Strategic ASSESSMENT

Volume 17 | No. 4 | January 2015

INSS
המכון למחקרי ביטחון לאומי
THE INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES
INCORPORATING THE JAFFEE CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES
TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY
אוניברסיטת תל-אביב

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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.

Strategic Assessment is a quarterly publication comprising policy-oriented articles written by INSS researchers and guest contributors. The views presented here are those of the authors alone.

The Institute for National Security Studies is a public benefit company.

Graphic Design: Michal Semo-Kovetz, Yael Bieber
Tel Aviv University Graphic Design Studio
Printing: Elinir

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Strategic Assessment is published in English and Hebrew.
The full text is available on the Institute's website: www.inss.org.il

 ISSN 0793-8942

Abstracts

A Game of Thrones: Royal Succession in Saudi Arabia

Yoel Guzansky

The guidelines for Saudi Arabian royal succession were formulated on the basis of principles bequeathed by Ibn Saud and the monarchy's unique needs, circumstances, and political structure. These arrangements, first and foremost the transfer of power among members of the same generation, may have had a positive effect on the monarchy's stability over the years, but they created a critical problem as the pool of potential heirs ages. With the recent move to the generation of Ibn Saud's grandsons, the struggle for the throne – generally occurring behind the scenes – is becoming one that involves many princes and could have a negative effect on stability in this leading Gulf state.

Keywords: Saudi Arabia, regime stability, royal succession

The New Ideological Threat to the GCC: Implications for the Qatari-Saudi Rivalry

Alexey Khlebnikov

The article explores the new ideological threat to the Gulf Cooperation Council that revolves around Qatar-Saudi rivalry and ideological differences. It examines the roots of the threat and the implications for the region through the example of the Arab uprising. The article argues that the Muslim Brotherhood, in its ideology and organizational operations, has become the core issue that challenges the relations within the GCC. The article explores how this intra-Gulf ideological split has affected the respective approaches to the war in Syria, and then puts the issue in the broader regional context of the Sunni-Shia confrontation, the reduced US involvement in the region, and the greater Arab uprising.

Keywords: Gulf Cooperation Council, ideological threat, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Gulf security, Muslim Brotherhood

Tripoli: A Syrian Heart in a Lebanese Body

Omer Einav

This article analyzes the complex challenge embodied in the Lebanese city of Tripoli, where tensions latent in the dual nature of the city have risen to the surface in the wake of the civil war in Syria. Tripoli's historical connection to Syria clashes with the rules of the game in Lebanon and creates a highly delicate and volatile religious and sectarian dynamic that impacts on the rest of the country. In addition, in light of developments in the Middle East, the threat of Salafist Islam – particularly the Islamic State organization – places local events in another context. The October 2014 clashes between Sunnis and Alawites in Tripoli, another link in a long chain of violent events, dramatized the destructive potential in the city. Although to date the violence has subsided, it underscores that Lebanon must contend with concrete dangers presented by the fabric of its society in order to ensure the nation's stability.

Keywords: Tripoli, Lebanon, Syria, Salafist Islam, Alawites

The Syrian Refugee Crisis: Regional and Human Security Implications

Benedetta Berti

With no indication that the bloody civil war in Syria is drawing to a close, the issue of short term emergency assistance and longer term support, integration, or resettlement of the Syrian refugee population represents a monumental challenge. Analyzing the regional refugee crisis, this article provides a general assessment of the situation and outlines the main impending issues that need to be tackled. It examines the short and longer term regional and human security implications of the crisis, emphasizing how current shortcomings in tackling the situation may, in the longer term, reflect negatively on regional security and stability.

Keywords: Syrian civil war, refugees, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Levant, human security, regional security

Are We on the Map? Israel in Jordanian Textbooks

Ofir Winter

In 2014, the Jordanian Ministry of Education removed a number of Jordanian study units that encouraged the ethos of struggle against Israel. In an unprecedented step, it also distributed a study guide for teachers and educational booklets that include a map explicitly displaying Israel by name, and it banned the introduction into schools of a book condemning the peace agreement with Jews. This article contends that these measures reflect the long term objective of the Jordanian regime to lessen the focus on the conflict with Israel in the Jordanian curriculum, based on its understanding of the conflict as a ready hothouse that undermines the stability of the regime and breeds subversion of the Hashemite royal house by religious extremism. On the other hand, the public protests aroused by these new educational measures highlight the tension between the Jordanian regime's strategic interests and the degree to which it is subject to the restraints of public opinion.

Keywords: education, textbooks, Jordan, peace, culture of conflict, Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic State, radical Islam

Israel-Azerbaijan: Despite the Constraints, a Special Relationship

Gallia Lindenstrauss

Israel and Azerbaijan have enjoyed close diplomatic relations since they were formed in 1992, and these relations have become even tighter in recent years, mainly as a result of the threat posed by Iran to each state. It can be argued that the relations between the two countries are similar to some of Israel's other special relationships – with Iran in the 1950s and 1960s, with South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, and with Turkey in the 1990s. This article analyzes the interests of Israel and Azerbaijan in developing the close relationship, and evaluates the degree of stability in the strategic relations. Although the two countries have more than a few interests that encourage continued close relations, these interests must be balanced against pressures on Azerbaijan by its neighbors to cool its relations with Israel, and the degree of stability in the future rule of the Aliyev dynasty.

Keywords: Israel, Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkey, Nagorno-Karabakh

The Politics of Peace in Israel from 2003 to 2013

Maya Kornberg

This article examines Israeli public opinion on the peace process from 2003 to 2013 through the prism of electoral campaigns. It explores the possible correlation between the focus of political campaigns and Israeli public opinion on the peace process. Using polling data, campaign ads, and interviews with campaign experts and politicians, the article traces a picture of Israeli society over this decade. The findings show that there is a correlation between the emphasis placed on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by political campaigns and the intention of Israeli voters to vote based on this issue. Research reveals a growing disinterest in the conflict among Israelis as it becomes a less immediate concern. Policymakers must find a way to restore the Israeli public's commitment to the peace process so that the issue will influence their vote in March 2015.

Keywords: Electoral campaigns, public opinion, peace process

A Game of Thrones: Royal Succession in Saudi Arabia

Yoel Guzansky

The Formation of the Principles of Succession

To a large extent, maintaining regime stability in Saudi Arabia relates to the transition of power among brothers rather than from father to son. It may be that this custom has ensured successors with the requisite experience to manage affairs of state, but it has also reduced the pool of potential heirs, resulting in the possibility that Saudi Arabia's aging leadership may negatively affect the nation's stability. Concern about succession struggles is not groundless, as the kingdom's selection process is not entirely institutionalized. Problems concerning succession of governance in monarchies are not unique to Saudi Arabia – Oman too could face them – but the status and importance of Saudi Arabia as the "custodian" of Islam's holy sites, its possession of the world's largest oil reserves, and its role as the leading political and military power among the Gulf's Arab states lends urgency to the Saudi situation. The advanced age and deteriorating health of King Salman and the nomination of Muhammad bin Nayef as the kingdom's new deputy crown prince suggest that a transition of power to the grandsons' generation, or at least a decision on the identity of the next heir, is closer than previously thought.

The formation of the process of succession in Saudi Arabia began during the reign of the country's first king and the founder of the modern Saudi state, Abdulaziz, also known as Ibn Saud. When the modern Saudi state was founded in 1932, the political structure relied primarily on the personal loyalty of the leaders of the dominant tribes to the king. Ibn Saud's principal task was to turn a regionalized tribal entity into a modern state with an effective central government. Attaining this goal also involved the

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ability to transfer the reins of government in a way that would not jeopardize the kingdom's stability. In 1933, he declared Saud as his successor, clearly intending to preserve the reins of control in the hands of his own family.[1] To prevent intra-family power struggles, he announced already then that Faisal would be the second in line to the throne after Saud.[2] Ibn Saud's other sons were placed in key positions of the central government, ensuring that when the time came, they would enjoy legitimacy as rulers and have experience in managing the affairs of state.[3] The desire for stability and consensus was a key feature in the process of building the state's institutions and continues to characterize the kingdom to this day.

Ibn Saud died without leaving a law defining royal succession, but the custom of power transfer among his sons was established, along with other principles of power transfer. The subsequent transfer of power to Faisal also entrenched the function of the ulama in providing the imprimatur to the Saudi royal family's decision. This custom not only provides the new king with religious legitimacy to rule, but also represents a stamp of approval of the historical alliance between the royal house and the Wahhabi strain of Islam (even though the ulama, whose members are appointed by the king, has never taken an independent stance on the transition of power and has always given its approval to the candidate deemed acceptable in the House of Saud family forum).

According to tribal custom, primogeniture was a decisive factor in succession, a custom also deeply rooted in the succession of Saudi rulers. Faisal, however, did not appoint his heir until 1965, a year after his own ascension to the throne, so as to make sure that the next crown prince would be worthy of the appointment. This decision entrenched the principle whereby the eldest brother – provided he is qualified – is appointed as heir apparent. Faisal divided authority among princes in specific disciplines and provinces and created a balance of power within the royal family so that the king functioned as the first among equals, and to a large extent his power depended on the princes.[4] Although this structure did not prevent power struggles within the family, it did contribute toward stability. The heir apparent, Khaled, ascended the throne in 1975 after Faisal's assassination and was crowned king the very same day. His younger brother, Fahd, had been appointed deputy crown prince during Faisal's reign and so ascended the throne immediately upon Khaled's death in 1982.

Power struggles among the sons of Ibn Saud erupted more than once, as a result of the fact that they were not full brothers and leading to the

creation of political camps defined by family lines. The prominent branch was the Sudairi, a group of seven princes born to the same mother and considered the most influential group in the family elite (the name is that of the tribe of their mother, Hassa Bint Ahmad al-Sudairi). Faisal worked to create a balance among the family's various branches and distributed the high ranking jobs among them, including control of the armed forces. Even now, the balance is largely intact: King Salman's son (a Sudairi), holds the defense portfolio, while Mutaib, son of the late King Abdullah, commands the National Guard.

Attempts to Institutionalize the Process

In the early 1990s, Fahd began to formalize Saudi Arabia's process of succession. The stationing of US troops on Saudi soil and to some extent Saudi Arabia's support for the Israeli-Arab peace process that started in Madrid ran into opposition from radical religious circles, which dared to challenge the legitimacy of the House of Saud.[5] This opposition pushed the kingdom to establish an advisory council (albeit one without any real power) and, for the first time, also enshrine in law the manner of transfer of power. Paragraph 5 of the Basic Law of Governance (1992) determines that the throne will pass to Ibn Saud's sons and grandsons.[6]

Fahd determined that only Ibn Saud's sons and their sons would be able to serve as king and be appointed crown prince, thereby allowing – at least on paper – the princes of the generation of Ibn Saud's grandchildren to claim the throne. Furthermore, Fahd made it clear that the king would be chosen on the basis of his qualifications and abilities and not just by age, as had been the custom.[7] While this formulation enshrined the basic principles in law, it did not spell out explicit directives or defined criteria for what constitutes the most qualified candidate, leaving the selection of the heir apparent an issue to be settled by the king and family consensus. In the long term, the kingdom cannot avoid translating the law into practice, even if the transition of power becomes more complicated as the crown goes to the grandsons' generation: balancing the interests of the different family branches can be expected to become a much more delicate, complex matter by virtue of the fact that the ambitions and interests of numerous princes – whose patience is not necessarily a given – must be taken into account.[8]

The deteriorating health of King Fahd, who suffered a stroke in 1995, resulted in the reins of power being handed to Abdullah. Although Fahd's

health did not allow him to manage the kingdom's affairs in practice, the rivalry between Abdullah and the Sudairi camp prevented him from earning the loyalty of the princes and being crowned officially until Fahd's death in 2005.[9] Abdullah's official reign was also marked by tensions between him and the Sudairis when Abdullah, breaking with family tradition, chose not to appoint a second successor until 2009, when Nayef was named second deputy to the prime minister as a result of Sultan's frail health and concern that a vacuum in governance might be created.[10]

Abdullah continue to entrench the succession arrangements and founded the Allegiance Council. Announced in 2006, it has 34 princes, all sons and grandsons of Ibn Saud, in charge of helping the next king choose his successor and arrange for the orderly transfer of power. The council is also supposed to serve as an interim government in case both the king and his heir die or are unable to function. One may also see the establishment of the council as Abdullah's attempt to limit the Sudairis' influence: although they still hold many key positions in the kingdom, they are restricted on the council, their numbers being identical to those of the other representatives. In any case, however, the council represents the formalization of the kingdom's custom since the death of Ibn Saud, whereby decisions on succession are made by the king after a consensus is reached in the family forum.

