nuclear reactors in Barakah, Abu Dhabi, took place on March 14, 2011, only three days after the accident in Japan. The construction of the first

reactor, Barakah 1, began in July 2012; on Barakah 2 in May 2013; on Barakah 3 in September 2014; and on Barakah 4 in September 2015. If there are no delays, the first reactor is expected to be joined to the electric grid in 2017 and the last in 2020.[14]

Why would a nation sitting on top of some of the world's largest oil reserves need a nuclear energy program? This is a question Iran has long been asking. Answers given by the UAE include the need to reduce air pollution (the UAE has one of the highest per capita-to-pollution ratios in the world) and dependence on oil for electricity. Moreover, while one cannot ignore the desire to acquire alternate energy sources as a way to protect the nation's natural resources and preserve them for exports, one can also not ignore the national prestige attached to technological nuclear achievement. The population of the UAE seems overwhelmingly in favor of the nuclear energy policy, which was presented as a way of reducing dependence on fossil fuels, increasing the security of electricity supply, creating jobs, and reducing pollution. A poll conducted in the UAE in December 2012 revealed that 82 percent of the population supports nuclear energy and that 89 percent supports the construction of a nuclear plant in the country, an increase from the 66 and 67 percent, respectively, over a previous poll. Furthermore, 89 percent thought that nuclear energy for peaceful purposes is "critically important," "very important," or "important" for the nation.[15]

Finally, alongside considerations of energy policy and prestige, the seal of approval given to the Iranian nuclear program is also clearly a strong motivating element for its neighbors to work toward civilian nuclear technology as a way of reaching a kind of nuclear parity. In their view, they too can play the game. For some of the smallest nations – Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman – their financial, geographical, and/or political situation is such that an independent civilian nuclear program, to say nothing of a military one, is unrealistic; they may take part in joint GCC projects. At the same time, some declarations on nuclear development in the Gulf were meant to exert pressure on the United States to stop Iran.

Possible Obstacles and Risks

Despite the UAE's commitment to act with full transparency and the steps already taken to ensure this goal, there are still technological obstacles to a sustainable nuclear energy program and concerns about the proliferation of nuclear knowledge and materials. The chief concern is that in the past, Dubai served as a base of operations for the smuggling network operated

by Pakistani nuclear scientist A. Q. Khan; Dubai remains attractive to smugglers, including a slew of Iranian straw companies involved in the smuggling of banned materials. In addition, the speed with which the UAE is advancing to nuclear energy is alarming because its institutions are not yet sufficiently prepared to handle the issue and undertake rigorous inspections. The federal structure of the UAE makes it even more difficult to inspect dual use materials because each of the emirates has different customs laws, and coordination among them is faulty. The lifting of the sanctions against Iran could also make it difficult for the UAE to oversee Iranian activity in the field on UAE soil.

Despite all these issues, as well as concerns that the reactors in the UAE are constructed in a conflict-prone area and could become targets for terrorist attacks, the federation is succeeding in interesting foreign governments and companies in the project and is using its economic clout to offer experts from all over the world attractive terms of employment. A large part of the UAE's success lies in its financial sources, the lack of political or environmental opposition in the country, and the availability of uninhabited land suitable for nuclear plants. The project schedule is unprecedented: some 10 years from the announcement of the policy to when the first reactor is expected to start supplying electricity. But even if the UAE has solved fundamental problems of nuclear development, such as ensuring a long term supply of nuclear fuel, regulating treatment of spent fuel, and devising regulatory and policy solutions, and even if it is so far on schedule, other issues remain unresolved, including: problems of safety associated with this type of reactor in South Korea; the sharp decline in oil prices in the last year, liable to result in budgetary pressures on the nuclear program; adjustment of the reactors to the difficult climate conditions in the Gulf, including water temperature, sand storms, and the dust and heat, issues that have not been fully resolved to date; and, finally, the numerous different systems and experts from many countries involved in the program, all with different technology backgrounds and speaking different languages.[16]

At least in the short and mid terms, the UAE's nuclear energy program is irrelevant to the danger of a nuclear arms race in the Middle East.

At least in the short and mid terms, the UAE's nuclear energy program is irrelevant to the danger of a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. However, civilian nuclear programs can reduce costs and difficulties associated with military programs if and when security risks or

political motivations emerge. Should the UAE, at some point in the distant future, decide it must have military nuclear capabilities of its own as a way to defend itself, the civilian program already in existence – including the plants, technologies, materials, human capital, and accumulated expertise – can pave a relatively quick and easy way to nuclear arms. The international community has good tools to confront this danger, if only thanks to the UAE's dependence – at least in the foreseeable future – on foreign sources for the construction of infrastructures and manpower. The UAE chose, at least initially, to attain its fuel from external sources and ship the spent fuel back to its country of origin. Nonetheless, economic constraints may result in nations exporting nuclear technologies being less than optimally careful in this area so as not to risk financial losses.

A Model for the Region?

The rationale behind the "123 agreement" between the United States and the UAE was to set a binding precedent that would apply to all countries seeking to build civilian nuclear infrastructures on their soil. However, since the signing of the agreement, it seems that other nations have become less inclined to accept similar terms. The United States, which does not want to lose markets to competitors, has also distanced itself from the precedent it wanted to establish, instead preferring to adopt a case-by-case policy. Other than the possible danger this change poses to the agreement already signed with the UAE, the policy is liable to allow other nations to operate a nuclear fuel cycle on their soil. Over time, applying limitations selectively not only fails to ensure that those nations will buy their facilities and knowledge from the United States but almost certainly damages the NPT regime, if only because of the role the United States has played and the bilateral agreements it has signed to stop nuclear proliferation.

The United States, which does not want to lose markets to competitors, has also distanced itself from the precedent it wanted to establish, instead preferring to adopt a case-by-case policy.

While the UAE remains bound to limits on operating a nuclear fuel cycle on its soil, the United States has significantly changed its approach since the agreement was signed in 2009 and weakened the threshold conditions for receiving nuclear approval, as reflected in the agreement it signed with Vietnam, which set the so-called "silver standard." In May 2014, Washington and Hanoi, which plans on building seven reactors in the country, signed a "123 agreement" that

did not include an explicit commitment on Hanoi's part not to process plutonium or enrich uranium. Despite the pressure on Congress to enforce the gold standard on future nuclear agreements, it seems that the current administration insists on judging each case on its own merits.[17] Similarly, in April 2015, the United States signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with South Korea, which already operates 24 nuclear reactors, designed to replace the prior agreement that banned Seoul from enriching uranium and processing plutonium. This agreement erodes the gold standard set in the agreement with the UAE and allows South Korea, in consultation with the United States, to engage in certain aspects of plutonium production and uranium enrichment.[18]

This trend not only reflects an erosion of the level set in the agreement with the UAE, but in the case of South Korea, affects a nation that exports nuclear knowledge and materials to the Middle East, representing a potential proliferation risk.[19] Two major elements are responsible for the administration's curtailed position: one, the pressure exerted on the administration by the US nuclear industry not to lose potential clients to competitors; two, the administration's complex relationship with nations seeking to develop nuclear infrastructures on their soil, such that other interests, including economic, might affect progress toward nuclear cooperation agreements if operating under a lower threshold than that set in the agreement with the UAE.

It is doubtful if the singular case of the UAE can serve as a model for future nuclear development. The agreements signed more recently by the United States, as well as the public demands voiced by Saudi Arabia and others nations about their right to enrich uranium on their soil, are indications of this.

Conclusion

The UAE has made a convincing case for the feasibility of nuclear projects for civilian ends: the increasing demand for energy, reduced dependence on polluting fuels, and more oil available for exports. In terms of nuclear proliferation, the federation does not pose a significant danger in the foreseeable future; the danger of a regional nuclear arms race is, at least for now, unrelated to the development of a nuclear program based on the model adopted by the UAE. In the more distant future, however, the UAE's nuclear program could have additional strategic significance, because it would force its enemies to waste energy on guessing whether or not nuclear arms were within UAE reach.

The nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1 set a new standard for the region. It is therefore not inconceivable that the Iranian precedent will encourage other Middle East nations to develop a nuclear program just below the nuclear threshold. Experts posit that the first of these nations would be Saudi Arabia, which believes it has the resources needed to close the gap with Iran should it become necessary to do so. Despite US efforts to calm the Saudis, the latter have not given up their "right" to enrich uranium on their soil. Senior Saudi officials are now asking for the same conditions Iran achieved in its agreement. More recently, amid fears of an atomic arms race in the Middle East, UAE's ambassador to the US told Ed Royce, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, that the UAE might also seek the right to enrich uranium, a right that Iran has asserted under the recently signed nuclear deal, and that his country no longer felt bound by its previous nuclear agreement with the US.[20]

It is doubtful if the singular case of the UAE can serve as a model for future nuclear development. The agreements signed more recently by the United States, as well as the public demands voiced by Saudi Arabia and others nations about their right to enrich uranium on their soil, are indications of this. Progress in the UAE's nuclear project will give the federation enhanced regional status, not only compared to Iran but also compared to its other neighbors, as the first Arab nation to join the nuclear club. Other Arab nations lacking the resources and international support enjoyed by the federation will find it difficult to develop a program with the same rate and systematic approach the UAE has achieved. Finally, although nuclear development in Iran was an essential factor in motivating the UAE to start its own program, other factors just as important, if not more so, were also involved. Even if Iran keeps its part of the agreement and rolls back some of its nuclear capabilities, energy security and national prestige will remain on the table as powerful motivators for the UAE to continue and further develop its nuclear program.