Although he established the council, King Abdullah involved it only sparingly in making decisions about his heirs. Indeed, upon establishing the council, Abdullah declared it would begin operating only after his own death, and therefore he was not obligated to consult it in appointing the crown prince. Thus, Nayef's 2009 appointment to second successor to the throne seems to have been Abdullah's own decision, without any input from the council. When Nayef passed away eight months after his appointment, Abdullah – in a rapid move intended to prevent strife and project stability and continuity – declared Salman heir without asking for the council's approval.[11] But in 2014, when Abdullah named Muqrin second successor, the council was convened: the appointment was supported with the votes of only some three-quarters of the council members.[12] The fact that many princes are still unhappy with the appointment is liable to place obstacles in Muqrin's way to the throne, and if and when he is chosen, they may well make it difficult for him to function and try to curb his power.

Key positions in the kingdom are another source of political clout and influence. Often, the holder of a senior position appoints his cronies as

deputies and successors so that it all becomes a family affair. This was the case with the Sudairis who appointed one another, resulting in their control of the defense and interior ministries for more than four decades. The political power embedded in such positions could also explain why Abdullah insisted on reserving the position of commander of the National Guard for himself even after he was tapped to become deputy crown prince. It is possible that he was worried that once Prince Fahd – who was the heir apparent at that time – ascended the throne, he would oust him from that position in favor of Sultan. The command of the National Guard and the loyalty Abdullah achieved were a significant counterweight to the Sudairi front and the regular army, then under Sultan's command.

The transition to the grandsons' generation may well prove a complex process. The traditional power centers, such as tribal connections, would seem to be less significant now than they were in the past. The many grandsons and the division into many sub-branches within the family are therefore a potential threat to the kingdom's stability.

The Challenges of Succession

Until recently the key challenge facing the Saudi royal household as it sets out to appoint future successors is the aging of the first generation of Ibn Saud's offspring. The current king, 80-year old Salman, is ill, and the potential pool of successors among Ibn Saud's sons is shrinking, forcing Saudi Arabia to prepare for the scepter being passed to the grandsons. The Basic Law of Governance laid the constitutional foundation for this move, but the process itself is liable to be complex and may involve renewed power struggles within the family.

Increasing the uncertainty is the fact that the process lacks transparency. Decisions are made within a small family forum and the announcement by the royal family comes only after the decision is made. An analysis of the situation and assessments of potential successors can therefore only be undertaken on the basis of the small amount of information leaking out of internal discussions and a survey of candidates currently holding key positions. Furthermore, any analysis must also consider other candidate-related data of equivalent weight, such as lineage, health, support among the princes, maternal origins, and closeness to the king. In the past, the ability to reach a consensus within the small family forum, numbering several dozens of princes, was the key to maintaining governing stability

in Saudi Arabia. By contrast, the number of Ibn Saud's grandsons is now in the hundreds.

At the same time, one cannot say that the Saudi leadership is reaching this historic crossroads totally unprepared. Provisions to transfer the reins of government to the next generation began more than two decades ago when the Basic Law of Governance was passed, underscoring that the royal household is aware that the transition is liable to represent a stiff challenge. Furthermore, in recent years several princes of the grandsons' generation have been promoted to ministers and governors of important provinces. As the number of grandsons serving in senior positions increases, so does the number of political power centers in the kingdom: every governor or minister wields extensive authority in his field, representing a political camp of his own (figure 1). These developments are liable to increase competition for appointments and positions at all echelons of the political system in Saudi Arabia, and not only for the throne itself. Still, despite the large number of Ibn Saud's grandsons, only a few have the requisite experience and stature to be considered potential successors. Of Ibn Saud's grandsons, the only two in truly significant positions are Interior Minister Muhammad bin Salman, 30, the defense minister and chief of his father's royal court (appointed in 2015), and Prince Mutaib bin Abdullah, 63, who in 2013 was appointed to command the National Guard, the kingdom's most important security establishment.

Since the start of the regional upheavals, perhaps out of fear of their implications, Abdullah has made several important appointments.[13] In addition to promoting his son Mutaib to the rank of cabinet minister, Abdullah appointed his third son, Abdulaziz, to serve as deputy to Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal. Al-Faisal, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister since 1975, is also not in the best of health, and the king hopes that Abdulaziz will take al-Faisal's place when he steps down. Another son, Mashal, was appointed governor of Mecca, the most important province in Islam and the second most important province in the kingdom. His seventh son, Turki, a fighter pilot by training, was made governor of the capital city of Riyadh in 2014. This pattern of appointing relatives is standard. Kings appointed their sons the moment they ascended the throne: Faisal appointed his sons Saud, Turki, and Khaled to key positions, ensuring their high status to this day. The sons of Sultan, Nayef, and Salman also came to occupy senior positions thanks to their fathers' stature. Thus, Abdullah's recent appointments may be seen as an attempt to provide the royal family with

satisfactory, experienced candidates who can, when the time comes, fill the void left by Ibn Saud's aging sons, but also – and primarily – his desire to give his sons an edge in the future struggle for the crown after his death.

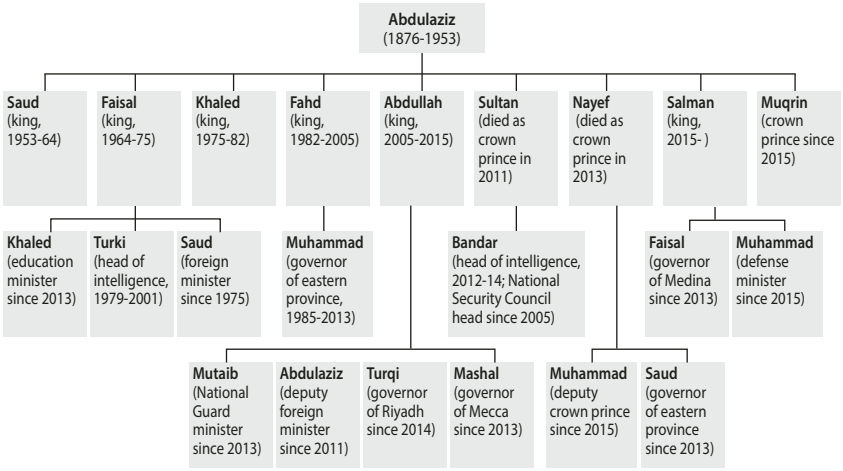

Figure 1. Key Members of the Saudi Royal Family

Conclusion

In March 2014, Prince Muqrin, Ibn Saud's youngest living son, was appointed second in line to the throne,[14] though due to his mother's Yemeni origins and the fact that she was a maidservant, he was at first thought to have slim chances of inheriting the crown. Muqrin, the former director general of al-Mukhabarat al-A'amah, the Saudi intelligence agency, and a former fighter pilot, is Ibn Saud's thirty-fifth son (his year of birth is commonly given as 1945).[15] Thus, his appointment in practice defers the transition to the grandsons' generation and symbolizes the preference for continuity and stability over progress and change. While compared to some of his brothers Muqrin has relatively little experience in security and foreign affairs, he was considered influential at court and close to King Abdullah. On more than one occasion he has been described by Western diplomats as Abdullah's "eyes and ears."[16] When Abdullah died, his half-brother, Crown Prince Salman, ascended the throne, though his reign is likely to be brief because of the state of his health. Immediately upon taking office, King Salman appointed Interior Minister Prince Muhammad bin Nayef bin Abdulaziz as the new deputy crown prince and second deputy prime

minister, meaning that he is third in line for the throne. For the first time in modern Saudi Arabian history, a grandson of the kingdom's first ruler, rather than a son, has a place in the line of succession – a move that injects clarity and vigor into the future succession of the al-Saud dynasty. Muhammad's way to the crown is well paved: Crown Prince Muqrin's credentials to be king continue to be questioned by senior princes; Muhammad has no sons – which might make his ascension less threatening to other princes; he is a Sudairi; and last but not least he is Washington's favorite candidate.

In the past, Saudi policy was intimately bound with the king's character and opinion. Although decisions are usually made in consultation and there is always the desire to reach agreement among the senior office holders in the royal household, the king has the final say. Therefore his identity is important in the setting of Saudi Arabia's policies. It is difficult to assess the style and policies of the next king because these tend, quite naturally, to change once the successor enters office; the situation always looks different when the shoe is on the other foot. When it comes to the nation's foreign policy, one may assume that the new Saudi Arabian king will try to mend relations with the United States, the country's most important ally and, like his predecessor, try to prevent Iran from further solidifying its influence in the region.

The main concern of the Saudi royal family is retaining their rule. The smoothness of the first ever generational transition suggests that the al-Sauds will do their best to do so. The Saudi model for royal succession will come under less strain than in recent years, but the manner of the transition of power to the next generation (a misleading term, as many of the princes of that generation are themselves quite elderly) and the effect of the process on the stability of governance in Saudi Arabia still depend, to a large extent, on the ability of the Allegiance Council to function as a body granting governmental legitimacy and mediating in disagreements and power struggles. The existence of an institutionalized family forum may help stabilize the Saudi monarchy during a crucial transitional phase ahead. Finally, the king's political abilities as mediator and arbitrator will be tested and be a critical factor in managing the complex succession process no less than the question of whether the members of the next generation will succeed in preserving the Saudi tradition that stresses the stability of the kingdom and continuity of the house of Saud as supreme values.

Notes

The author would like to thank Erez Striem and Chen Peretz, former interns at INSS, for their help in writing this essay.

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The New Ideological Threat to the GCC: Implications for the Qatari-Saudi Rivalry

Alexey Khlebnikov

In his book *Sectarian Politics in the Gulf*, Frederic M. Wehrey argues that the Arab Gulf states are united by a shared threat perception and a shared discourse on security. Indeed, these states have much in common, including Sunni monarchial regimes, an abundance of oil and gas, similar socio-political conditions, and the US as a major ally. A constellation of these common characteristics makes the security challenges facing the Arab Gulf states almost identical. One major peculiarity of the security threats is that they have an ideological character more than a conventional military nature.[1] Throughout the modern history of the Gulf, these threats included Nasserism, Baathism, communism, and revolutionary Shiism from Iran.[2] However, since the Arab uprising began in late 2010, a new ideological threat to many of the GCC states has formed. This threat, in the perception of Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain, appears in the guise of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood not only poses an ideological challenge and threat to several Gulf Arab states; it also undermines the unity and functionality of the only cohesive Arab organization – the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). This challenge, which the Muslim Brotherhood poses to some of the Gulf states, draws a divide between two major rivals for the leadership in the region, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Persian Gulf petro-powers, are engaged in a struggle for ideological and geopolitical supremacy in the Sunni Islamic world. Both nations have been actively involved in the so-called Arab Spring revolutionary movements that erupted throughout the Middle East

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since late 2010, but they have different sociopolitical views about how to weather the inevitable transition that is taking place in the region while maintaining the status quo within their respective monarchies.[3] Among the main areas where the two states have different perceptions, beyond the ideological dispute regarding the Muslim Brotherhood, are aggressive Qatari construction of narratives through the al-Jazeera satellite channel and support of different radical Islamist groups in the region, in particular Syria and Egypt. These two issues are tightly interconnected and affect the functionality of the GCC, and therefore, regional security.

The recent rift in relations between the Gulf states is believed to be the biggest challenge to the GCC since its creation in 1981.[4] The core dispute between the members centers on the ideological perception of regional threats. In early March 2014, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the UAE announced a withdrawal of their ambassadors from Qatar. The main reason for the disagreement was the financial and political support provided by Qatar's leadership to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and elsewhere, and sermons by Yusuf al-Qardawi, the ideological leader of the Muslim Brotherhood. To Saudi Arabia, which blacklisted the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization in Saudi Arabia in early March 2014,[5] Qatar has been interfering in Saudi Arabia and the internal affairs of other Arab countries with its support of the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Jazeera's critical anti-government reports about the Gulf countries and the Middle East.[6]

On April 17, 2014, soon after the crisis erupted, the GCC foreign ministers met in Riyadh at the GCC summit, which produced an announcement whereby policies of GCC member states will not interfere with the interests, security, and stability of other member states.[7] This vague formulation was not a convincing resolution of the crisis between the GCC members, and not surprisingly, the path to reconciliation is bumpy. Only on November 16, 2014 did Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain agree to return their ambassadors to Doha after Qatar vowed not to meddle in the affairs of the member states and to cease media criticism through Qatari channels. That was an indication of some closure of an eight-month rift over Doha's position and support of Islamist groups in the region. There are many possible reasons for such a move; however, it seems that Islamic State advances in Iraq and Syria and the plummeting oil prices, which by mid-November were approximately $70 per barrel, drove the need to be united in the face of hard times in order to cope with the challenge.

Another indication of the change is that two weeks after the rapprochement among the GCC members, Egypt and Qatar began to work toward a new chapter in their relations. On December 21, 2014 Qatar released a statement announcing its intention to normalize ties with Egypt's President Sisi, stressing how Egypt's security is crucial for the security of Qatar and the entire region. Two days earlier, on December 19, 2014, Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani called on Turkish President Erdogan to take steps to normalize Turkish-Egypt relations.[8] This is a significant step, considering the close Qatari-Turkish relations and the Turkish negative attitude towards Egypt's ouster of the Muslim Brotherhood. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that all friction was left behind, as the differences between both sides are still very significant.