Notes

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China and Israel: On the Same Belt and Road?

Galia Lavi, Jingjie He, and Oded Eran

The Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road (One Belt, One Road, OBOR) is a Chinese pan-continental initiative that aims to connect China to Western Europe while promoting the economic cooperation and prosperity of the regions and the countries along the respective land and sea routes (figure 1). This initiative is presumably one of the key issues that will be included in China's 13th Five-Year Plan of 2016-2020.[1] It may also represent the transformation of China's grand strategy from passive participation to active construction.

The OBOR initiative is estimated to involve over 60 countries, 63 percent (4.4 billion) of the global population, and 29 percent ($21 trillion) of global GDP.[2] The fact that Israel is not on either aforementioned route suggests that it is not a major target for the OBOR initiative. Nevertheless, Israel is of great importance to China's implementation of the project, primarily because of its location on the shores of the Mediterranean and its image as a member of the "US camp."

Origin and Development of OBOR

The idea of the Silk Road Economic Belt was first mentioned publicly on September 7, 2013 in a speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping at Nazarbayev University in Astana, Kazakhstan. Xi proposed then that China and Central Asia jointly construct the Silk Road Economic Belt to strengthen economic ties and foster regional cooperation.[3]

A month later, during his visit to Indonesia, Xi proposed the building of a 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road to promote the maritime cooperation

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with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and "to make good use of the China-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation Fund set up by the Chinese government." In addition, Xi proposed the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB),[4] thereby putting both new Chinese initiatives, OBOR and the AIIB, on the map.

Implementation of the OBOR initiative began in 2014. On February 6, 2014, China and Russia agreed on connecting China's OBOR initiative with Russia's Euro-Asia Railways.[5] During the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Beijing on November 8, 2014, Xi announced that China would contribute $40 billion to set up the Silk Road Fund to provide investment and financing support for infrastructure, resources, industrial cooperation, financial cooperation, and other projects in countries along the Belt and Road.[6] At the end of the year, at the Central Economic Work Conference, China's top level economic conference, the OBOR initiative was upgraded to one of China's priorities for 2015,[7] and indeed, 2015 saw the expansion of the project. In February 2015, a special group of five top profile Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials led by Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli was established by the central government to oversee the OBOR implementation.[8] A month later, China unveiled its action plan, "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road," symbolizing the official confirmation of the initiative.[9]

Meanwhile, China launched the establishment of the AIIB. On June 29, 2015, fifty Prospective Founding Members (PFM) of AIIB, including Israel, signed the Bank's Articles of Agreement, which outlined the legal framework and management principles of the bank.[10] The AIIB will be formally established, provided that more than ten of the PFM with a total capital of no less than 50 percent complete their ratification procedures by the end of 2015. Though functioning independently of OBOR, the AIIB is a crucial financial source for implementation of Silk Road.

China's Rationale for OBOR

Economic Motivator

China's economic growth rate has begun to decline from its peak of recent years. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecast of October 2013, the growth rate from October 2013 to 2018 will be 7 percent, a 2.6 percent decline from the average growth rate from 1998 to 2013.[11] One major contributor to this decline is China's excess capacity. Nowadays, the

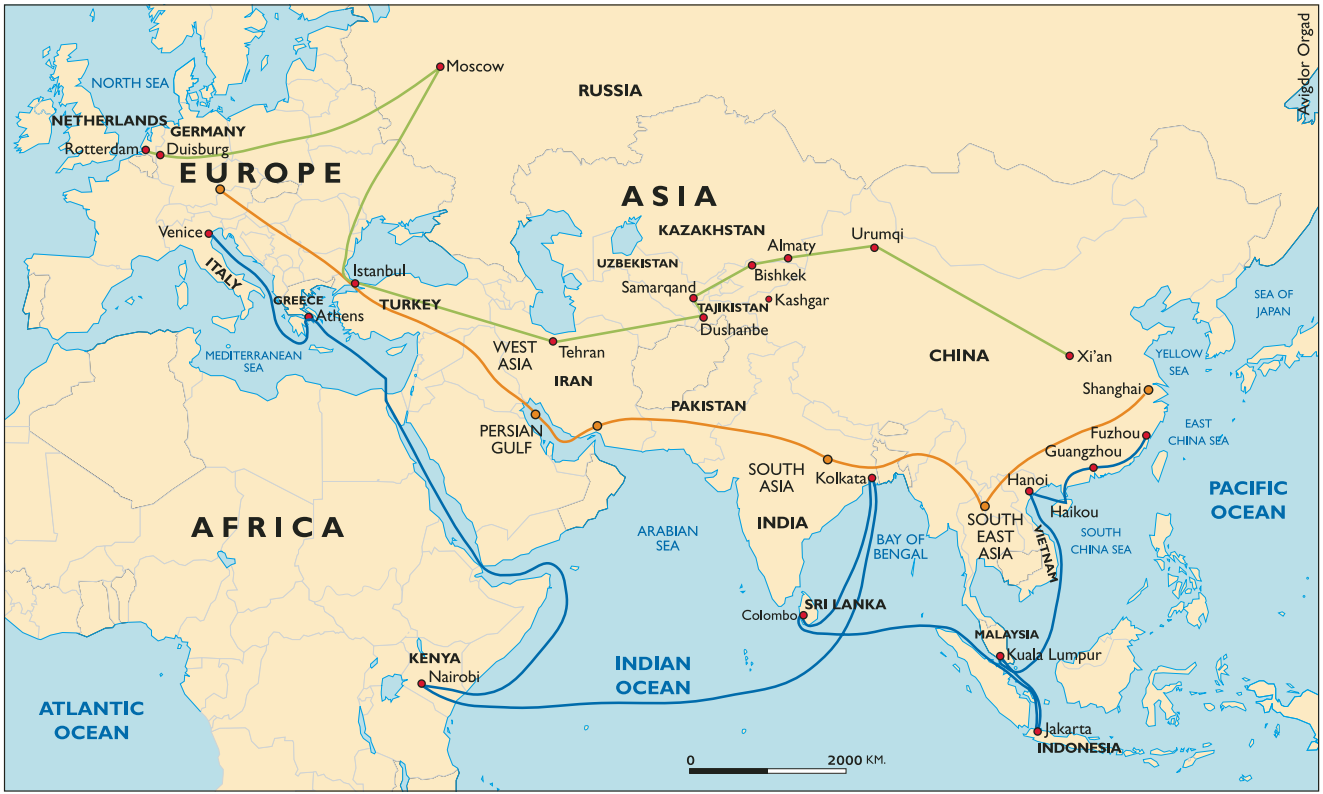


Figure 1. Land and Sea Routes of the OBOR Initiative

high rates of investment, stimulated by the Chinese government after the 2008 financial crisis, have been transferred to capacity, as consumption has shown no significant increase. Since China has been following an investment-led growth model, it is eager to refuel its economic growth through the pursuit of new global markets to absorb its excess capacity. This can be achieved through, among other means, the OBOR project.

Apart from exploring new global markets, OBOR will also enable China to diversify its inland and maritime transport network, thus better securing its existing export markets and energy and raw material supply line. Today the Middle East remains the largest source of China's oil imports. In 2014, oil imports from the Middle East to China amounted to 171.7 million tons, approximately three times more than those from Africa, China's second largest oil supplier.[12] This makes the Strait of Malacca, which is located on the shortest sea route between the Middle East and China, a vital chokepoint for China's energy and raw material import. Accordingly, Beijing has been increasingly concerned about the Malacca dilemma − whoever controls the Strait of Malacca controls China's energy supply route.[13] Under such circumstances, China's OBOR initiative will help alleviate its concern by building alternative routes for energy and raw material supplies.

Moreover, OBOR is an extension of the domestic economic development agenda. One of the top priorities over the coming years is to narrow the development discrepancy between the eastern and western parts of China and between cities and villages by transferring the excess capacity from the more developed areas to the less developed areas. In recent years, these development gaps became increasingly crucial in terms of China's internal security. This includes the mounting problems of terrorism and separatism, for instance in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, where the extremist and separatist Uighur minorities have staged violent uprisings and terrorist activities as moves toward independence. Therefore, the CCP expects that OBOR will encourage its domestic agenda of bridging China's development gaps and securing China's domestic stability.

Another domestic strategy launched recently by China is "Internet+" (Internet Plus), meaning internet plus traditional sectors: a program to revitalize traditional sectors by associating them with internet platforms and information and communications technology. This strategy was announced by China's Prime Minister Li Keqiang during the third session of China's 12th National People's Congress (NPC) in March 2015.[14] Approximately three months later, a detailed action plan was released, whereby Internet

Plus is to become a new economic model for China by 2025. OBOR, and particularly its sub-concept of the Information Silk Road, which promotes more advanced communication connectivity among countries along the routes, will facilitate the Internet Plus strategy.