In tandem, Islamist organizations in the region have suffered some setbacks that affect their overall stance and performance throughout the region. On December 5, 2014, Interpol issued an arrest warrant for Yusuf al-Qardawi. Over the past months, Egypt has cracked down on the Brotherhood and jailed thousands of its members and supporters and continues to pursue them throughout the country. Hamas experienced serious hardship within the last year, especially during Israel's Operation Protective Edge in the Gaza Strip, which resulted in many casualties and extensive physical damage in Gaza. Tunisia also experienced a paradigm shift: during the recent presidential and parliamentary elections, the Islamic party, an-Nahda, failed to repeat its success of 2011 and lost the parliamentary elections to the secular party Nidaa Tounes, and Nidaa Tounes candidate Beji Caid Essebsi was victorious in the presidential elections.

Thus despite ideological frictions, it seems that GCC members are still able to find a way toward a common approach to withstand new challenges, even though this might – as in the past – be just a temporary rapprochement. Considering that the nature of the friction is connected to regional dynamics and the balance of power, any complete resolution of the issue is a long way off. In any event, the rift in the Gulf indicated that a new era in the relations between its members, namely, between Qatar and Saudi Arabia has already started.

The Threat of the Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood is a powerful 80-year old Islamist group with a strong history of popular support throughout the region. However, the most critical element that arouses the suspicion among the majority of

the GCC states is that the increased power of the Muslim Brotherhood can lead to the politicization of Islam, with unpredictable consequences for the entire Gulf region. This concern is of great importance to the GCC states, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The Brotherhood and their affiliates began to command a more serious presence in those countries in the 1960s and 1970s and are seen as a genuine threat to the regimes, especially since the onset of the Arab Spring.

The Muslim Brotherhood ideology contradicts the basis of the regimes of the Gulf states and can potentially undermine monarchial authoritarian systems of the Gulf. Indeed, Saudi Arabia has long favored Islamist groups that eschew political involvement, and this is why Riyadh sees the Brotherhood, which has embraced politics, as an ideological rival and a model that threatens its own governance, since some of the strongest domestic opposition (al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya)[9] comes from Sunni Islamist groups.[10] The legitimate rise to power by the Muslim Brotherhood through elections in Tunisia and Egypt relayed an alarming signal to the majority of the Gulf states. The dangerous trend posed by the Brotherhood and Qatari promotion of political involvement goes hand in hand with the fact that violent jihad has largely been replaced[11] by Islamic political action across the Middle East and North Africa in demand of human, civil, and political rights.[12]

The Saudi leadership has less control over its powerful clergy than Qatar, which does not have homegrown powerful clergy with broad public support. As such, Doha exercises much more control over its clergy and does not allow it to create an alternative to the ruling family.

The problem for the Saudi leadership is rooted in the form of government. The state of Saudi Arabia was founded on the agreement between the ruling house of al-Saud and the clergy, which made religion a part of the politics in Saudi Arabia and sees the state as the model of Islamic rule. That is why the conservative ulama and Salafis in the kingdom are powerful and influence social and political life. In contrast, Qatar separated religion from politics, almost eliminating a risk of the ideological challenge. The fact is that the Saudi leadership has less control over its powerful clergy than Qatar, which does not have homegrown powerful clergy with broad public support. As such, Doha exercises much more control over its clergy and does not allow it to create an alternative to the ruling family and its politics. Political scientists Birol Baskan and Steven Wright claim that on a political level, Qatar is closer to Turkey than to Saudi Arabia.[13]

As noted by Mehran Kamrava, director of the Center for International and Regional Studies at Georgetown University's campus in Qatar, "Religion doesn't play any role in articulating or forming oppositional sentiments, unlike in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, or the UAE…And the reason is that the state has patronized the Muslim Brotherhood, has presented itself domestically and regionally and internationally as the patron of the Muslim Brotherhood. And if the price of domestic tranquility in a very turbulent region is Saudi ire, it's a small price to pay."[14]

In this regard Qatar has used an approach that greatly contributed to its political and religious stability. In other words, it secured itself by allying with the Brotherhood. In the 21st century Qatar consistently pursues its goal – to become a regional power and leader – in part by providing a safe haven for the Muslim Brotherhood members and followers of other Islamist organizations.

Qatar's Approach to the Muslim Brotherhood

It is important to understand the roots of Qatar's approach toward the Muslim Brotherhood, which began more than 50 years ago and has cemented into a specific type of relationship between the movement and the state. The underlying controversy here is in the relations between Qatar and other Gulf States, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which are problematic and threaten Qatar and its commitment to the support of the Brotherhood.

Among the members of the Muslim Brotherhood who began to arrive in Qatar en masse in the 1960s were clerics and Islamic scholars who helped design the Qatari education system. The main goal of that strategy was to create an independent education system to fill the emerging Qatari bureaucracy with necessary cadres, which could be independent from Saudi Arabia.[15] This approach allowed Qatar to avoid relying on Saudi clerics and scholars, which otherwise could lead to the creation of the similar system in Qatar, automatically making it oriented toward Saudi Arabia and putting it under the Saudi influence. In 1961 Yusuf Qardawi arrived in Qatar from Egypt. He initially ran a newly formed institute of religions, and later founded the College of Sharia at Qatar University and became its dean. Now Qardawi is considered to be one of the most influential and well-known Brotherhood clerics. On the whole, the Brotherhood secured a niche for itself in Qatar through establishing its education system and educating its bureaucrats, with the result that there are many Brotherhood sympathizers in the Qatari establishment.

However, despite the influx of Muslim Brotherhood intellectuals and clerics to Qatar and their involvement and prevalence in its various bureaucracies, for several reasons Brotherhood ideology did not become dominant. First, Qatar is a country where the Wahhabi creed of Salafı, Hanbali Islam, prevails. The Qatari ruling family originates from the same tribal group, the Banu Tamim tribe, as Wahhabism's founder, Muhammad bin abd al-Wahhab. It served as a tool to legitimize the rule of the Tamim family, while simultaneously it was seen as an opportunity for Saudi Arabia to play a dominant role over Qatar. As a result, given its adherence to Wahhabism, Qatar was not highly fertile ground for proselytization, although overall the Brotherhood ideology balanced the religious climate to a certain degree. However, at the same time, by supporting the Muslim Brotherhood ideology and allowing Brotherhood scholars to be based in Qatar, Doha enhanced its regional status with the Brotherhood ideology, which is more widespread and popular in the region than Wahhabi ideology. This gave Qatar a reputation of the state with an "open door" policy toward different ideologies that has fashioned it in a better way than Saudi Arabia. This approach has contributed to protection of the Qatari leadership from the Brotherhood's involvement in politics and has thus far proved to be function well.

Second, as Dr. Ahmed Jamil Azem noticed, "the Brotherhood is barely involved in Qatari domestic affairs."[16] This sort of relationship guarantees that the Brotherhood does not criticize the Qatari government or try to create active opposition to it. In return the Brotherhood secured a safe haven for its members in Qatar and a stable ground for launching its activity in the region to disseminate its ideas. In effect, despite its being a Wahhabi country with historical ties to Saudi Arabia, Qatar saw the Brotherhood as a tool to compete with Riyadh for regional leadership. Moreover, Qatar conducts a policy that limits the institutional opportunities for clergy to gain and exercise any influence domestically. Thus on a political level, the Qatari model is much more secular than the Saudi. It excludes religious influence of clergy on politics and positions Qatar far better than its rival Saudi Arabia, with a class of indigenous Muslim legal scholars. Institutionally, religious influence in Qatar is much lower than in Saudi Arabia: Qatari rulers' legitimacy is not based on the clerical

Despite its being a Wahhabi country with historical ties to Saudi Arabia, Qatar saw the Brotherhood as a tool to compete with Riyadh for regional leadership.

class, Qatar does not have special religious police, and Qatari religious schools are run by the Ministry of Education, not by the religious affairs authority.[17] That is why the confrontation between Doha and Riyadh can be characterized as a struggle between pragmatic Wahhabi Qatar and conservative Wahhabi Saudi Arabia. Abdel Hameed al-Ansari, the former dean of Qatar University's College of Sharia and professor of Islamic Studies, told the *Wall Street Journal* in 2002: "I consider myself a good Wahhabi and can still be modern, understanding Islam in an open way. We take into account the changes in the world and do not have the closed-minded mentality as they do in Saudi Arabia."[18]

Another important reason for the lack of the Brotherhood penetration into Qatari politics is the governmental control over the social organizations (such as charity societies, food banks, sport clubs, and others).[19] Generally the Brotherhood and its affiliates run many social and charity activities throughout the region, attracting quite broad popular support in the home societies (e.g., in Egypt and Tunisia), which is not the case in Qatar where the government took full control over the social sphere, consequently undercutting an ability of the Brotherhood to use their powerful grassroots practices and acquire broad public support. As a result, the Muslim Brotherhood presence in Qatar does not bother its leaders and allowed Doha to create a symbiotic relation with the Brotherhood. This mutually beneficial relationship between the two has succeeded thus far. Qatari leadership keeps the Brotherhood activity in the country in check and maintains its ideological expansion outward-oriented. Especially having given the Brotherhood use of such an influential tool as the al-Jazeera satellite channel, Qatar developed quite a powerful "weapon" with which to maintain the relationship.

Institutionally, religious influence in Qatar is much lower than in Saudi Arabia: Qatari rulers' legitimacy is not based on the clerical class, Qatar does not have special religious police, and Qatari religious schools are run by the Ministry of Education, not by the religious affairs authority.

Among other gains that Qatar receives from its alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood is an opportunity to expect preferable economic and political ties in the countries where the Brotherhood and its affiliates are in the race for power (including Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Syria). It seeks the role of mediator between Islamists and their opponents in those countries, as well as between them and the West. This is to Qatar's advantage in its bid for regional leadership.

The Arab Spring and Rivalry Escalation

Since the onset of the Arab uprising, Qatar has supported the Muslim Brotherhood throughout the region. Generous Qatari financial aid has flowed to Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and elsewhere. Moreover, Doha has actively used one of its most powerful resources, al-Jazeera, to construct media narratives that promote its interests.

Al-Jazeera introduces another ideological challenge for Saudi Arabia. Like many elements, particularly those in power, Arab leaders do not take well to criticism, and they treat the broadcasts as a threat to the stability of their regimes. Saudi Arabia, already on bad terms with Qatar, never favored al-Jazeera, whose criticism of Saudi Arabia and its "friends" rose significantly over the last years. Trying to create a counterbalance to Qatari al-Jazeera, Saudi Arabia launched its own satellite channel in 2003, al-Arabiya, but it failed to compete with its rival. According to independent media research, al-Jazeera's daily viewership across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region was 34 percent higher than all the other pan-Arab channels combined.[20] Thus al-Jazeera possesses all the necessary tools to promote certain narratives that are unacceptable for some actors in the region. Moreover, religion is central to the channel with a prominent weekly program called "Sharia and Life" presented by Yusuf al-Qardawi, the leading theologian of the Muslim Brotherhood. Qardawi, considered today one of the most authoritative voices of Sunni Islam, has aroused much anger in Saudi Arabia and the UAE through his sermons. Commenting on al-Jazeera, the Egyptian liberal thinker Maamun Fendi wrote in *a-Sharq al-Awsat* that some 50 percent of the network's personnel belong to the Muslim Brotherhood. He believes that Qatar, by embracing the Brotherhood while hosting American bases, has found the perfect formula against retaliation by the Arab leaders and attacks by Islamic extremists.[21] In contrast, Saudi Arabia failed to secure itself to the same degree.

Another aspect of Saudi fear lies in the Qatari policy of providing support to radical Islamists throughout the region. Riyadh fears that various terrorist groups that are now active in neighboring Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and Lebanon might sooner or later return to Saudi territory. According to the Saudi Interior Ministry, at least 1,000 Saudi militants have gone to Syria, and according to Western sources, the number is much larger.[22] Moreover, these rebels will have good combat experience and will be ideologically prepared to return home and undertake terror attacks against the House

of Saud. There were precedents for this in Saudi Arabia, when in 2003 and 2006 al-Qaeda carried out terrorist attacks in the territory of the kingdom.[23]

Indeed, although the kingdom has supported the Sunni-led rebels fighting to overthrow Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, it has long feared a backlash from radical jihadist groups. Concerned about this phenomenon, the Saudi authorities took some serious measures. In February 2014, King Abdullah decreed jail terms of up to 20 years for anyone belonging to "terrorist groups" or fighting abroad.[24] On March 7, 2014 the Interior Ministry blacklisted the Muslim Brotherhood, along with two other groups fighting with the Syrian rebels – the Nusra Front and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – as terrorist organizations.[25] The statement gave Saudis fighting in Syria 15 days to return. This evidence validates the Saudi fear of Sunni radical Islamists who can return to the kingdom and threaten domestic stability. Finally, there is a succession issue that has made the Saudi royal family more cautious about any threats that can destabilize the kingdom if it experiences a succession crisis.