Geopolitical Motivator

China's geopolitical consideration is twofold. First, OBOR is a direct, albeit peaceful, response to Obama's Pivot to Asia strategy, a long term Asia-Pacific-oriented strategy that aims to preserve the US strategic position as a Pacific power by deterring China in the military, diplomatic, and economic dimensions.[15] A case in point is the US exclusion of China, the biggest economic entity in Asia, from the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement (TPP).[16] In response to the US turning to the East, China opted for a strategy of turning to the West.[17] This allows China to avoid a direct confrontation with the US while strengthening its ties with countries from Asia to Europe.

Moreover, OBOR is the materialization of China's diplomatic guideline vis-à-vis its periphery, or the land and maritime regions adjacent to China: preservation of China's border stability and export of China's political influence through economic cooperation and amity. This guideline was first articulated by Xi Jinping during a Chinese Communist Party work forum on China's diplomacy toward its periphery in October 2013 and was referred to by Chinese government and academia as Planning and Controlling China's Peripheries (*Jing Lue Zhou Bian*).[18] Accordingly, OBOR will function as a crucial instrument to fulfill China's diplomatic guidelines toward neighboring countries.

Israel's Potential Contribution to the OBOR Initiative

The Israeli government encourages cooperation with China in a wide range of fields and has established a Special Economic Task Force headed by Prof. Eugene Kandel to promote economic ties with China. Former Economy Minister Naftali Bennett set cooperation with China as "top strategic goal" whereby "hundreds of Israeli companies will operate in the Chinese market as soon as possible."[19] The Chinese OBOR project creates a good opportunity for Israel to achieve this goal and advance its economy.

Israel has the potential to be one stop on the Chinese marine Silk Road connecting the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea through the Gulf of Suez, provided that the construction of a railway line from Eilat to Ashdod

port is approved by the Israeli government. Though Israel seems to be a small and dispensable stop on the OBOR routes, its significance should not be underestimated. Statistics show Israel's rating in the investment index is 22 out of the 63 countries located along the silk routes,[20] and the operational risk to investment in Israel is considered to be lower than average among countries along the road.[21] These statistics are further validated by an intensification of Chinese investment in Israel. In the past two years, Chinese companies have completed more than $5 billion in acquisitions in various domains, including food (Tnuva), agriculture (Makhteshim Agan), healthcare (Shahal), hi-tech (Nextec), and infrastructure (construction of the new port in Ashdod).

Although China abounds in manpower and is the second largest economy in the world, it sorely needs innovation and technological enhancement for further economic development. As President Xi Jinping told China's leading scientific and engineering think tanks in 2014, "Science and technology are the foundations for national strength and prosperity, and innovation is the soul of national promotion."[22]

China's Prime Minister Li Keqiang stressed the same issue in July 2015 and said that innovation is a "golden key" to the development of China, and that the development of science and technology is essential for continued growth.[23] Science and technology are precisely the areas in which Israel, as a "start-up nation," can contribute to China's development.

The injection of Chinese-owned financial resources into the Israeli private sector and Israeli academic institutions is a welcome phenomenon against the background of an overall decline in foreign direct investment in Israel.

In fact, Sino-Israeli collaboration projects in both areas are already underway. For example the Chinese "city of water" Shaoxin has benefited from Israel's innovative water technologies for the development of municipal, agricultural, and industrial water infrastructure.[24] This kind of cooperation will be received favorably in northwestern China, for example in Xinjiang province. China has sought to encourage development in this province in order to reassure and encourage stability in the region, and to bridge the economic gap between eastern and western parts of the country. Implementation of Israeli inventions and technological solutions in agriculture, water, and renewable energy sources can promote the Chinese objective of turning the west of the country into the center of agricultural production in order to meet China's growing need for food.

Israeli hi-tech companies have much to offer to China's "Internet+" program, which is designed to improve and develop the traditional industrial sector through computers and communications, as well as to expand its electronics infrastructure, from fiber optic networks to satellite communications, in order to improve the flow of information, especially in rural and remote areas. Israeli companies can help the development of the industrial sector in China by streamlining work procedures and improving performance in areas such as industrial robotics.

In addition to developing local industry and agriculture in China, the OBOR project aims to expand trade and transportation between countries. Along its routes, it will be necessary to establish sea ports and airports, construct railways, build warehouses, and develop a transport system. Israeli companies will be able to contribute to this complex project through cooperation in developing and integrating advanced technologies and related systems for trains, aircraft, and marine engineering. An example is measurement technology through laser and cameras for the automotive and aviation industry being developed by Nextec Technologies, which was acquired by a Chinese company in 2014.[25]

Other areas that suit the OBOR project are the medical services sector and the finance and insurance fields. In December 2014, China bought the company Natali, and in July 2015, it included the company Shahal in its shopping cart.[26] Both companies specialize in providing tele-medicine services and advanced emergency medicine. The insurance sector is also very interesting to the Chinese, who acquired the controlling stake in Phoenix in June 2015[27] and are currently negotiating to purchase Clal Insurance.

The Political Aspect of China-Israel Economic Relations

The combination of massive financial resources and assertive Chinese foreign policy ambitions and strategies has sent warning signs to many capitals. In Israel it sparked a lively public debate about whether there are strategic risks involved in the exposure to China. But more than just a public debate will soon be needed. The sale of a major part of the Israeli dairy food company Tnuva raises many questions that would not have been raised had a British company bought the same Israeli company. In part this is the fear of the unknown, and when ports, railways, and tunnels are constructed by one country's firms, questions arise about the wisdom of entrusting too many national infrastructure projects to firms of one nation, efficient and economical as it may be. Especially when this one country is

China, the questions become even more salient when they relate to massive investments in Israeli hi- tech firms or academic institutes that serve as greenhouses to many innovations, some of which are in cyber security.

There are no doubts about the political and economic benefits of formal governmental relations between China and Israel. The invitation to join the AIIB is certainly a political gain with economic potential. Israel's membership in the Asian Development Bank is opposed by the Asian states that belong to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Israeli firms are denied the business opportunities that membership in the ADB offers. Membership in the new AIIB can compensate for that loss and create a meeting point for representatives of Israeli and Muslim countries. The OBOR initiative has the potential of developing a major economic engine in central Asia, Turkey, and certain Middle East countries, which may enable Israel to leverage its relative economic advantages and improve its relations with these countries. The injection of Chinese-owned financial resources into the Israeli private sector and Israeli academic institutions is a welcome phenomenon against the background of an overall decline in foreign direct investment in Israel.

Yet these relations retain some thorny elements. China has not modified its pro-Arab stance. Its pattern of voting on resolutions dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has not changed since the establishment of full diplomatic relations in 1992. Its policy of selling weapons to Arab countries and Iran does not take into account Israel's concerns. China participated in the P5+1 talks over Iran's nuclear program, and while there is no evidence to show that it had a negative role, it may be expected to be among the first to remove sanctions, even earlier than stipulated in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

In and of themselves, the various business projects that Chinese firms have in Israel may not be a sufficient cause for alarm. Yet when juxtaposed with the ambitious OBOR, they can be viewed as part of a strategy to create a Chinese stronghold on the eastern flank of the Mediterranean.

In and of themselves the various construction projects that Chinese firms won in Israel may not be a sufficient cause for alarm. Yet when juxtaposed with the ambitious OBOR they can be viewed as part of a strategy to create a Chinese stronghold on the eastern flank of the Mediterranean. The Chinese investments in Israeli private hi-tech companies and academic institutions may be viewed as purely innocent

economic decisions. Yet some Israeli firms are on the cutting edge in their fields, especially in cyber/counter-cyber warfare. Even indirect involvement may give China access that may unintentionally harm Israel's interests.

Israel-China cooperation may also be in conflict with Israel's reliance on the United States. Israel has been careful to avoid cooperation with China in military sales and production, yet there is a danger that Chinese investments in Israeli hi-tech firms may inadvertently produce know-how transfer. Upon receiving China's invitation to join the AIIB, Israel, like some other states, consulted the US, thereby exhibiting sensitivity to the views in Washington. The conclusion of the TPP in October 2015 requires Israel to consider reaching an early agreement with this major economic bloc. The TPP may have political ramifications in the context of the sensitive triangular China-US-Israel relationship, which ought to be examined by the relevant authorities in Israel.

Conclusion

An Israeli national assessment of China-Israel relations in their entirety, beyond individual sectors and deals, is urgently needed. China is already a leading global economic force, notwithstanding recent setbacks in its economy. The establishment of an Israeli governmental task force aimed at the expansion of economic relations and the opening of another Israeli consulate, in addition to Shanghai, are evidence of the Israeli government's recognition of the importance it attaches to these relations. Certain aspects of these relations must be assessed more carefully, and policies must be adopted in ordered, informed fashion rather than resulting from intuition or default options.

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Relations between Israel and the Czech Republic: From Sentiment to Pragmatism?

Irena Kalhousová

Relations between the EU and Israel are currently marked by growing misgivings. On both sides, a lack of trust and different perspectives concerning the realities in the Middle East seem to be the main obstacles to a deeper relationship. Yet on a bilateral level Israel has a very strong relation with some EU countries, and these countries play an important role in balancing EU countries that promote rather one-sided anti-Israeli positions. One of the most Israel-friendly countries is the Czech Republic. Not always definitive in its foreign affairs, the Czech support for Israel remains one of the few stable features of its foreign policy. Czech politicians repeatedly support Israel when it faces strong international pressure and criticism. Diplomats, both in the Czech Republic and Israel, consider the mutual relations to be strong and friendly; the Czech diplomats would not hesitate to call them special.