Contrasting Saudi and Qatari Policies on the Syrian Crisis

The Syrian crisis has become a barometer of the relations among the regional actors, especially those who would be expected to be in one camp. Ideological rivalry between Qatar and Saudi Arabia can be easily tracked through the prism of the Syrian conflict.

Since the start of the turmoil in Syria in the spring of 2011, Saudi Arabia has used this opportunity to enhance its leadership within the GCC and, in particular, restrain the growing confidence of Qatari foreign policy in the region. Another underlying reason for Saudi involvement is a desire to establish a new regional order by winning the Levantine front of struggle between Sunnis and Shiites, i.e., Saudi Arabia and Iran. This is especially important in light of the partial diminution of the US involvement in the region. Since the eruption of uprising in Syria, the Saudis were involved, eager to topple the Assad regime. They supported moderate groups as well as more radical groups such as Jabhat an-Nusra and Ahrar ash-Sham brigades that were the most successful,[26] until March 2014, when Riyadh, perceiving a threat to the unity of the Kingdom, banned support of al-Qaeda, Jabhat an-Nusra, ISIS, Hizbollah of Saudi Arabia, Houthis,

> The new ideological threat to the Gulf Cooperation Council posed by political Islam and radical Islamists is substantial, and affects not only the GCC but the broader region as well.

Ansar Allah, and the Muslim Brotherhood. Saudi Arabia grew increasingly fearful of the risk of returning jihadists, who pose a certain threat to the Saudi leadership and domestic stability.

Qatar's interests in Syria involve a mix of strategic, economic, political, and ideological concerns. Interestingly, before the rebellion began in Syria, Doha had enjoyed relatively good relations with Syrian government, as Doha also tried to maintain correct relations with Iran, Syria's closest ally. In fact Qatar shares with Iran its primary source of wealth – the South Pars gas field, which helps to understand the "special" rhetoric towards Tehran. When the conflict in Syria erupted, Qatar intervened, aiming to secure its influence in the region by backing the Muslim Brotherhood, a major instrument of its foreign policy. In the course of the Arab Spring, Qatar bet on the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates, which brought Doha some positive results. Being almost immune to the Islamist movements' ideologies, Doha exercised its influence through the Brotherhood elsewhere in the region. As for Syria, Qatar started to arm Syrian rebels almost from the first days of the uprising, hoping that Muslim Brotherhood would be able to topple the Assad regime and seize control of the country. This policy contributed to the transformation of the Syrian uprising into the full-scale civil war, with thousands of jihadists fighting there. However, while Qatar has secured itself from the ideological and religious challenges, Saudi Arabia has failed to do so and begun to experience hard times.

Conclusion

The Syrian civil war demonstrates how ideological differences between two major powers in the Gulf affect the conflict and the behavior of respective actors. It is evidence that the ideological challenge that the GCC countries face has already impacted heavily on current developments in the region.

The new ideological challenge to the GCC and the threat of political Islam to some of the GCC members represented by the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates in the region mark a watershed in regional dynamics. Following the weakening of traditional Middle East powers (Cairo, Damascus, and Baghdad) over the last decade, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are consistently pursuing their own road to regional leadership. However, systemic changes in the Middle East produced a new ideological challenge that threatens the security and stability of the GCC and sharpens the contest between two major Council powers, Riyadh and Doha. The rise of political Islam in the MENA region and its growing appeal to the region's population, especially

during the last three years; the war in Syria; and Islamic State advances in Iraq – all of these contribute to the division within the GCC, which coincides with other regional dynamics (exacerbation of the Sunni-Shia confrontation and the changing US role in the region) that further deepen security and stability concerns. Therefore, the new ideological threat to the GCC posed by political Islam and radical Islamists is substantial, and affects not only the GCC but the broader region. Although the possibility of open military conflict in the GCC is close to naught, this new ideological threat might change this assessment in the mid to long terms.

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Tripoli: A Syrian Heart in a Lebanese Body

Omer Einav

If we think of sensitive, complex cities in the modern Middle East that are highly volatile, reflect sectorial tensions, and are home to serious acts of violence, the first names that come to mind are likely to be Baghdad, Mosul, Beirut, and even Jerusalem. However, perhaps it is actually Tripoli in Lebanon that is a microcosm of dramatic regional phenomena and trends and offers a vivid contemporary case study. Located on the northern coast of the Mediterranean, Tripoli, Lebanon's second largest city, has in recent years been home to another round in a long cycle of violence.

This article attempts to provide a broad context for the tempest in Tripoli, focusing on the domestic situation in Lebanon and the civil war in Syria, and deriving insights from what has emerged thus far. To this end, it takes a combined look at Syria and Lebanon, as this is the only way to shed light on the situation and allow an in-depth examination of its consequences. The challenging situation in Tripoli has crucial importance for the future, both inside and outside of the city.

Background

A review of Tripoli's rich history, which dates back to the days of the Phoenicians and covers almost three thousand years, is beyond the scope of this article. However, a number of essential points will help provide the necessary background for understanding the situation of today.

The particular character of modern Tripoli was formed at the time of the Ottoman conquest of the Middle East and the establishment of the eyalet[1] of Ṭarābulus[2] al-Sham (Tripoli of Syria) in 1579. Tripoli was the capital of the province because of its centrality and its proximity to a Mediterranean port.

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It was also the gateway to the interior of Syria, Bilad al-Sham at that time, and especially to the two nearby cities, Hama and Homs;[3] the connection between the three cities was and has remained strong. Another connection that was established at that time and continues today was to the northern coastal region and the Alawite Mountain (Jibal an-Nusayriyah), to this day the traditional home of members of the Alawite sect.

When Mount Lebanon gained autonomy in 1864, Tripoli was associated with the newly established vilayet of Beirut. This arrangement gave Tripoli an identity separate from the rest of Greater Syria. However, when the French mandate in Lebanon began after the end of the World War I, Tripoli remained in dispute because it had a significant number of Sunni Muslims with a conservative approach who saw themselves as an integral part of Greater Syria and not of the new state established in the spirit of the Maronite Christians and their French patrons. The city's population also found it hard to cede the preeminence of the nearby port of al-Mina to the up and coming Beirut. Ultimately, Tripoli was included in the new state and has remained a part of it to this day. [4]

Yet despite its inclusion in Lebanon, Tripoli did not lose its singular character. Its Sunni foundations have made it a natural representative of the Arab Middle East in the twentieth century. This is reflected in two different yet interfacing ideologies, pan-Arabism and Nasserism on the one hand, and traditional Islamic conservatism on the other. Accordingly, the city has produced prominent figures who were known in Lebanon and beyond for their activities, among them military leader Fawzi al-Qawuqji, Rashid Karami, who was prime minister of Lebanon for eight terms, and Sheikh Sa'id Sha'aban, who headed the Islamic Unity Movement in Lebanon. After Greater Lebanon was established, the Sunni population found it difficult to accept the French mandate, and anti-French groups operated in the city with the goal of ending the foreign presence on Syrian and Lebanese soil. This trend continued after Lebanon gained independence in 1943 with the small civil war that took place in 1958, in which Tripoli's residents played a significant role. The 1967 war caused Tripoli, like elsewhere in the Arab world, to lose its faith in secular radicalism, and political Islam gradually grew stronger there. This was clearly reflected in the second Lebanese civil war, which lasted from 1975 to 1990. Armed militias with radical Islamic characteristics were active in the city, as well as against IDF forces in Lebanon. In addition, Tripoli was a refuge for Fatah leader Yasir Arafat until, together with his entourage, he was expelled by the Syrians.[5]

Once the war ended, the city remained under the influence of the prolonged violence that has continued, at least intermittently, to this day. Aside from the national issues that were reflected in the urban fabric, among them the Palestinian problem, the heart of the conflict in the northern city revolved around the sectorial tension welling up among its residents, with a focus on two neighborhoods: Jabal Mohsen, which is Alawite, and Bab al-Tabbaneh, which is Sunni. Since the outbreak of the civil war, tensions have risen in these neighborhoods, which are separated only by a street named for Syria. It appears that since early 2014, after a period of relative calm, the clashes in the streets of Tripoli have returned, leading to the intervention of the Lebanese army in late October 2014 and claiming the lives of dozens of people.[6]

It is difficult to separate these events from the civil war in Syria, which provides fertile ground for sprouting destructive seeds of calamity and ties its fate to that of Lebanon. Therefore, the situation in Tripoli should be seen in part as a microcosm of the civil war in Syria, yet different from the inferno across the border because it evolves according to local rules derived from the Lebanese context.

The Syrian Angle

While Tripoli has belonged to Lebanon for nearly 100 years and was unquestionably the keystone in the building of the Lebanese state, what takes place there cannot be separated from the remaining vestiges of Syrian political and social culture. Prior to the contemporary turmoil in the Arab world, such a statement could have been considered archaic and a distortion of the modern geopolitical fabric of the region. However, today this cannot be dismissed – and all the more so given the weakening of the state structure in the wake of the changes that have occurred. The recognizable borders that divided between the national entities established over the previous 100 years have been blurred, and distinct identities based on religion, ethnicity, community, society, economics, and culture have risen to the surface. It is no wonder, therefore, that a city such as Tripoli, whose demographic makeup and common traditions differ little from those of Syria, reflects the strengthening of the Middle East sectorial trend within its territory, and in particular, the trend that has grown stronger in Syria.[7]

The first element of the spillover of the Syrian war to Tripoli concerns the city's Alawites. This large community, based in the Jabal Mohsen neighborhood, numbers 40,000-60,000 people. It is the largest concentration

of Alawites in Lebanon, and more than half of Lebanon's Alawites live there.[8] Traditional Sunnis naturally identify the Alawites with Shiism, and hence there is an inherent tension between the Alawite minority and the Sunni majority in the city. Moreover, many in the Middle East do not even consider the Alawites to be Muslims (although this idea subsided somewhat for a period of time when in a religious ruling in 1973 Shiite imam Musa al-Sadr recognized the Alawites as Muslims).[9] Despite the latent volatility given the proximity of the two communities, for hundreds of years a stable and relatively calm way of life was maintained, and Christian and Jewish communities lived in the city as well. The match that ignited the fire that has still not been extinguished was the ascent of Hafez al-Assad to power. Assad, who was Alawite, headed a country whose population was mostly Sunni. The rule of the persecuted minority over the majority has had the constant potential to spark a conflagration, a challenge that the Syrian president handled effectively during all his years in power.

Nevertheless, in Lebanon too the Alawites remained a minority, and in Tripoli, the situation intensified as Jabal Mohsen residents were perceived by the city's Sunnis as representatives of the Assad regime. Syria's involvement in Lebanon from the day of its establishment, which increased during the civil war and afterwards, aroused the ire of much of Lebanese society against the patronage of the state's big sister. The Sunnis constitute a significant part of the anti-Syrian movement in the country, which does not take a favorable view of the close connection between the Assad regime and elements in Lebanon – primarily Hizbollah – that has grown closer since Assad's death and the ascent of his son Bashar to power in 2000.[10] The clashes between the residents of Jabal Mohsen and Bab al-Tabbaneh have continued with fluctuating intensity, against the backdrop of critical events such as the murder of Rafiq al-Hariri, the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon in 2005, and the crisis in the country in 2007-8. The latest milestone on the road to the current events was the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in March 2011.

In Lebanon, where the wounds from its own civil war have not yet healed and sectarian rifts are contained in a delicate balance to prevent another round of violence, the events in the neighboring state are read loud and clear. Every ethnic group and community has drawn its own conclusions according to the sensitivities and interests on its agenda. Sunni residents of Tripoli, many of whom have moved closer to Salafist Islam over the years, largely thanks to the conservative Muslim tradition that is an integral part

of the city, have felt a deep solidarity with the Sunni population in Syrian cities in face of the conduct of the Assad regime toward this population. However, since the city is not part of the Syrian state from the point of view of sovereignty or geography, they have vented their anger at Assad's local representatives, the residents of Jabal Mohsen. Every detail that was routine in the past, such as pictures of the Syrian president hanging on the balconies of homes, has become a provocation and led to unrest in Tripoli in 2011.[11] The Alawite population, which always identified and was identified with the Assad regime, has, against its will, ended its temporary passivity, and realized that it must fight for its security.

The Alawite context, however, explains only part of the picture, as conflicting elements in the history of Tripoli remain quite salient, despite the political and social changes since the period of independence and the end of colonialism. Tripoli's connection with the ancient cities in its area, Hama and especially Homs, continues and is an integral part of the story. These two cities were among the first to enter current the Syrian cycle of bloodshed and become a focus of the war.