This article analyzes the importance of strong Israel-Czech relations from the Israeli perspective; the roots of the Czech "special relationship" with Israel; and the future of Israel-Czech relations.[1]

Israel-Czech Relations

Notwithstanding existing animosities, relations with Europe are important for Israel. Economic, scientific, and cultural relations between them flourish, even as the political cooperation is marked by distrust and frequent misunderstanding on both sides. Nonetheless, there is a group of countries that do not universally embrace critical positions toward Israel.

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These countries prevent the EU from adopting policies that could have a significantly negative impact on Israel and resist an attempt to delegitimize Israel in international organizations, or via the BDS (boycott, divestment, sanctions) movement. Active in this group is the Czech Republic. Similarly, in the United Nations, the Czechs generally vote against resolutions that single out Israel.

In Israel, the Czech Republic evokes primarily positive connotations. In the minds of Israelis, and certainly in comparison to other Central and East European countries, it is not connected with the Holocaust. The Czech nation is considered friendly toward both Israel and Jews. Israel's intellectual elite is familiar with the name of the first Czechoslovak president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, for whom streets, squares, and cafes in major Israeli cities are named. Among the older generation of Israelis the term "Czech rifle" still resonates, as they remember the Czech military assistance that contributed to Israel's victory in the War of Independence. Václav Havel, leader of the Velvet Revolution and the first Czechoslovak post-Communist president, was also a popular figure in Israel after 1989.

Even during the Communist era, when Czechoslovakia adopted an anti-Zionist position, there was an understanding in Israel that this position was taken under the pressure of Moscow, to which Czechoslovakia, as a Soviet satellite, was subject since the late 1940s. Consequently, Israelis were very emotional about the Prague Spring in the 1960s, during which they hoped Czechoslovakia would be able to free itself from the Soviet tutelage. After the invasion of the armies of the Warsaw Pact ended these hopes, legendary singer Arik Einstein composed a song "Prague," which became a hit in Israel.

The Elements behind the "Special Relations"

While the positive Czech approach toward Israel is rooted in a series of mutually reinforcing factors, it is the historical legacy that largely defines the Czech position. The pro-Zionist approach of key Czech (Slovak) leaders and the trauma of the Munich Agreement are two notable elements in the Czech history that represent the formative experience influencing the Czech perspective. Combined with its non-colonial past and Communist heritage, history is thus the key for understanding the Czech position. This stance is bolstered by pragmatic factors, among them economic interests and a common security threat perception.

History

In Czech lands, Jews and non-Jews coexisted relatively well.[2] The Czech Jews were usually highly assimilated and were an integral part of the business, cultural, and scientific elite of Czechoslovakia. Intellectual philo-Semitism was quite strong and influential among the Czechoslovak leadership of the First Republic (from 1918 until WW II). The first Czechoslovak president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, was a strong supporter of Zionism and was the first head of state who, in 1927, at the age of 77, visited the Jewish state in the making.

From the end of WWII until the Communist coup in 1948, Czechoslovakia was able to practice rather independent foreign policy. Under the foreign minister Jan Masaryk, son of the first president, Czechoslovakia supported the division of Palestine in the UN and recognized the State of Israel on May 19, 1948. The diplomatic support to the new state was accompanied by militarily aid. Despite the international embargo, Czechoslovakia sold the state, both before and after its independence, rifles, machine guns, ammunition, and Avia S-199 and Spitfire aircraft. Israeli pilots, among them future president Ezer Weizmann, as well as military technicians, were trained in Czechoslovakia.

After 1948, Czechoslovakia began to adopt the Soviet approach in its relations toward both Jews and Israel. As in the USSR of the 1930s, the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia staged trials against "disloyal" members of the party. Jewish defendants, among others, were accused of a Trotskyite-Titoite-Zionist conspiracy, thus underlining an anti-Semitic element of the trials. In reaction to the anti-Semitic character of the 1952 Slansky trial,[3] Israel recalled its ambassador; Czechoslovakia had done so already the previous year.

The process of de-Stalinization reached its peak in Czechoslovakia during the 1960s. The disagreement with the official authorities over its anti-Israeli position became part of the protest against the Communist regime. Especially after the Israeli military victory in the Six Day War, many Czechs did not hide their admiration for the Jewish state. Indeed, the fact that in reaction to the Six Day War Czechoslovakia cut off its diplomatic relations with Israel proved to many that notwithstanding the partial liberalization, the Czechoslovak Communists leadership still closely followed the Soviet doctrine.

After the Prague Spring was crushed in 1968, Czechoslovakia remained hostile toward Israel. It supported the UN resolution in 1975 that equated

Zionism with racism. The Czechoslovak Communist regime also maintained close relations with the PLO, which maintained an official representative office in Prague since 1976. Yasir Arafat was a frequent guest of the Czechoslovak Communist leaders.

The Velvet Revolution of 1989 opened a new chapter in Czechoslovak-Israeli relations. In his New Year Address President Václav Havel expressed his desire to renew diplomatic relations with Israel. The restoration of relations, which occurred in February 1990, was a clear expression of the Czechoslovak foreign policy free of the Soviet control.

Identification with Israel

Czechs tend to see some historical parallels between the Czech and Israeli situations. The trauma of the Munich Agreement of 1938 remains the formative experience influencing the Czech understanding of the Israeli position. The fact that Great Britain and France betrayed a small state in the middle of Europe in order to placate an aggressive Nazi regime left the Czechs with a bitter feeling of abandonment. Many Czechs understand the Israeli doubts and skepticism when advised by friends and foes to cede control over territory in order to reach a lasting peace. The Czech diplomats also recognize that it is the legacy of Munich that consciously or subconsciously prevents them from joining those who see a clear connection between the lack of peace in the region with an Israeli presence outside of the Green Line. They do not want to be a partner to a policy that was so detrimental to the Czechs.[4]

Many Czechs, including the intellectuals, see Israel as a democratic island surrounded by a sea of instability and oppression. The ability to defend itself against the more powerful enemies strengthened the popularity and admiration of Israel among Czechs who live with the trauma of surrender, first to the Nazi occupation and later, during the Prague Spring, to the armies of the Warsaw Pact. Israel's readiness to protect its territory and its emphasis on self-reliance is not, as is often in Western Europe, interpreted as aggression and stubbornness, but is understood by Czechs. The fact that in the first Arab-Israeli war Czech arms contributed to the survival of Israel even strengthens these sympathies.

Non-Colonial Past and Communist Heritage

Lacking a colonial past, historically the Czechs do not have "special relations" with any of the Arab countries of the Middle East. Moreover, though

because of its Communist past Czechoslovakia had no choice but to conduct friendly relations with the Arab authoritarian countries, the Czechs are not sentimental about the Arab world. They are quite realistic when assessing the events in the region. For example, during the Arab Spring, many Czech politicians and commentators refused to compare it with Eastern Europe of the early 1990s. They also warned against overly optimistic predictions concerning the quick democratization of the Middle East.

The Communist experience has left a significant impact on Czech intellectuals. Whereas in most of the Western universities and media concepts such as post-colonialism, post-nationalism, and multilateralism dominate the discussion and left-leaning intellectuals prevail, the situation in the Czech Republic is still rather different. Czech intellectuals are often quite conservative in their world view, less prone to adopt the postmodern and relativist positions of their Western colleagues. As such, many of them understand and respect the willingness of Israelis to use force when protecting the country's security and sovereignty and refuse what is often hypocritical pacifism of their Western colleagues.

Foreign Policy Stances

After the fall of Communism, one of the main goals of Czechoslovak and later Czech foreign policy became membership in the Western security, economic, and political structures. A pro-Atlantic position was not only a strategic choice, but a natural reaction to forty years during which Czechoslovakia lived in the Soviet sphere of influence. Reflecting on its historical experience, it was the US, rather than the West European countries, that was the preferred source for security guarantees not only of the Czech Republic, but of the whole region of Central and Eastern Europe. Part of this pro-US position was a friendly stance toward Israel. Notwithstanding the desire to join the EU, the Czech Republic has always been considered to be rather Euro-skeptic. The critical approach toward Brussels is especially strong among some in the center-right and conservative spectrum of the Czech politics. As the anti-Israeli position in EU institutions grows, this Euro-skepticism is also a factor for the Czech distinctive position within the EU.

Economic Interest

Israel is the Czech Republic's sixth largest export market outside the EU, and since 1993 the trade between the two countries has risen almost consistently. The Czech economy profits from Israeli investments as well

as tourism.[5] The Czech Republic also faces the challenge of transforming its heavy industry-based economy to a knowledge-based economy. Israel, with its developed hi-tech sector and experience in successfully translating the results from primary research into practice, is seen by many Czech scientists, hi-tech experts, and businesspeople as a very positive model.