Tripoli's strong connection with Hama, which is further away than Homs, is reflected primarily in the shared ideological platform. Traditionally, Hama and Tripoli were considered strongholds of conservative Islam and fertile ground for activity by groups associated with political Islam. Hama was also etched as a symbol of Islamic resistance to the Assad dynasty and as the heart of the Muslim Brotherhood rebellion between 1976 and 1982, which culminated in the massacre of tens of thousands of residents of the city, carried out by Rifaat al-Assad in his brother's name. The deep solidarity between the populations of Tripoli and Hama has grown, particularly since Hama experienced the strongarm tactics of the regime and was under siege and suffered mass killings in July 2011, less than four months after the start of the riots in the country.[12] Thus, for example, Riad al-Shaqfeh, the secretary general of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria and a native of Hama, found refuge in Tripoli after the civil war broke out.[13]

The connection with Homs is even closer. Geographically, the cities are about eighty kilometers apart, slightly more than the distance between Tripoli and Beirut. Indeed, many residents of the city have a stronger sense of proximity to Homs than to Beirut, the Bekaa Valley, and Mount Lebanon, where the prominent religious groups are the Christians, Shiites, and Druze.[14] Aside from commercial and religious ties, which have been adversely affected by the prolonged Syrian involvement in Lebanon and

the suppression of the Sunni population in the city,[15] there are even more tangible connections: some 10 percent of the Sunni Muslims in Tripoli have relatives in Homs.[16] In the past, Homs was not perceived as an Islamic stronghold like Hama, but its demographic makeup in the five decades of Assad family rule has turned it into a model with strong similarity to Tripoli. Both cities have an established Alawite community, a small Christian community, and a decisive Sunni majority. The variegated structure has created a dangerous compound that could easily ignite violence, and in fact, during 2011, the popular protest reached the gates of the city. The waves of demonstrations and the massive military operations by the regime that followed in their wake made a deep imprint on Homs, giving it strategic importance in the war and in the public consciousness making it the capital of the revolution. It was not long before volunteers from Tripoli and the surrounding area began to stream into Homs to resist the Assad regime and come to the aid of their brethren, for reasons of religious and cultural solidarity and for purely familial reasons.[17]

The Lebanese Angle

The Syrian experience is alive and well on the streets of Tripoli, and to a considerable extent is part of the local DNA and dictates the city's inward and outward stances. However, the city is located in a state that is complicated in and of itself and operates according to its own rules. Lebanon has attempted to distance itself from the civil war in Syria, lest the events spill over into its territory and create an undesirable situation. After initial success, several factors combined to force Lebanon to become involved in various aspects of the struggle across the border on a larger scale than it wished. The first concerned the flood of Syrian refugees into Lebanon. More than one million refugees poured into the country, a large percentage of them Sunni Muslims, and about one-quarter settled in the Tripoli area.[18] This dramatic fluctuation in the demographic makeup of the country led the authorities to adopt a tougher immigration policy in order to stop the trend jeopardizing Lebanese society, and in late 2014 steps were taken toward this end.[19]

The second factor is the dual problem of involvement by Lebanese elements in the fighting in Syria. The first, which thus far has played the most significant role, is Hizbollah's decision – possibly taken voluntarily and possibly because of the dictates of Tehran – to stand by Bashar Assad and fight alongside his army in the struggle against the rebels. This choice

subjected the organization to harsh criticism domestically, particularly from anti-Syrian elements in the country represented by the March 14 Alliance, for forcibly dragging Lebanon into an unnecessary conflict. This criticism, however, has yielded little, and Hizbollah is still entrenched in the fighting in Syria, mostly along the border with Lebanon. The organization casts itself as the defender of Lebanon and is fully supported by the March 8 Alliance, which it heads.

Some of the significant battles in which Hizbollah fighters have participated are on the country's northeastern border. The most prominent of these were the battle of al-Qusayr, near Homs, where Hizbollah and the Syrian army defeated the rebels in June 2013,[20] and the battle in Arsal, which was part of the larger battle in Syria's Qalamoun region and was fought to the south between Jabhat al-Nusra and the Islamic State (IS) on the one hand and Hizbollah on the other, on the Syrian-Lebanese border. In August 2014, a dramatic reversal took place in the border city, when Islamic rebel groups kidnapped a Lebanese policeman and soldiers. Some were executed and others are still in captivity. The incident stirred up the public in Lebanon.[21] Al-Qusayr and Arsal are not far from Tripoli, and it is highly possible that in certain scenarios, the events would be felt in the streets and the surrounding areas.

The other side of Lebanese involvement in Syria is represented by Salafist Islam, with its varying manifestations and intensities. The Sunni population, much of which has remained relatively moderate over the years on questions of religion and nationality in Lebanon, has been exposed to the bright colors of Islamic activism, and this process has been spearheaded by elements in Tripoli. Years of ideological radicalization, together with economic collapse, have pushed the city's residents into the comforting arms of Islam. The presence of Palestinian refugees, primarily in the Nahr al-Bared and al-Baddawi camps near Tripoli, has intensified this phenomenon, in light of the growth of al-Qaeda cells among this public. Thus, a situation has been created in which aside from the tension within Tripoli, the city serves as a breeding ground for jihadi fighters in Syria and elsewhere. The fact that the Palestinians are not currently a great security threat, after being routed from the area at the end of the previous decade, has caused the Sunnis of Tripoli to unite against a more pressing common target, Assad and the Alawites.[22]

Beyond the cross-border sectorial tension polarizing Lebanese society is a serious political crisis. Since May 2014, when President Michel Suleiman

ended his term, the presidential palace in Baabda has remained empty. The two large political blocs, the March 14 Alliance and the March 8 Alliance, have not been able to reach agreement on a presidential candidate, and the country has been functioning – or more precisely, not functioning – for a number of months without a president.[23] In addition, the parliamentary elections that were to take place in November have been postponed, with the terms of current members of parliament extended because of the security situation. With the serious political situation in the background and the war in Syria spilling onto Lebanon's doorstep, it appears that the pressure is growing in the already unstable city of Tripoli.

In April 2014, Lebanese security forces launched an operation to suppress the violence in Tripoli, which had increased intermittently in parallel to the war in Syria. In the short term, the Tripoli security plan did succeed in stopping the destruction and the killing, but after several months, serious clashes broke out again between the warring neighborhoods of Jabal Mohsen and Bab al-Tabbaneh.[24] Once again the army intervened, and this time the objective changed from eliminating local bloodshed to eradicating a much greater threat, Jabhat al-Nusra and particularly IS. The sweeping conquests by IS in Iraq and Syria made waves around the world and created a serious backlash among moderate states in the region, certainly in a country like Lebanon, which is populated by various minorities, including Christians. Tripoli's young people are a target audience for the ideological attraction that is spreading through the Middle East and beyond, and more than a few have expressed support for its revolutionary ideas and admitted planning to establish an Islamic emirate in northern Lebanon.[25] Therefore, unprecedented steps were taken, such as sending armored vehicles into Bab al-Tabbaneh, from an understanding that the threat is qualitatively different and should be dealt with aggressively. The result was that this fire was completely extinguished, at least temporarily, but it is impossible to know how and when it will be reignited.[26]

Significance

"Tripoli has been accused of militant trends, but it has proven that it is the beginning of change, the first capital of Lebanon that has drawn the map of the strong and just state." These words were spoken by former president Michel Suleiman during his visit with Mufti Malek al-Shaar in the city in early November 2014. This was an attempt by the two to prove that Tripoli has weathered the crisis and is facing a better future.[27] Is this the case?

Within the turbulent Middle East, which abounds with opposing factions, a number of islands remain that were damaged less by the ravages of the storm. Lebanon was and still is such an island. Despite the delicate balance among the communities and the security, political, economic, demographic, and social crises it faces, the long-suffering country has thus far known how to contain the conflict and to maintain its integrity, certainly in comparison to its Syrian neighbor. The trauma of its own civil war is still deeply etched in the minds of Lebanon's citizens and leaders, many of whom were actively involved in those events. The prevailing feeling in the country is that the situation is dangerous but that the opening shot of another civil war has not yet been fired, and it does not appear that it will be fired soon. This is also the situation in Tripoli, where the city's residents have been engaged in conflict for almost forty years. A political commentator for *al-Bayan*, published in Tripoli, captured the mood very well in the paper's lead article on November 5, 2014: "The gate of *fitnah* [civil war] in Tripoli has been closed ... at least for the foreseeable future ... In the end, the weapons and the *fitnah* have been dropped ... but the anarchy has not."

While *al-Bayan* expresses itself calmly and confidently, it also demands that state institutions comprehensively address the evils that are destroying the city from within, not in a piecemeal and reactive fashion, as has been the case until now. Consequently, it is not at all certain that in the future Tripoli and Lebanon will remain as they were. The state structure in what is commonly called the Fertile Crescent is collapsing. Syria and Iraq are being reshaped, and it is impossible to know what they will look like in another few months, let alone another few years. The border between Syria and Lebanon was never hermetically sealed, and it is an area that has lost its governability and enables terrorist, criminal, and refugee activity. Moreover, within the borders of Lebanon, Tripoli is different from the other areas and main cities. Since it was closely connected to Syrian culture and tradition for generations, the era of state dissolution is drawing some of its residents back to their deep feeling of Sunni communal belonging. In a city that suffers from poverty, a lack of personal and public security, a sectorial conflict, and a history of clashes, it is only natural that the new messages from the east find a sympathetic ear among the desperate young people.

Tripoli's physical proximity to the border with Syria, as well as the connections between the Sunni population and its counterparts in Homs and Hama and the Alawites and their brethren in the nearby Jibal an-Nusayriyah, could lead the borders and the checkpoints in northern Lebanon

to collapse and the Syrian civil war to penetrate completely. This is a grave scenario that while not spoken of openly should be taken very seriously. In a state that is so fragile, which is now lacking a healthy, functioning political system, the likelihood that the situation will become chaotic increases. Tripoli is a major candidate to be the first domino to fall, and after this occurs, the Lebanon we know will change in many ways. Furthermore, aside from the Lebanese framework, which is naturally influenced by the events in Tripoli, the city is a microcosm of existing and potential turmoil in other areas in the region that directly affect and are affected by it, e.g., Syria and Iraq, on the one hand, and Jordan, the West Bank, and Gaza, on the other. Hence, the ongoing battle for Tripoli, with its escalations and periods of calm, is also Lebanon's battle for its future, and neither Israel nor Lebanon's allies want to see this battle lost.

Notes

1 This is the administrative name given by the Ottomans at the start of their empire to the territorial units of which it was composed.

2 The transliteration of the Arabic name of the city, which is different from Ṭarābulus al-Gharb (Tripoli of the West), the capital of Libya.

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14 Ibid., p. 107.
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The Syrian Refugee Crisis: Regional and Human Security Implications

Benedetta Berti

The Refugee Population: An Overview

Defined as the "worst humanitarian disaster since the end of the cold war,"[1] the Syrian civil war has to date claimed over 200,000 casualties, including over 8,000 documented killings of children under eighteen years of age.[2] In a country of approximately 22 million people, the bloody and prolonged conflict has resulted in 7.6 million internally displaced persons and an additional 3.2 million refugees, as well as approximately 12.2 million people (more than 1 in 2 Syrians) in need of humanitarian aid to survive.[3] Over 700,000 Syrians have registered as refugees with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2014 alone, with an average of approximately 70,000 Syrians fleeing their country every month.[4] Even though the average monthly number of new refugees has declined since 2013, the regional crisis is by no means subsiding, especially as it becomes clear that returning to Syria will not be a viable option in the short or medium term.

To date, the humanitarian cost of the crisis has been paid mainly by Syria's neighbors, with Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey currently hosting over 600,000, 1.14 million, and 1.6 million refugees, respectively, and with a smaller number of Syrians seeking shelter in Egypt (over 140,000) and Iraq (over 220,000).[5] In reality, the number of Syrians present in these countries is higher than the official UNHCR figure of registered refugees, as a number of Syrians choose not to register, for reasons that range from fearing the consequences of having their names in official records, to lacking either proper information or access to the registration points.

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In Jordan, a country of approximately 6.5 million, Syrian refugees, now equivalent to roughly 9-10 percent of the population, are mostly concentrated in urban centers in the center and north of the country, with approximately 80,000 Syrians living in Zaatari, the largest refugee camp in the country.[6] In Lebanon, the number of refugees dispersed over 1,000 different municipalities, predominantly in the Bekaa valley and the northern areas of the country,[7] is currently equivalent to 26 percent of the Lebanese population. And whereas 1.6 million refugees is a small number compared to Turkey's population of over 76 million people, still, over 80 percent of the refugee population is concentrated chiefly outside of camps in five provinces in the south and southeastern Turkey, thus representing a substantial presence and having a significant impact on each of these areas.[8] In terms of the demographic characteristics of the refugee population, the gender distribution reveals a slight imbalance between women (50.8 percent) and men (49.1 percent), as well as a high percentage of refugees under age 17 (53 percent). These figures should be juxtaposed with data on Syria's pre-war demographic distribution, when the population under age 20 represented roughly 46 percent of the population and where males represented a slight majority.[9]

In addition, the Syrian civil war has resulted in a number of non-Syrian refugees. First and foremost are Palestinians: since the beginning of the war, of the approximately 560,000 registered Palestinian refugees in Syria, over 50 percent have been displaced within the country, with an additional 12 percent seeking shelter in Lebanon (with over 40,000 registered to date, joining the 450,000 Palestinians refugees already present); Jordan (approximately 14,000); and Gaza, Egypt, and Turkey.[10] In addition, countries such as Lebanon have also seen as many as 50,000 "returnees" resettling in the country, increasing the list of vulnerable sectors of the population.[11]

The Impact of the Crisis: Critical Areas of Intervention

The exponential influx of refugees in the Middle East in the past three years has led to one of the worst humanitarian crises the international community has faced in the past few decades. Some of the critical challenges and areas of intervention engaging the international community include:

Protection: Ensuring legal, physical, and psychological protection to the refugee population is a sine qua non in meeting the ongoing crisis. Indeed, lack of basic security takes a direct toll and exerts a negative impact on virtually all assistance programs: for example, lack of security keeps

children out of school – leading parents to prevent them from traveling alone to the educational facilities; or forces women to stay at home and forego education and employment opportunities. Even access to basic health care can be substantially impaired by an insecure environment.