Fight against Terrorism

In the Czech Republic Islamic terrorism is considered one of the major threats to domestic security as well as to international security.[6] As a member of NATO and the EU; a dispatcher of soldiers to Afghanistan; a host of the US-financed Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, which broadcasts to many Muslim countries; and a state with strong relations with both the US and Israel, the Czech Republic is a potential target for terrorism. Israel is seen by many as a frontline where Western culture collides with radical Islam. The Israeli and the Czech interests in fighting radicalism emanating from the Middle East are therefore seen as identical.

Small Muslim Community

The Czech Muslim community is small and not significantly engaged politically, and does not represent a voting factor. Many Muslims who live in the Czech Republic came as students in the 1970s and 1980s as part of the Soviet-sponsored program of cooperation among the socialistic countries. Most of those who stayed married Czech citizens. Another group is represented by those from Muslim countries who currently study at Czech universities, yet their number is very small and most do not promote radical Islam.[7] Moreover, these Muslims often do come not from the Middle East, but from the countries of the former Soviet Union.

Lack of Support for anti-Israeli Initiatives

Activities familiar in West European countries, among them BDS – often supported by both leftist and Muslim students – are almost non-existent in the Czech Republic. Even among students, the anti-Israeli activities promoted by Czech branches of notoriously anti-Israeli NGOs[8] did not command significant support. This can be explained not only by the small number of politically active Muslims, but also by a lack of enthusiasm among the Czechs to support activities of this kind. A generally negative approach by Czechs toward Arabs/Muslims contributes to a lack of public support of anti-Israeli initiatives.

Legacy of the Holocaust

Czechs were not active instigators of the destruction of the Jewish nation in Europe, but the tragic fate of Czech and European Jewry is a factor that contributed to the positive approach of the Czechs toward the Jewish state. For many it has been a moral duty to support the nation, which was almost destroyed during WWII. Even today, when there are only a small number of those who witnessed the events, Holocaust remembrance and memorial books that remember the Czech Jews who were murdered during WWII are part of Czech culture and education.

Bilateral and Multilateral Forums

An example of good relations is the series of meetings among the Israeli and Czech high level officials. Prime Minister Netanyahu visited Prague in 2011 and in 2013, and Czech President Zeman went to Israel shortly after being elected to office in 2013. In 2014 Czech Prime Minister Zaorálek visited Israel, and a presidential visit by Reuven Rivlin was planned for late 2015. In 2012, 2013, and 2014 the Israel-Czech government summits took place both in Prague and in Jerusalem. Prague is also a popular venue for public as well as private meetings and conferences that aim to promote discussion and cooperation among Middle East countries. As much as the Czech Republic cannot and does not aspire to be a key moderator in the Middle East conflict, the long term interests of Czechs to be involved in this backstage diplomatic effort is acknowledged by both the Israelis as well as the Arabs.

Examples of the Czech Positions

Over the last decade, Czech diplomacy took positions toward some events in the Middle East that were in clear contrast with EU mainstream opinion. Among the staunchest supporters of Israel is Czech President Miloš Zeman, who, notwithstanding his social-democratic affiliation, became known for a hawkish position when addressing topics related to the Middle East, especially Islamic terrorism. He raised attention already during his visit as Prime Minister in 2002 when he compared Arafat to Hitler and Palestinians with Sudeten Germans, who by supporting the Nazi regime in large numbers in the 1930s played an active part in the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1938.

Operation Cast Lead took place in Gaza during the Czech presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2009. In the context of the Czech

presidency, a neutral position calling for an immediate ceasefire would be considered an appropriate reaction for Czech diplomacy. Nonetheless, the Prime Minister's spokesperson stated that in the context of the latest developments, Cast Lead cannot be seen as an offensive, but rather as a defensive action.[9] Similarly in 2006, Czechs did not join the majority of the EU countries, which condemned Israel's offensive against Hizbollah in Lebanon. The Czech position toward the *Mavi Marmara* affair in 2010 was also different from that of many other European countries. Přemysl Sobotka, head of the Senate, the second chamber of the Parliament, said that to send the ships to Gaza was a provocation, and he recognized the right of Israel to act against Hamas, including in the blockade of Gaza.

The latest example of the non-EU mainstream position was the Czech "no" in the UN vote on an upgrade of Palestine to a nonmember observer state. The Czech position was, however, strongly influenced by the dynamic within the EU. The Czechs first agreed to join the other EU member states and to abstain. Once it became clear that there were countries that wanted to break this unity and vote in favor of the proposal, Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg, exasperated that the member states could not agree on a united position, chose to balance the countries, which decided to vote in favor. Officially, the Czech diplomacy defended its position on the pretext that it supported the direct negotiations rather than diplomatic initiatives taken by one side of the conflict. The real motivation, however, seemed to be to balance the anti-Israeli position within the EU.

The Future of Czech-Israel Relations

Both Israeli as well as Czech diplomats agree that the current relations are not balanced. Whereas for the Czechs the strong pro-Israeli affiliation is partially based on rationalism, more important is the sentimental feeling that reflects values and historical experience. The practical results stemming from the friendly relations toward Israel are less important. For the Israelis, pragmatism and realism define their relations toward the Czechs. The Czech Republic is important as a friendly country in a rather unfriendly international environment.

The Czech diplomats are somewhat frustrated in not receiving even symbolic gratitude from Israel. They do not expect a reciprocal level of affection or anything specific in return, but they would appreciate that the Israelis not take the Czech position for granted.[10] One of the examples of a lack of sensitivity from the Israeli side was the low-level official delegation

sent to the funeral of President Václav Havel, who remained active in a struggle against the delegitimization of Israel even after he left the office.[11] A sign that Israel is now paying more attention to the relations with the Czech Republic was the visit of Benjamin Netanyahu after the Czech "no" vote in the UN, as well as reception of the participants of the Israel-Czech Forum by President Shimon Peres in 2013.

Europeanization?

Czech diplomacy is becoming increasingly Europeanized, as diplomats and political leaders are exposed more and more to mainstream EU positions and opinions. In the long term, it may become less convenient for the Czechs to espouse positions that remove them from the majority. Especially Czech Social Democrats, inspired by West European leftist parties, may start to adopt rather critical positions toward Israel.

However, as proved by recent events, this process may take longer and may not be straightforward. After the electoral victory in 2013, new Social Democratic foreign minister Zaorálek assigned the important post of first deputy to Petr Drulák, an international relations theorist and a well-known critic of some of the basic pillars of the Czech foreign policy of the last decade.[12] It took only a little bit more than one year until Drulák, who as a deputy minister openly questioned Václav Havel's legacy in the Czech foreign policy – which included strong Atlanticism and special relations with Israel – was relegated to a less prominent position of political secretary.[13] Instead, the young cohort of Social Democrats took over the positions of the deputies at the Foreign Ministry. Being in their thirties, they not only lack experience, but also well-defined foreign policy positions. As such, they seem to be much less willing to challenge the existing foreign policy orientation.

The best example of the prevalent status quo in the Czech foreign policy is the new "Foreign Policy Strategy."[14] Drulák's suggested innovations did not pass the scrutiny of the Office of the Prime Minister and of other ministries, and the document, approved by the Czech government in July 2015, does not suggest any major shifts in Czech foreign policy. It stresses that the strategic partnership with Israel, characterized by joint meetings of Czech and Israeli governments, and cooperation in the fields of science, research, investments, security, economy, and culture, remain the Czech policy priority.

There may be another possible reason for the endurance of the Czech pro-Israeli stance. After the departure of Václav Havel, the international reputation of the Czech Republic weakened considerably. On the diplomatic level the Czech Republic is searching – without much success – for a topic that would help distinguish it from other European middle-sized countries. Support for Tibet and dissidents in authoritarian regimes, promoted by Havel, somehow dissipated under the new generation of political leaders. As suggested by an Israeli diplomat, it is the strategic relations with Israel that make Czech diplomacy special.[15] Particularly on the EU level, only few countries have such a close relationship with Israel.

Israel's Course and Strategy

To what extent the pro-Israeli coalition within the EU will remain strong also depends on Israeli policies. Should the nationalist-religious-pro-settlement trends in the Israeli politics dominate the political arena, the European countries with a strong positive approach toward Israel will find it hard to maintain their positions. These countries may start to distance themselves from Israeli policies. This trend is already apparent in the case of Germany. Without an Israeli policy that aims to reach some sort of settlement with the Palestinians, ideally a two-state solution, the Czech determination to at least slow down the process of increasing criticism of Israel in the EU may start to wane.

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Czech diplomats would also find it helpful were the Israeli positions toward the EU better defined.[16] Israel often does not pay not enough attention to the processes underway in the EU when Middle East positions and policies are formulated. This reflects Israeli frustration with the EU – which is considered overly biased – and Israel's consequent loss of interest in investing too much energy in the mutual relations. As much as the Czechs understand this frustration, unclear Israeli positions concerning certain EU policies complicates their job. In some cases it is not apparent to the Czech diplomats to what extent they should be active in seeking changes in the proposed policies and statements, if even Israel is not clear about its position.

Finally, historical experience on both Israeli and Czech sides is an important factor for the mutual understanding and trust. Yet for the new generations of Israelis, terms like the "Czech rifle" or Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk are largely unknown. Similarly on the Czech side, the post-Communist generation is more exposed to West European values, including the post-nationalist and post-modern ones. Different experience and values will present a challenge for the future of Czech-Israeli relations.