As such, providing security for the vulnerable refugee population is a challenge both within and outside refugee camps. Refugee camps can present significant security challenges by providing the breeding ground for organized criminal groups as well as for the recruitment of fighters. At the same time, securing a widely dispersed refugee population – often living in informal settlements – represents a different but just as daunting task. Vulnerable groups are especially affected, with women and girls, particularly women who fled Syria alone or with their children, vulnerable to sexual and verbal harassment outside the home, as well as to a heightened risk of domestic violence or abuse.[12] Children, particularly unaccompanied minors, are another especially vulnerable group: with insecure and impoverished living conditions, children are exposed to various forms of exploitation, from child labor to sexual violence, to recruitment and employment by armed and criminal groups. Child marriage has also become increasingly common among Syrians since the beginning of the war: for instance, a Save the Children 2014 report stated that "early and forced marriage among Syrian refugee girls in Jordan has doubled since the onset of war," growing from 13 percent to 32 percent between 2011 and 2014.[13]

In addition to securing refugee camps, communities, individuals, and especially vulnerable populations, protection also concerns the refugees' legal status, beginning with ensuring that each refugee is able to register and obtain a recognized legal status in the host country and preventing forced repatriation as well as statelessness. With both Jordan and Lebanon not having ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention,[14] the UNHCR works with the host countries through separate Memorandums of Understanding that allow the agency to operate and keeps both countries committed to the general customary international law principle of non-refoulement.

Lebanon has further relied on a previous bilateral agreement with Syria to allow Syrians to obtain residency permits in Lebanon. However, Syrians who have entered the country through unofficial crossings or are unable to renew their permits are considered as being in the country illegally, thus creating a worrisome loophole in the protection regime.[15] Jordan has a different system in place, allowing Syrian refugees to register with UNHCR and reside in ad hoc camps, with a bailout system that allows refugees to

reside outside of camps if "sponsored" by a Jordanian. It conditions their right to work on getting a permit, which is, in turn, costly and difficult to obtain.[16] Turkey has ratified the Refugee Convention but applies it according to its original scope, thus awarding refugee status only to refugees from Europe. The country has nevertheless devised a so-called Temporary Protection Regime for Syrian refugees and, since April 2014, the Turkish Law on Foreigners and International Protection guarantees legal presence in Turkey, temporary residence permits to settle in most of the country, access (with an identity card) to basic services, and universal access to health care.[17] While in theory Syrian "guests" can apply for a work permit, in practice obtaining such a document is extremely difficult.[18]

Shelter: According to UN estimates, up to 85 percent of Syrian refugees live outside of refugee camps, scattered in both urban and rural settings.[19] In Jordan, 18 percent of Syrian refugees live in camps, chiefly Zaatari and Azraq.[20] Turkey has accommodated roughly 20 percent of the refugee population in 22 camps that were initially described as "the best refugee camps ever seen," but which are under increasing strain by the prolonged crisis.[21] In Lebanon, all Syrians are accommodated outside camps, as domestic political realities have led the country to oppose their construction.

Assistance in finding adequate shelter and providing services to the refugee population dispersed outside the camps has been a significant challenge for international and local stakeholders alike. Moreover, with the majority of Syrians needing shelter, the number of available accommodations has declined. In turn, rental prices have increased significantly in all areas with a high concentration of refugees, placing an additional strain on the vulnerable refugee population as well as on the host communities. Most refugees are indeed in need of assistance for rent, and financial considerations can prevent refugees from finding adequate housing, forcing them to live in sub-standard accommodations such as abandoned or unfinished buildings or in informal dwellings, which in numerous cases lack adequate access to water, sanitation, waste management, or electricity and are unfit for the winter season.

Health and Education: Along with the housing shortage, the refugee influx has also had direct repercussions on the states' capacity to deliver social services, with the host countries' health and educational systems, especially in the cases of Lebanon and Jordan, stretched beyond their limits. For the health sector the pressure derives from a substantial increase in need, demand, and costs as well as in shortages of personnel and structures,

resulting in an overall deterioration of the system for the refugee and host community alike. Poor and unsanitary living conditions and limited access to basic health services also pose an added risk in terms of both preventing and treating epidemics and outbreaks of infections while contributing to a worsening of the target population's health. Lack of heating or damp housing conditions, for example, can lead to respiratory diseases such as asthma, allergies, and acute bronchitis.[22]

In addition, lack of proper documentation or financial factors complicate the question of access, with the ladder factor especially relevant in Lebanon, where the health system is privatized (despite the fact that the international community subsidizes a large number of health-related expenses), as opposed to Jordan or Turkey, where free public health care is generally available. Lack of adequate access to the medical system takes an especially high toll on the elderly refugee population, as well as on Syrians with disabilities, chronic conditions, or in need of psychological assistance.[23] This is especially relevant given the high percentage of Syrian refugees with impairments: for instance, a HelpAge International and Handicap International survey in 2014 found that "30 per cent of refugees have specific needs."[24]

Providing access to education has been similarly complex, with the international community and the host governments struggling to accommodate Syrian children and with the local educational system increasingly overcrowded, under financial strain, and with overworked personnel. For example, in Lebanon, the number of Syrian school-aged children surpasses the number of Lebanese children in the public school system.[25] Additional factors, including lack of proper documentation, costs of education, distance from school, safety issues, cultural or language barriers, strong differences in the curriculum, or the need to work to support the household have kept Syrian children out of schools, a trend with extremely negative long term consequences. Again with respect to Lebanon, the International Labour Organization reports that the gross enrollment rate (defined as "the number of children enrolled in a level, regardless of age, divided by the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the same level")[26] for Syrian refugees is around 55 percent for primary education (6-10 years) but as low as 13 percent for secondary education (11-15 years), well below both the Lebanese and the Syrian pre-war average.[27] While there seems to be substantial gender parity when it comes to enrollment in primary schools, when it comes to secondary education boys are more likely than girls to drop out of school to start working.[28] Children outside

refugee camps are more likely to be out of school. For example, in the case of Turkey, whereas roughly 83 percent of Syrian children age 6-11 attend school within the camps, that number drops to 14 percent when it comes to refugees living outside the camps.[29] And even Jordan, the country that fares the best out of the three in terms of percentages of children age 5-17 enrolled in formal education, has only a 52 percent enrollment rate.[30]

Employment: The massive refugee flows have in some cases resulted in the saturation of the job market, with a widespread perception in host communities that refugees have contributed to both a general rise in unemployment rates along with a decrease in wages. This is especially the case as the refugee population, often driven by the desperation of their circumstances and/or unable to obtain the proper work permits, agree to work for lower wages, harsher conditions, and fewer rights than their counterparts in the host communities. For example, the International Rescue Committee estimates that wages in the service and agricultural sectors have dropped as much as 50 percent in Lebanon between 2011 and 2013.[31] Along with the competition with local workers, Syrian refugees have also opened informal businesses that sell below market prices, further contributing to the "race to the bottom."

A 2013 International Labour Organization assessment of the patterns of employment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon highlighted that the majority of the refugees work in unskilled or semi-skilled, often informal or temporary/seasonal jobs − from agriculture to domestic work to construction − that generally fail to offer steady and adequate income, job security, or work benefits.[32] Significantly, patterns of both average income and unemployment tend to reflect a gender gap, with male unemployment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon at roughly 30 percent (versus 68 percent of women) and with the average monthly income at $287 for male workers (against the $448 minimum wage) versus $165 for female workers.[33] An analysis of patterns of employment in both Jordan and Turkey confirms these same trends, with refugees overwhelmingly lacking formalized, skilled, and regular jobs and often employed as "illegal workers" due to the limits in the legal framework. In addition, insufficient and unsteady income in turn fosters greater dependence on international assistance to survive − for example, through food parcels, food vouchers, or pre-paid credit card programs − while forcing more refugees to deplete their resources and savings and go into debt.[34] The consequences of these insecure economic conditions are pervasive and include higher risks of contracting debts and exploitation;

higher percentage of food insecurity, malnutrition, and anemia;[35] increased rates of child labor and child marriage; and the inability to afford adequate shelter, healthcare, or basic services.

The Impact of the Crisis: Host Community Resilience

This brief overview clearly details the massive impact of the regional refugee crisis on the host countries' social services and job markets, as well as on housing, electricity, sanitation, and water resources. The massive refugee influx has also impacted negatively on the host countries' economies.

In the case of Lebanon, a 2013 World Bank assessment found that the Syrian civil war had strained Lebanon's already frail public finances and widened the fiscal deficit, with the state needing to spend an additional $2.5 billion simply to restore access and quality of services to pre-Syrian civil war levels, and with the Lebanese trade and tourism sectors especially suffering.[36] Given the rising prices and unemployment, ordinary Lebanese families are paying directly for the Syrian crisis, with the resulting estimate that at least 170,000 Lebanese will have been pushed into poverty by the end of 2014.[37] The situation is worsened by the fact that a large number of refugees have settled in areas of Lebanon such as the Bekaa Valley and the north of the country that have historically been more economically marginalized and underdeveloped in terms of social services and infrastructure.

Economic and political pressures in host countries have led in turn to tensions at the social level, both between the refugee population and the local residents and, especially in the case of Lebanon, between different politico-sectarian sectors of society that support opposite sides in the Syrian civil war, resulting in a general deterioration in social cohesion.

This situation has not only taken a toll on the Syrian refugee population, an already vulnerable group, but has also created massive domestic pressure, ultimately shaking the host communities to their core. The severe economic burden of the crisis, the potential social tensions, and the crystallizing perception that the refugee crisis will not subside in the near future have led to attempts to further restrict and regulate refugee flows as well as to further limit the current refugees' rights and benefits in the host countries. These join the preexisting exceptions to the open borders policies: for example, Amnesty International reported that Lebanon was already restricting entry for Palestinian refugees, while Jordan was outright denying it, with both Jordan and Turkey at times preventing entry to those who lacked identity documents (and in the case of Turkey resulting in internally displaced

persons camps mushrooming at the border between Syrian and Turkey).[38] However, restrictions further increased in late 2014, with reports surfacing of forcible deportation of refugees back to Syria, in violation of international law.[39] In a telling declaration in early October 2014, Lebanese Social Affairs Minister Rashid Derbas stated that apart from "humanitarian exceptions," the country "no longer officially receives any displaced Syrians."[40]

Managing the Crisis and Increasing Sustainability: An International Priority

The regional refugee crisis has indisputable and far reaching political, social, economic, and security implications. First, the dire conditions facing a large part of the refugee population directly undermine all dimensions of their human security (from the personal, to economic and environmental, to health and food security). Second, the refugees' problems and hardships cannot be seen as self-contained. On the contrary, they deeply affect their host countries' resilience and domestic stability, to the detriment of the host societies' human security. Indeed, the study emphasizes how the refugee crisis has severely undermined the host countries' resilience, as well as their economic performance, while also furthering social tensions. Clearly, each host country's preexisting social, political, and economic context equips it in a different way to deal with these destabilizing trends, but the fact that even the more prosperous and resilient Turkish state is starting to face significant pressure in tackling the refugee crisis demonstrates the magnitude of the challenge.

The cumulative effect of the ongoing crisis on the main host countries should be seen as a potential source of short term domestic and regional instability at the economic, political, and ultimately security levels. And if in the short term the failure to tackle the crisis only adds pressure to an already shaky regional security landscape, the lack of serious investments in the long term integration or resettlement of refugee communities could lead to the rise of a new group of economically deprived and politically marginalized second class citizens throughout the Levant, with negative consequences in terms of human development, political stability, and security.