Conclusion

Czech-Israeli relations remain friendly and strong. For Israel, the main value of this relationship is stable support of the Czech Republic within international institutions. This support is important especially within the EU, where the anti-Israeli sentiments are growing. The Czechs seem to understand the Israeli position and perspective better, thanks to their historical experience, interests, values, and partially idealism.

Nonetheless, this empathy and affiliation may weaken in the future. With the generational change, some of the sentiments will fade. Therefore, for the relations between the two countries to remain strong, they must be grounded in a more practical, pragmatic base. Economic cooperation and a share of know-how should be the building blocks for durable relations. The conditions for solid mutual cooperation in various fields are already in place. Practical cooperation, together with the positive approach of Czechs toward Israel, would be the best assurance for the long term duration of the close relations.

At the same time, the depth of the mutual relations also depends on the policy of the State of Israel. If its policies lead the country to international isolation, it will be increasingly hard for the Czech Republic to maintain its existing diplomatic line. The future Czech position toward Israel can be expected to be more rational, rather than idealistic. Nonetheless, since great potential for cooperation on different levels exists between Israel and the Czech Republic, both countries should be interested in maintaining strong relations for the future.

Notes

1 For this paper, I conducted interviews with current and former diplomats and Ministry of Foreign Affairs figures, both in Israel and the Czech Republic. I spoke with the ambassadors, attachés, deputy ministers, directors general, heads of departments, and desk officers. We agreed

that they would not be quoted in this paper, which enabled them to speak more openly. In addition, this paper draws from interviews and analyses presented in the unpublished study by Jan Fingerland, *Israel and the Czech Republic* (2008).

2 The short historical overview is based mainly on the following books: Moshe Yegar, *Czechoslovakia, Zionism, and Israel: Shifts and Turns in Complex Relations* (Jerusalem: Zionist Library, 1997); Petr Zídek and Petr a Karel Sieber, *Czechoslovakia and the Middle East in Years 1945-1989* (Prague: Institute of International Relations, 2009); and Miloš Pojar, *Israel* (Prague: Libri, 2009).

3 The Slansky trial included two Israeli witnesses, Shimon Orenstein and Moredechai Oren, a leader of Mapam. His sentence to 15 years by the Czechoslovak Communist regime cased a deep shock among the Israeli left.

4 Interviews at the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013.

5 "Summary of Territorial Information Israel," Czech Embassy, Tel Aviv, April 1, 2014 (Czech), http://www.cisok.cz/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/STI-aktualizace-%C4%8Derven-2014.pdf.

6 Czech Security Information Service, *Annual Report 2012*, January 15, 2014 (Czech), http://www.bis.cz/n/2013-11-07-vyrocni-zprava-2012.html.

7 Ibid.

8 International Solidarity Movement, https://www.facebook.com/ismcz.

9 "Israel Launched a Ground Offensive in Gaza, Mobilizes Reservists," *Novinky.cz,* January 3, 2009 (Czech), http://www.novinky.cz/zahranicni/blizky-a-stredni-vychod/157920-izrael-zahajil-pozemni-utok-na-gazu-mobilizuje-zalozniky.html.

10 Interviews at the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013.

11 "Havel will Participate in Campaign against Boycott of Israeli Goods," *IDnes.cz,* September 14, 2010 (Czech) http://zpravy.idnes.cz/havel-se-zapoji-do-kampane-proti-bojkotum-izraelskeho-zbozi-pl4-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A100914_074421_zahranicni_aha.

12 "Havel's Politics was Wrong and Harmful, Claims the Czech Diplomat," *Lidovky.cz*, May 30, 2014 (Czech), http://www.lidovky.cz/havlova-politika-byla-chybna-a-skodliva-fci-/zpravy-domov.aspx?c=A140530_111312_ln_domov_jzl.

13 "Drulák Ends as the Deputy Minister. He will Become a Secretary," *Lidovky.cz*, July 1, 2015 (Czech), http://www.lidovky.cz/drulak-konci-ve-funkci-namestka-ministra-zahranici-bude-tajemnikem-1fp-/zpravy-domov.aspx?c=A150701_111918_ln_domov_ELE.

14 Ministry of Foreign Affairs,"Foreign Policy Strategy," July 13, 2015 (Czech), http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni_vztahy/analyzy_a_koncepce/koncepce_zahranicni_politiky_cr.html.

15 Interview in Prague, September 2015.

16 Interviews at the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013.

Israel and Apartheid in International Discourse

Michal Hatuel-Radoshitzky

While Israel's leadership takes pride in the state's liberal policies, particularly in comparison to those of its non-democratic neighbors, international discourse appears to debate, if not question, Israel's democratic character. In particular, it appears that Israel is increasingly compared to South Africa's former apartheid regime,[1] a system of institutionalized racial segregation in which a white minority harshly oppressed a large black majority. While the adoption of the loaded term "apartheid" is not uncommon in criticism relating to perceived institutionalized racism in additional liberal and democratic regimes,[2] it is generally internally focused. In other words, it is unusual for states to accuse other states of practicing apartheid-like measures, all the more so when such accusations are systemized and ongoing.

The threat of Israel's isolation in the international arena has penetrated the Israeli public debate and is well known. However, there are insufficient concrete findings and data regarding when and how Israel's image as a non-democratic apartheid state became rooted in international discourse; the extent to which it is overtly apparent; and its fluctuations over the years. The absence of such data enables decision makers, who are weary of allocating scarce resources to amorphous threats, to argue that channeling funds to deal with Israel's international standing is less urgent than the need to address tangible and imminent threats. To this end, the current article strives to document the existence of international questioning regarding Israel's democratic character and explore the perils that this trend encompasses by providing qualitative and quantitative findings relating to the apartheid analogy.

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The article begins by explaining the concept of apartheid and providing background to the international struggle against the South African apartheid with which Israel appears to be equated, as well as to the anti-Israel campaign. Following this is a section that verifies the existence of the Israel-apartheid analogy through a quantitative and qualitative analysis of international English media items. This is followed by a section on the surfacing of the Israel-apartheid analogy in the UN. The article concludes with policy recommendations in light of the central findings presented.

The International Struggle against South African Apartheid and the Global Anti-Israel Campaign: Milestones and Methods

The South African Case

South Africa's international prestige began to erode in 1946 when its racial policies were debated in the first session of the United Nations. In 1948, the South African National Party won the general elections, and the elected Prime Minister, D. F. Malan, embarked on official efforts to separate South Africa's small white minority from its large non-white majority. Laws enforcing apartheid such as the Group Areas Act,[3] the Lands Act,[4] and the Population Registration Act[5] are clear examples of the institutionalization of the racial segregation upon which the South African apartheid regime was based. Unlike other states that may have blatantly defied international norms in the same period, South Africa's international standing suffered a severe blow because its racial repression appeared more extraordinary than other governments' similar militarization, bureaucratic control, and use of torture.[6]

In the mid-1980s, alongside the transnational anti-apartheid movement's (AAM) efforts to equate support for South Africa as support for racism, the divide grew between Congress and the Reagan administration, which pursued the policy of "constructive engagement."[7] Anti-apartheid activists began staging protests at the South African embassy in Washington, and thereafter at South African consulates elsewhere in the US. The visibility of such acts increased as demonstrations began to include prominent personalities and members of Congress.[8] In 1985, bipartisan concessions on partial sanctions were reached in open opposition to the administration's policy of constructive engagement. In 1986 international criticism of South Africa grew, and bipartisan efforts succeeded in overriding President

Raegan's veto of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA), marking a dramatic shift in US policy.

As such, and against President Reagan's initial will, the United States began imposing restrictions on new investment in South Africa, including stronger restrictions on governmental loans, imports, trade assistance, and tourism promotion, and fewer preferred tax agreements with South Africa.[9] These steps significantly boosted the global momentum for sanctions, with Britain accepting multilateral demands to sanction South Africa because of the social costs of appearing to tolerate racism. This was also the case with the Commonwealth and Europe, which following the US lead, imposed economic sanctions on South Africa, and Japan, which adopted bilateral restrictions.[10]

The UN played an important role in monitoring these sanctions and the international community's overall relations with South Africa. This was done through the establishment of an organizational platform for this purpose that included the UN Special Committee against Apartheid, composed of 19 states, and the Center against Apartheid – a UN office in the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs.[11] The UN compiled an annual list of institutions giving indirect support to the South African apartheid regime, based on the rationale that sensitizing the international community would pressure the South African government to amend its racist policies.[12] Eight years later, in 1994, South Africa held its first democratic multi-racial elections, and the state's apartheid era came to an official end.

Contrary to the South African case, the analogy to apartheid in Israel hinges on opinion rather than fact. Moreover, the idea of separation between Israelis and Palestinians in the stretch of land between Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea is linked to security issues and was officially backed by the UN.

The Israeli Case

Israel defines itself as a Jewish democratic state. While the exact meaning of such a formula is widely disputed, Israel's Jewishness is firmly recognized by many of the same scholars who hold diverging view on its democratic performance.[13] Since 1947 the international community has envisaged partition, rather than a single state, as the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 181, supported by a two thirds majority on November 29, 1947, clearly stipulates the creation of an Arab state and a Jewish state in Palestine as the means

to resolve competing national claims over the land by the Zionist and Palestinian national movements.[14] This partition, which enabled the creation of a Jewish state in what was Mandatory Palestine, was not accepted by the Arab inhabitants of Palestine or the surrounding countries, and the two sides have been immersed in conflict ever since.

In June 1967 Israel gained control over the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. Israel's claims to these territories, along with the question of Palestinians living in the latter three areas, continue to pose a long term challenge to Israel's diplomacy, notwithstanding many rounds of negotiations over the years in an attempt to reach a peaceful solution. In 1979 Israel signed a peace agreement with Egypt, and a peace agreement with Jordan was signed in 1994. In June 2002, in a wave of ongoing terror attacks, the Israeli cabinet decided to erect a physical barrier separating Israel from most of the West Bank with the declared objective of regulating the entry of Palestinians from the West Bank into Israel; this separation barrier was soon dubbed by critics as the "apartheid wall." In 2005 Israel withdrew unilaterally from the Gaza Strip, a move that included the dismantling of Israeli settlements. To this day Israel's borders (in the East and West) are not internationally recognized.

Although popular sentiment may attribute the international questioning of Israel's democracy to recent years, the genesis of the idea that the very establishment of Israel is based on racism dates back to the 1975 UN resolution defining Zionism as a form of racism.[15] Despite the fact that the resolution was later rescinded,[16] this very debate created a dent in Israel's international image.

The September 2001 UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance[17] was the next significant milestone in cultivating the idea that Israel is a racist, apartheid state. This conference culminated with an anti-Israel declaration,[18] endorsed by hundreds of civil society organizations in attendance, calling on the international community to isolate Israel "as an apartheid state, as in the case of South Africa."[19]

July 2005 can be noted as the following milestone, with the issuing of the Palestinian Civil Society Call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel,[20] endorsed by over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations, forming the BDS movement (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions). BDS advocates a full-fledged boycott of Israel until three stated goals are achieved: (a) end of the occupation of all Arab lands and dismantlement of the "Wall"; (b)

recognition of the rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and (c) respect for the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, as stipulated in UN Resolution 194.[21] The first goal referring to Israel's occupation of Arab lands remains ambiguous, with BDS leaders stating their vision regarding a single Palestinian state, or in other words, the end of the Jewish state.[22]

Similar to AAM, BDS systematically works bottom-up to influence global public opinion against Israel, through vocal protests and lobbying of decision makers. Through activities reminiscent of anti-apartheid activist protests, Israel is systematically equated with racism and apartheid.

Nonetheless, the First World democratic establishment thus far appears to remain supportive of maintaining trade, diplomatic ties, and other cooperation with Israel.[23] Israel's thriving relations with the Western world are often cited by policy shapers as proof that anti-Israel activists have limited, if any, success; that anti-Israel sentiment is in fact a new form of old anti-Semitism that Jews will always face regardless of their state's conduct; that Israel's place in the international community of nations is secure; and that Israel's apartheid analogy is employed exclusively by radicals who are nothing more than a nuisance.

In order to counter this argument and delineate the extent to which Israel's democracy is sincerely questioned in the mainstream international arena – a trend that poses a dangerous threat to Israel's security – the following sections illustrate the use of the Israel-apartheid analogy in two central realms: the international press and the United Nations.

The Perception of Israel as an Apartheid State in the International Press

A search of the international media in English[24] coupling the words "Israel" with "apartheid state" yields 54 articles published between 1967 and 2000 (a period of 33 years). Between 2001 and 2015 (a period of 14 years), the search showed 1,741 articles referencing these terms. The turn of the century can clearly be pinpointed as a watershed for intensive international deliberation regarding the authenticity of Israel's democracy.

The mere abundance of articles, however, while pointing to inflated international interest in the linkage between Israel and apartheid, does not indicate the manner in which the international media portrays Israel with respect to the analogy. In other words, the quantitative findings themselves

are insufficient to determine if Israel is accused of being an apartheid state or is defended against such a perception.

In extracting English European[25] (n=86)[26] and American (n=51)[27] articles from the large database of articles containing the terms "Israel" and "apartheid state," an analysis of 137 press items published over the course of fifteen years (2000-2014) was performed.[28] Each item was assessed with respect to the context in which the analogy appears,[29] i.e., positive: articles defending Israel against apartheid accusations; negative: articles claiming that Israel is an apartheid state; or neutral: items that report about protests against Israel as an apartheid state, items that bring multiple perspectives, or items that warn that Israel could become an apartheid state in the future.[30]

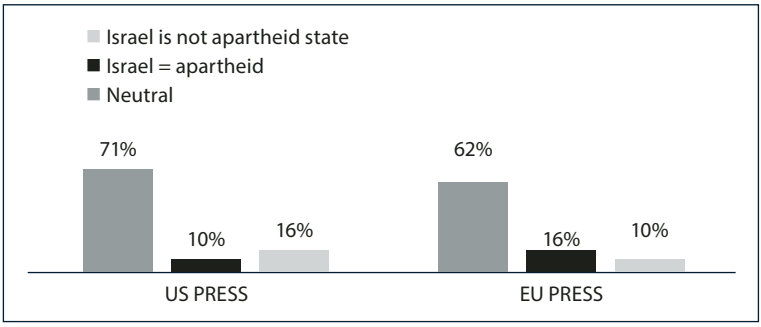


Figure 1. Classification of international press articles relating to Israel and apartheid (2000-2014)

As illustrated in figure 1, 16 percent of American articles and 10 percent of European articles defend Israel's democratic character by arguing against its equation with apartheid, while the vast majority of press items, 62 and 71 percent in Europe and America, respectively, do not take a stand on this comparison, noting its existence in public discourse or warning of the possibility that this situation will emerge in the absence of substantial policy change.

Division of the data into two time periods, the previous decade (2000-2009) and the last five years (2010-2014), indicates that there was a significant increase in coverage relating to the analogy over the past five years. More specifically, from 2000 to 2009 the number of press items in American publications referring to Israel and apartheid was 27, whereas from 2010-2014, 24 articles dealt with this analogy. In Europe, the previous decade saw the publication of 37 press items that related to the Israel-apartheid

analogy, whereas the number of articles relating to this analogy over the past five years alone rose to 49 press items.

These findings lead to two central conclusions: (a) only a minority of articles (10-16 percent in European and American newspapers, respectively) voice claims wholeheartedly defending Israel against its equation with apartheid; and (b) in recent years the question of Israel's democracy is drawing increasing international attention.

The Perception of Israel as an Apartheid State in the UN

In analyzing the analogy in the United Nations, a search for documents including the terms "Israel" and "apartheid" between January 2000 and December 2014 yielded 158 documents.[31] Of these, only seven items make the case for Israel and argue in defense of the state's policies (i.e., 4 percent of documents).[32]

Of the UN documents mentioning the words "Israel" and "apartheid" and not drafted by the State of Israel or by pro-Israeli NGOs (n=151), 56 percent (n=84 documents) refer to Israel as an apartheid state (i.e., to Israel's "apartheid regime" or various "apartheid" practices), and 32 percent of documents (n=48 documents) relate the word apartheid to the separation barrier between Israel and the Palestinian territories ("the apartheid wall").[33]

The coining of the term "apartheid wall," clearly referencing the black South African struggle for self-determination, is a brilliant success of pro-Palestinian forces, particularly owing to the fact that no such barrier between whites and blacks ever existed under South African apartheid. The Israeli security barrier was thus "recruited" by activists to sustain additional arguments that Israel is an apartheid state, for example by basing a comparison to the "pass" system, a trademark of apartheid South Africa (e.g., "Checkpoints serve to humiliate Palestinians ...in this respect they resemble the 'pass laws' of apartheid South Africa, which required black South Africans to demonstrate permission to travel or reside anywhere in South Africa"[34]).

Another Israeli policy that significantly boosted criticism of Israel as an apartheid state in the UN arena is the ongoing expansion of settlements and the construction of roads connecting settlements to each other and to Israel. These roads "were reserved for exclusive use by settlers, relegating Palestinians to second-class roads obstructed by checkpoints and roadblocks,"[35] thus facilitating the creation of a new term in UN discussions and reports: "road apartheid." The expansion of settlements has also

led to criticism of Israel regarding disproportionate allocation of natural resources between Palestinian and Jewish residents (settlers) in adjacent areas, coining additional new terms such as "water apartheid."[36]

In looking at bottom-up anti-Israel civil society efforts in the UN arena, 21 percent of documents relating to Israel and apartheid were submitted to UN forums by pro-Palestinian NGOs (n=31 documents), as opposed to 1 percent of documents (n=2 documents, over the course of 15 years!) submitted by pro-Israeli NGOs. This finding clearly illustrates the centrality that NGOs and civil society activists play in nurturing the negative attention directed at Israel and fueling continued interest in its conduct vis-à-vis the Palestinians.

In breaking the analysis into two time periods (i.e., 2000-2009, and 2010-2014) two trends emerge (table 1): (a) an increase (from 52 percent of all items in the first period to 62 percent of all items in the second period) of documents relating to Israel as an apartheid state; and (b) an increase (18 percent of all items in the first period to 26 percent of all items in the second period) in the proportion of documents relating to "Israel" and "apartheid" submitted to the UN on behalf of Palestinian civil society organizations.