To respond to the ongoing humanitarian emergency, the international community has relied on an inter-agency Regional Response Plan (RRP) that brings together over 100 stakeholders between UN agencies and NGOs,[41] as well as on bilateral and multi-lateral assistance to the host

countries and communities. The RRP appeal for 2014, set at $3.7 billion to sustain the emergency assistance and relief efforts, is one of the largest ever presented in United Nations history. When adding appeals from other agencies and host governments, the sum rises to a staggering $7.7 billon.[42] The 2015 UN appeal for the sum of $8.4 billion (with $5.5 billion earmarked for the regional refugee and residence plan) similarly shows that the emergency is far from subsiding.[43]

Yet despite the gravity and urgency of the situation and the clear importance of preventing a further escalation of the crisis, the international assistance efforts are increasingly more cash-stripped, with the RPP having obtained only 54 percent of the needed funds.[44] The lack of funds will clearly have a direct and potentially devastating impact on access to health, education, shelter, water, and sanitation, while also compromising the refugees' food security and putting even more pressure on the already frail host communities. In turn, this can not only push the host governments to the brink, but it can also fuel preexisting political, sectarian, or political tensions between host and refugee communities. In this context, the very first priority of the international community must be to step up its commitment and prevent the cutting of vital assistance programs by fully funding the humanitarian assistance efforts.

Again, stepping in to ensure the funding of the refugee crisis should be seen as a key ingredient in any longer term plan to stabilize the region and keep extremism at bay. In this sense, the "soft security" focus on managing the humanitarian crisis and preventing a collapse of the host states should be seen as at least as important as the hard security efforts to downgrade and destroy the Islamic State. Failing to see the integrated nature of human and hard security threats to the region represents, to date, one of the larger failures in the international community's approach to the Syrian civil war and its regional spillover.

Another indirect way to reduce the pressure of the regional crisis is for the international community to substantially step up its commitment to resettlement. UNHCR has expressed hope to resettle an estimated 130,000 Syrian between now and 2016,[45] but to date that seems a particularly elusive goal. With the exception of Germany and to a lesser degree Sweden, European countries in particular lag behind, with countries like France having pledged to resettle only 500 refugees.[46] Indeed, by and large European governments, with increasingly more securitized immigration policies and facing a generally reluctant public opinion when it comes to refugee

absorption, have taken only small steps with respect to resettlement. Given the general political climate in Europe, it is unlikely this policy stance will change substantively in 2015.

In the longer term, preventing a further deterioration of the crisis also requires the international community to invest more in boosting the host communities' economies and infrastructure, so that they can better cope with the refugee crisis as well as with the increased vulnerabilities and needs of the local populations. Indeed, given the precarious context and the long term outlook of the crisis, investing in the long term development and resilience of the host communities should be seen as an outmost priority. This does not just require additional funds to deal with the refugee crisis and the increased needs of the local population, but also working to invest in long term economic development, institutional capacity building, and security sector assistance.

Finally, there needs to be a clear focus on long term development and integration, which in turn requires host governments to relinquish their approach to treating refugees as "temporary guests." In this sense, a key priority should be on livelihood and income generation, including job creation, lending geared to fostering micro-enterprise, and vocational training. Clearly this approach also requires a shift in legal frameworks, easing the conditions for refugees to obtain work permits, and investing in sensible social and labor policies.

In dealing with the Syrian civil war, the international community seems to have split the focus between the "military-security" dimension of the conflict and the "humanitarian" aspect, with the regional refugee crisis largely analyzed through the humanitarian lens. While understandable, this approach has de facto created an artificial separation between regional and human security concerns.

Put simply: the economic, political, and social impact of the ongoing refugee crisis should not be seen solely through the humanitarian lens. Successfully tackling the emergency and boosting the long term resilience of both refugee and host communities is also a vital strategic priority to prevent the long term destabilization and implosion of the entire Levant. The relative lethargy with which the international community has reacted to the challenge reflects a fundamental underestimation of the nature of the crisis and its long term regional repercussions in terms of regional stability and resilience, but also in relation to issues such as radicalization

and the rise of uncontrolled migratory flows, two issues that have been at the forefront of the European security agenda for the Mediterranean.

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Are We on the Map? Israel in Jordanian Textbooks

Ofir Winter

Textbooks as a Tool for Indoctrination

Textbooks are an important resource for shaping the identity, values, goals, ethos, and historical narratives that a country wishes to impart to its citizens. Official bodies responsible for the content and distribution of textbooks use this medium to instill political world views in the younger generation, shape a dominant collective memory, and create a broad consensus on maintaining existing political and social order. Textbooks fulfill these roles in democracies and even more so in authoritarian governments such as the Jordanian regime, which supervises the agents of socialization and propaganda very closely. In the case of Jordan, the Minister of Education is appointed by the king, and the textbooks are written by teachers or supervisors subject to the instructions of the Jordanian Ministry of Education and printed and distributed by the government. Consequently, the textbooks are agents of education, propaganda, and political indoctrination.[1]

Textbooks fill a particularly decisive function in societies subject to and defined by violent and prolonged conflicts, or, alternatively, peace and reconciliation processes. During a period of conflict, textbooks help the regime instill a "culture of conflict" that includes a dominant psycho-cultural repertoire of views, beliefs, and feelings about the causes, goals, and course of the conflict, the home society, the enemy society, and the desired solution. Conversely, with the achievement of a political agreement, textbooks are likely to help cultivate and disseminate a new and alternative culture fostering the value of peace, reconstruct the national narratives and history, and struggle against old or competing cultural systems.[2]

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Jordanian Textbooks from the Period of Conflict to the Era of Peace

Even two decades after the signing of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty, the shift from conflict to peace appears in Jordanian textbooks but little. While during the years of conflict the Jordanian educational system followed and spouted the dominant Arab nationalist line, the changes made after the peace treaty with Israel was signed were limited in number and quality. There is still a wide gap between the existing changes and the systematic fostering of a culture of peace, including empathy for Jews, acceptance of the Zionist enterprise, and recasting of the historical narratives to portray the past and present relations between the two sides in a new light.

The limited scope of the educational reforms was due to cost-benefit political calculations, not ideological inhibitions. Measured and cautious changes, more so than those made in textbooks in Egypt, suited the interests of the Jordanian regime in three ways. First, a rapid change from the traditional image of Israel as a foreign, colonial, exploitative, and threatening entity to its new status as a partner in peace worthy of normalized relations was liable to arouse strong opposition among the Jordanian public. Second, the failure of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on a permanent settlement made it difficult for the Jordanian regime to gain legitimacy for far reaching educational reforms. Finally, the pressure exerted by those opposed to the peace treaty deterred the regime from controversial measures liable to provide political opponents with a weapon that could prove embarrassing in domestic public opinion.

Study of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Jordanian educational system began as early as the 1950s. Despite the intimate clandestine relations developed from the mid-1960s between King Hussein and Israeli leaders, until the moves toward peace, Jordanian textbooks served as a tool for fostering and spreading a "culture of conflict" and incited hostility, hatred, and demonization of Israel and the Jews. The Jordanian Law of Education, passed in 1964, stated that the "Arab character of Palestine" and the "effort to return it to the bosom of the Arab fatherland" were the foundations of the Jordanian educational philosophy.[3] Accordingly, Zionism was described in the textbooks as an abominable reflection of Western colonialism, a movement that stole Palestine from its original inhabitants, sought to disrupt Arab unity, and expand at the Arabs' expense. Repeating common anti-Semitic motifs and without any real distinction between Judaism and Zionism, the Jews were depicted as controlling the financial markets and the global media and spreading moral corruption among civilization.[4] The

struggle against the Jews was explained as a religious-historical struggle from the days of Muhammad, when the Jews violated their agreements with the Muslims and made alliances with the infidels.[5] The idea of peace with Israel was absent from the textbooks, even though in 1967 Jordan accepted UN Security Council Resolution 242, which was based on the "land for peace" formula. Furthermore, the Camp David agreements between Israel and Egypt were denounced for their serious shortcomings: recognition of Israel, abandonment of Jerusalem, neglect of the Palestinians' rights, acceptance of a violation of the territorial continuity between Arab countries, and a blow to Arab unity.[6]

The maps that appeared in the Jordanian textbooks underwent a gradual transformation over the years, reflecting the changes in the kingdom's actual borders as well as the symbolic borders that the regime sought to sketch in order to reflect the affinity between the Jordanian identity and the Palestinian identity. In the maps published in the 1950s and 1960s, all the territory of Mandatory Palestine was labeled as Jordan. These maps reflected non-recognition of the legitimacy of Israeli sovereignty over the land, the belief that all the territory up to the Mediterranean coastline belonged to Jordan, and the denial of the competing Palestinian and Egyptian claims to sovereignty over all or part of the land.[7] After the Six Day War, the map of Jordan shrank to the borders of the 1949 ceasefire lines, including the West Bank and Jerusalem. The rest of the land of Israel appeared as "Occupied Palestine."[8] The portrayal of the kingdom within the borders known to us now began to appear in the textbooks only after the decision to disengage from the West Bank in July 1988. For its part, the State of Israel continued to be absent from the maps in its real name, and to appear as Palestine.[9]

In the framework of the peace treaty (Section 11C), Jordan and Israel undertook to refrain from expressions of hostility in governmental publications, including textbooks. Under pressure from Israel, Jordan acceded to a number of nominal corrections. Most of the content typical of Jordanian textbooks during the period of conflict, however, which was ostensibly inconsistent, at least in spirit, with the peace policy it had adopted, was left unchanged. This was confirmed by Munther al-Masri, Jordanian Minister of Education in 1996-1998, who said, "There was no systematic change in study programs after the peace treaty, except for slight changes corresponding to the new status [of relations] commenced with Israel."[10] The changes nevertheless implemented in the honeymoon period of the peace included omission from the textbooks of the phrase "the Zionist

enemy," and partial omission of the Quran verses and traditions used to whip up hatred of the Jews and arouse support for jihad against them.[11] Similarly, in accordance with Jordan's position on Jerusalem, statements by King Hussein calling for leaving sovereignty over the holy places of the three monotheistic religions "in the hands of God" – substituted for the traditional Jordanian demand for exclusive Arab-Muslim sovereignty over the Holy Basin – were cited.[12] Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the US, the Jordanian Ministry of Education decided to enhance its education for peace and tolerance as Islamic values advocated by the kingdom, although devoid of any explicit link to the controversial peace relations with Israel.[13]

While these changes were taking place, the Jordanian Education Law, passed in April 1994, a few months before the signing of the peace treaty, emphasized Jordan's loyalty to the traditional line, which held that "the Palestinian problem is a fateful problem for the Jordanian people, and the Zionist aggression against Palestine is a political, military, and cultural challenge for the Arab and Islamic nation in general, and in particular for Jordan."[14] In the spirit of the law, which reflected Jordan's desire to prove that its pursuit of peace did not constitute a deviation from its commitment to the Palestinians, the textbooks in the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century continued to portray Israel as an occupying and aggressive country seeking to destroy the original inhabitants of the land, describe Zionism as a racist ideology designed to subject all other peoples to the Jews and steal their property, and indiscriminately attribute to Jews negative character traits.[15] The maps in the textbooks continued to display "Palestine" as a country on the kingdom's western border, and refrained from explicit recognition of Israeli sovereignty. In contrast to Egyptian history books, which emphasized the positive contribution of peace with Israel to the essential interests of Egypt, the Jordanian history books were silent and refrained from clarifying the nature of the current relations between Jordan and Israel following the peace agreement, while at the same time highlighting the kingdom's role in the wars "for the defense of Palestine and Jerusalem."[16]

Between May and September 2014, the Jordanian Ministry of Education launched a number of measures that it had shunned during two decades of peace.

Educational Reforms in Light of the Struggle against Radical Islam

Between May and September 2014, the Jordanian Ministry of Education launched a number of measures that it had shunned during two decades of peace, which may well signal the beginning of a positive change in the status of Israel in the Jordanian textbooks. As part of the changes, the Ministry removed from the curriculum lessons that promoted the ethos of struggle against Israel. In an unprecedented move, it distributed a study guide for teachers and educational booklets that included a map in which Israel was explicitly shown by name, and it banned the inclusion of a book denouncing the peace with the Jews in school libraries. While these measures did not amount to a comprehensive reform in the attitude toward Israel in Jordanian textbooks, they did constitute some improvement in Israel's status at a time when Operation Protective Edge was taking place and the royal palace's public rhetoric was highly critical of Israel. The public criticism by the royal household of Israel's policy in the Palestinian arena during the summer of 2014, which was designed to have a calming effect on Jordanian popular opinion, does not contradict its basic desire for long term educational changes regarding Israel's image. A circumstantial analysis of the Jordanian regime's measures suggests that although their rationale was not articulated publicly, they were adopted as part of an enduring trend to reduce the centrality of the conflict with Israel in the Jordanian educational experience, a conflict that nurtures the radical Islamic forces posing a growing threat to the kingdom's stability.