Table 1. UN documents relating to the terms "Israel" and "apartheid" (2000-2014)

	2000-2009	2010-2014	Total
Number of documents referring to Israel as an apartheid state	53 (52%)	31 (62%)	84 (56%)
Number of documents submitted to the UN on behalf of Palestinian civil society organizations	18 (18%)	13 (26%)	31 (21%)
Total	101	50	151

Findings of documents relating to Israel and apartheid in the UN arena thus reinforce the central trend apparent in the international media of an intensifying debate regarding Israel's non-democratic character in recent years, and of little, almost nonexistent, pro-Israel efforts both on the part of Israel and other nations, in defense of accusations relating to Israel's democratic regime. UN documents further point to Israel's settlement policy as a central factor in nurturing the anti-Israel sentiment in the UN

and to the significant, and growing, role that pro-Palestinian civil society efforts play in cultivating the Israel-apartheid analogy in UN discourse.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The collective findings presented in this article assert that the Israel-apartheid analogy is increasingly employed in the international press as well as in UN discussions, statements, and reports in order to puncture Israel's democratic image in the international arena. The intensification of the debate regarding Israel's apartheid-like features can be dated to the beginning of the century and has increased in scope over the last five years; with only 10 and 16 percent of articles in the European and American press, respectively, defending Israel from apartheid accusations. Findings also indicate that the UN arena is neglected by Israel, which at the best of times puts up a poor fight to counter apartheid accusations, and that pro-Palestinian civil society organizations are increasingly involved in inserting the Israel-apartheid analogy into the UN public sphere. Furthermore, it appears that Israel's policies vis-à-vis building and expanding settlements, and the ongoing occupation of the West Bank in general, are central catalysts in the perception of Israel as an apartheid state. Both these policies cultivate the employment of extreme, charged terms such as "the apartheid wall," "water apartheid," and "road apartheid."

While Israel's positive relations with the official governments of Western democratic states are often cited as proof that anti-Israel activity has limited, if any, success, the quantitative and qualitative findings in this article place a large question mark on the indefinite period that the modern world's official leadership can remain immune to much harsher anti-Israel public sentiment that the growing use of the apartheid analogy may well produce. As illustrated in the South African case study, intensive and mechanized bottom-up civil society efforts played a crucial role in changing the attitudes of the superpowers toward South Africa and initiating sanctions against its apartheid regime.

Alongside much-needed, and much-absent, proactive pro-Israel efforts to counter the Israel-apartheid analogy,[37] a more effective and long-lasting antidote to factors that nurture international anti-Israel sentiment is Israel's professed and active commitment to the two-state solution. The credibility of the claim that the State of Israel is liberal, democratic, and committed to the globally endorsed two-state solution requires Israel to follow up on such declarations with concrete actions. This will not only serve to significantly

improve Israel's deteriorating international standing – contributing to its legitimacy and securing its future as a Jewish state – but will also enable Israel to buy leverage and political space to attack apartheid-related international perceptions.

Israel would do well to chart trends in the international arena regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the perception of Israel's contribution to the deadlock; monitor indicators hinting at its deteriorating international position; and take significant, proactive strategic steps to rectify the situation. More significant than contributing to the dissolution of the Israel-apartheid analogy in the international arena, such an approach will contribute to Israel's national and international security.

Notes

1 Robbie Sabel, "The Campaign to Delegitimize Israel with the False Charge of Apartheid," Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2009, http://jcpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/apartheid.pdf.
2 Examples include India ("Housing Apartheid Practices in Delhi against Muslims," *The Hindu Online*, July 8, 2012); Canada ("An Unofficial Apartheid of Cultures and Identity" with respect to French and English-speaking groups, *Books in Canada*, Vol. 28, May 1999, pp 29-30); and even America (where US celebrated author Alice Walker asserts that she grew up under "American apartheid," *The Independent*, June 20, 2012).
3 The Group Areas Act assigned racial groups to different residential and business sections in urban areas.
4 The Lands Act aimed to regulate the acquisition of land by South African blacks.
5 The Population Registration Act required that all inhabitants of South Africa be classified and registered in accordance with their racial characteristics, i.e., white, black, or colored.
6 Audrie Klotz, *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle against Apartheid* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995); Audrie Klotz, "Transforming a Pariah State: International Dimensions of the South African Transition," *Africa Today* 42, no. 1/2 (1995).
7 This included pursuing quiet diplomacy, rejecting sanctions, and valuing stability vis-à-vis relations with South Africa at the price of tolerating white minority rule.
8 Organized anti-apartheid activists cooperated with the Congressional Black Caucus.
9 Arnold Millard, "Engaging South Africa after Apartheid," *Foreign Policy* 87 (1992): 139; Klotz, *Norms in International Relations*.
10 Klotz, *Norms in International Relations*.

11 "Report of the Secretary General on Policies of Apartheid of the Government of South Africa: Measures to Monitor Sanctions against South Africa," undertaken by the United Nations System, Governments and Non-Governmental Entities, March 1990.
12 Preliminary report on monitoring the transition to democracy in South Africa submitted by the Special Rapporteur, July 1993.
13 Marco Allegra and Paolo Napolitano, "Leadership and Peace Making in the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict," *Mediterranean Politics* 16, no. 2 (2011): 261-78.
14 Leila Farsakh, "The One State Solution and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Palestinian Challenges and Prospects," *Middle East Journal* 65, no. 1 (2011): 55-71.
15 UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 (1975).
16 The resolution was rescinded by the General Assembly in 1991, marking the first time that the UN General Assembly took such a step. See Sabel, "The Campaign to Delegitimize Israel with the False Charge of Apartheid."
17 Colloquially known as the "Durban Conference."
18 Hanafi Sari, "A Moral Victory in Durban," *Israel Resource Review: Behind the News in Israel*, September 17, 2001, http://israelbehindthenews.com/a-moral-victory-in-durban/3528/.
19 The declaration named Israel a "racist, Apartheid state in which Israel's brand of apartheid as a crime against humanity has been characterized by separation and segregation, dispossession, restricted land access, denationalization, 'bantustanization' and inhumane acts." Excerpts from the NGO Document are accessible on the Anti-Defamation League website, http://www.adl.org/durban/durban_ngo.asp.
20 BDS, "Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS," July 9, 2005, BDS Movement, http://www.bdsmovement.net/call.
21 Ibid.
22 Ehud Rosen, "What is the Real BDS Endgame? The Elimination of Israel," Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, February 12, 2014, http://jcpa.org/article/what-is-the-real-bds-endgame/.
23 This, as opposed to municipal councils which have voted in support of boycotting Israel, e.g., the Clackmannanshire County Council in Scotland, March 14, 2013, http://www.clacksweb.org.uk/document/meeting/1/465/3999.pdf.
24 The search was carried out using the Lexis Nexis search engine.
25 Pursuant to the limitation of analyzing English press items, European-based articles include publications in the UK and Northern Ireland and Ireland only.
26 Articles included in the analysis are from the following European-based media outlets: *BBC Monitoring*; *Birmingham Evening Mail*; *Daily Mail* (London); *Belfast Telegraph*; *Daily Telegraph* (London); *The Express*; *The Guardian* (London);*The Independent* (London); *Irish Times*; *The Mirror*; *The Observer*;

The Scotsman; *Sunday Herald*; *Sunday Times* (London); *The Times* (London); *Western Mail*.

27 Articles included in the analysis are from the following US-based media outlets: *Christian Science Monitor*; *Daily News* (New York); *St. Petersburg Times* (Florida); *The Advertiser*; *International Herald Tribune*; *New York Times*; *Philadelphia Inquirer*; *Washington Post*.

28 The search was conducted on press items published between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2014. Letters to the Editor and book reviews were excluded from the analysis; the number of items stated (n) reflects the final number of items analyzed.

29 If there is more than one opinion reflected in the article dealing with the complexity of the situation and illustrating voices pro and against Israel, the article was tagged as objective.

30 In addition to these three categories there were a number of articles that coupled "Israel" and "apartheid" out of context so that the appearance of the word apartheid was unrelated to Israel, or the central issue covered did not relate to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or to Israel's stranding in the international arena. In the European press 12 percent (n=10) of the items analyzed and in the American press 4 percent (n=2) of the items analyzed fell into this category.

31 The search was conducted using the UN's official Document System (ODS) search engine as well as a more updated UN search engine recently installed on the UN website.

32 Five documents were submitted to the UN by the official Israeli delegation to the UN/Israel's Foreign Ministry, and two documents were statements submitted to the UN by pro-Israeli NGOs.

33 Few documents refer to apartheid in both contexts (i.e., referencing Israel as an "apartheid regime" and referring to the "apartheid wall"); other documents relate the word apartheid to other states and events, quote apartheid-related literature or reference similarities to the South African anti-apartheid struggle, thus not making the direct claim that Israel's practices are akin to apartheid.

34 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation, 2008.

35 Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, Sixty-first session, Summary record of the 17th meeting, April 7, 2005.

36 General Assembly, Sixty-eighth session, Agenda item 52, Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, October 9, 2013.

37 For operative ways to counter the global anti-Israel campaign see INSS report: "Insights on BDS further to INSS-BICOM Workshop" conducted on June 11, 2015, http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4480&eventid=10112.

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