Evidence of the public weight of these educational changes can be found in the debate between the Jordanian regime and the opposition forces, headed by the Muslim Brotherhood and the trade unions. The latter elements denounced the changes in the textbooks for three main reasons: first, it was alleged, they reflect surrender to external foreign pressure based on American-Israeli interests; second, they violate sacred religious and national values at the heart of the Jordanian identity; third, they weaken the younger generation in the struggle against Israel and undermine its spirit of sacrifice for Palestine. In response to the criticism, the regime's spokesman stressed the ongoing Jordanian commitment to the Palestinian issue, and rejected the accusations concerning the effects of the external pressure allegedly exerted on the kingdom. They also belittled the value of the changes, or alternatively, used semantic apologetics by claiming that what was involved was "enhancement and development" of textbooks by inserting new content, not "changes" or "revisions."

The change in Israel's status in the Jordanian textbooks was not unrelated to the strengthening of radical Islam in the region and the threats facing Jordan. In 2014, the battles in Iraq and Syria neared the kingdom's borders, and the increasingly brazen Islamic State soldiers extended their range of targets to Kurdistan and Lebanon. Along with the external threats, the Jordanian regime faced a no less troublesome threat on the internal front from the followers of the Salafı-jihadi ideology, mainly in the cities of Ma'an and al-Zarqa. A considerable number of young Jordanians have drawn encouragement and inspiration from the successes of the Islamic State organization and Jabhat al-Nusra in Iraq and Syria, and several thousand of them even went to fight in its ranks. The economic and social distress in Jordan, reflected in high rates of poverty, unemployment, and inflation, has also contributed to the growing religious extremism in the country.[17]

The external dangers on its unstable borders with Syria and Iraq, as well as pockets of Salafı-jihad support inside Jordan, have highlighted Israel's standing as a strategic partner for the kingdom's security and economic interests, and the state of peace with Israel as a guarantee of stability on its western border. At the same time, the ongoing public agitation on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has become more troublesome than ever for the Jordanian regime, due to its role in inciting the religious radicalism threatening to spread in Jordan. Senior Jordanian spokesmen have mentioned the Palestinian issue as a factor in the rise of the Islamic State, the strengthening of radical terrorist groups, and regional instability.[18] King Abdullah himself stated, "The many conflicts in the region constitute a convenient climate for extremism and terrorism, and this requires serious action to strengthen the middle of the road and moderation."[19]

In view of the growing anxiety in Jordan about the dangers threatening it from both without and within, the government in 2014 began to formulate a multi-dimensional plan of operation for the struggle against radical Islam. The plan had legal, economic, military, and educational components. In April, the Jordanian parliament approved an amendment to the Anti-Terrorism Law that made it easier to arrest and put on trial anyone who joins jihadist organizations, propagates their ideas, gives them money, or helps recruit and train their operatives within Jordan or elsewhere. In October, King Abdullah cited an urgent need to create new jobs as part of the struggle against religious extremism. That same month, Jordan joined the international coalition in the war against the Islamic State, and in November, the government approved training for members of

the Iraqi army and the stationing of six French warplanes on its territory. In addition to these measures, the regime decided to promote reforms in study programs in the schools and universities in the belief that the younger generation was overly exposed to the influence of radical Islamic ideologies.[20] Jordanian Minister of the Interior Hussein Hazza al-Majali stated in August 2014 that the struggle against extremism and terrorism was not limited to the use of military force; it should also be conducted in the ideological sphere. He added that this was a collective responsibility of all the country's agencies, educational institutions, mosque preachers, universities, discussion forums, social organizations, and the family.[21] For his part, King Abdullah stressed that the campaign against terrorism and extremism included both military and educational aspects, and predicted that in contrast to the military campaign, which would not take a long time, "the ideological campaign" to institute moderate Islam can be expected to last 10-15 years.[22]

It therefore appears that the series of changes in 2014 in the portrayal of Israel in Jordanian textbooks constitutes an integral part of the ideological struggle conducted by the Jordanian regime against radical Islam and the threat posed by the Islamic State. The first public outcry occurred in May 2014, after a letter from the Jordanian Ministry of Education to high schools was leaked. This letter instructed the schools to refrain from buying the book *The Jews: No Agreements and No Treaties* for their libraries, insofar as it was inconsistent with the state educational philosophy. The Muslim Brotherhood warned that banning the purchase of a book revealing the true nature of the Jews as people with whom treaties could not be conducted would prevent students from recognizing the real face of "the occupying enemy."[23] Muslim Brotherhood leader Hamza Mansour sent a letter to the Jordanian Minister of Education condemning the Ministry's order. He said that the Quran contained many verses showing that the Jews did not honor their treaties, to the extent that "violation of treaties and evading undertakings is second nature for them," as stated in verse 100 of the "The Cow" Surah (concerning the breach of the Jews' treaty with the Prophet Mohammed): "And every time they made a pledge some of them pushed it aside, and many of them do not believe."[24]

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Three months later, before the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year, a study guide for teachers containing supplementary materials for the geography curriculum for junior high schools and two study booklets for elementary schools and junior high schools dealing with hygiene and the damage caused by smoking were distributed. In unprecedented fashion, these contained a map of the region in which Israel was explicitly displayed, i.e., no longer as Palestine. Israel was portrayed in the pre-Six Day War borders, without the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. Only next to the Golan Heights was it stated that the territory was "occupied by Israel." In response, the Anti-Zionism and Racism Society, affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, stated that the use of the strange name "Israel" was designed to weaken the attachment to Palestine among the nation and the people.[25] The Association called the study booklet an anti-educational plot for normalization and the spreading of ignorance, and called on teachers not to distribute it to their students and to warn them of its dangers.[26] Following the protests, the Jordanian Ministry of Education disavowed the booklets, claiming that it had not approved them.[27]

Furthermore, in the summer of 2014, the Jordanian Ministry of Education removed texts dealing with Jerusalem and Firas al-Ajlouni, commander of an air battle squadron who was killed in the 1967 War and was considered a Jordanian national hero and a symbol of Jordan's commitment to the Palestinian cause, from third grade Arabic study booklets.[28] This measure led to a protest demonstration by opposition organizations in front of the Jordanian Ministry of Education, under the heading, "No to Normalization in the Jordanian Study Programs."[29] The protestors accused the regime of having ulterior motives. For example, Thabahtoona, a student protest organization, expressed its suspicion that the removal of the al-Ajlouni lesson was the result of cooperation between the Jordanian government and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), as part of an agreement for $235 million over five years to improve education in the kingdom.[30] Jordanian Teachers Union chairman Hussam Masheh attributed the changes to external pressure on Jordan to revise its study programs. He mentioned his longing for the old textbooks "that dealt extensively with the Palestinian problem and the dangers of the Zionist enemy," and expressed regret that "we no longer see these subjects in the study programs, which are now subject to foreign dictates."[31] A publicist's article on an independent Jordanian website wondered whether the erasing of al-Ajlouni's name constituted "a precedent for a decision to allow international forces to use

our land to attack fellow Arab Muslims in neighboring countries, on the pretext of an attack against the Islamic State and similar organizations."[32]

Islamist groups regarded the removal of the lesson on al-Ajlouni as a typical example of the Jordanian regime's efforts to repress the ethos of struggle against Israel. A summons to a protest demonstration in front of the Ministry of Education organized by the Anti-Zionism and Racism Society asserted that the revisions in textbooks were no coincidence; they were the result of a regular policy designed to uproot the spirit of resistance from the consciousness of the younger generation and replace it with a mood of surrender, disguised by slogans like "common universal values" and "culture of peace." The summons stated that the regime's measures "contributed to creating a generation of rootless cosmopolitans" and "education for not belonging to the fatherland and the soil."[33] In a speech at the demonstration, al-Ajlouni was described as "a paragon of the struggle against the sworn Zionist enemy and for the defense of Palestinian soil, the main problem of the Jordanian people," and concern was expressed that removal of his biography constituted "part of an organized process of reformulating study programs to fit the peace treaty with Israel and the Zionist-American demands for the elimination of any study material whipping up hatred of the Zionist entity."[34] An article in *Assabeel*, the Muslim Brotherhood publication, stated that in contrast to the Jordanian pilots of today, al-Ajlouni "was not satisfied with airshows, and would not have allowed his airplane to rust away unused in a warehouse through the weakness of diplomats and the fears of leaders."[35]

Faced with this wave of criticism, the Jordanian Ministry of Education hurriedly made clear that the study unit involved was removed as part of a general replacement of textbooks for grades 1-3 for pedagogical, not political, reasons involving techniques for teaching reading. The Ministry also emphasized that it cherished the spirit of sacrifice represented by al-Ajlouni, and cited the school in Amman named after him as evidence.[36] Jordanian Minister of Education Mohammad Thneibat promised that the Jordanian study programs "would

> According to the Jordanian establishment's long term perspective, it is both possible and desirable to implement gradual measures to reduce the conscious and symbolic intensity of the conflict with Israel, even in a political situation where no Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement is on the horizon.

continue to be replete with material about sacrifice and national foundations, and would put a maximal emphasis on the Palestinian problem."[37]

Conclusion

Regardless of their limited nature, the changes in the portrayal of Israel in the Jordanian educational system are singular developments. While previous revisions in the textbooks occurred as a result of Israeli pressure in the second half of the 1990s, during the honeymoon period of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty, the recent revisions were a voluntary initiative of the Jordanian regime, even though they were implemented during a period of colder formal relations with Israel. This indicates that internal political interests are likely to bring the Jordanian regime to promote educational changes concerning recognition of Israel and moderation of the hostility to it, despite the concomitant sharp public protests. According to the Jordanian establishment's long term perspective, it is both possible and desirable to implement measures for gradually reducing the conscious and symbolic intensity of the conflict with Israel, even in a political situation where no Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement is on the horizon.

Despite the measures taken over the past year, however, there is much ground to cover before a state is reached in which Jordanian education advocates reconciliation and good neighbor relations with Israel. At this stage, it is still difficult to assess whether the recent changes in textbooks indicate the beginning of a wave of broad reforms likely to help strengthen the peaceful relations between Israel and Jordan in the future, or whether only a set of limited and individual actions is involved. The royal house's main motivation for revising its study programs in the framework of this conflict with radical Islam, combined with the strategic interests shared by Israel and Jordan, is likely to encourage a continuation of this trend; on the other hand, the powerful public protests aroused in Jordan by any move in the direction of reconciliation with Israel constitute a formidable stumbling block.

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Israel-Azerbaijan: Despite the Constraints, a Special Relationship

Gallia Lindenstrauss

Introduction

A telegram from the US embassy in Azerbaijan that was published in Wikileaks claimed that the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, compared Israel-Azerbaijan relations to an iceberg, with most of the relations being below the surface and only the edge visible.[1] Moreover, the strategic relations between the two countries, as long as they do not prompt the actors for adventurist policies, are consistent with the interests of the US and the West. It can even be asserted that Azerbaijan is the Muslim country with which Israel currently enjoys the closest relations. This might seem surprising, given that Azerbaijan has a common border with Iran and that most of its population is Shiite (although it has a strong secular tradition). Nevertheless, after more than two decades of diplomatic relations, it appears that relations are at a peak.

Following the visit by Israel's Minister of Defense Moshe Ya'alon to Azerbaijan in September 2014, *Haaretz* published several op-eds about arms exports from Israel to Azerbaijan, a key aspect of the relationship. One contributor argued that continuation of Israeli arms exports to Azerbaijan was liable to help cause a renewed outbreak of violence in Nagorno-Karabakh and lead to massacres by Azerbaijan against the Armenian population.[2] In contrast, articles written in response stressed the problems for Israel posed by the close relations between Armenia and Iran, and argued that Azerbaijan was a true partner of Israel.[3] The ethnic cleansing committed by the Armenians against the Azeris in the 1990s, the responsibility of the Armenians for the failure to reach a solution to the dispute concerning

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the Nagorno-Karabakh and nearby regions, and the Russian support for Armenia were also cited as contributing to the deadlock.[4] This argument raises anew the question of the characteristics of the relations between Israel and Azerbaijan and to what degree the strategic relations between them are stable.

Background

In April 1992, not long after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Israel and Azerbaijan established diplomatic relations, and in 1993, Israel opened an embassy in Baku. Despite promises made over the years, Azerbaijan has chosen not to open an embassy in Tel Aviv, and instead maintains an unofficial channel of communication for inter-governmental dialogue through the Israel offices of the Azerbaijan airlines.[5]

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, there have been a number of high level visits, although in most cases the visiting senior officials were Israelis.[6] In 1997, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made an intermediate stop in Baku on his return from a visit to the Far East. In May 2009, President Shimon Peres made an official state visit to Azerbaijan, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Avigdor Lieberman made a number of official visits to Baku (in February 2010, April 2012, and April 2014). In April 2013, Azerbaijan Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmar Mammadyarov made a high level visit to Israel, while in September 2014, Minister Ya'alon became the first Israeli Minister of Defense to visit Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan is a target for Israeli defense industry exports. Israeli defense companies were also involved in training special forces and bodyguard missions for senior officials in Azerbaijan, constructing security systems for the airport in Baku, and upgrading military equipment from the Soviet era (especially tanks).[7] In 2012, a $1.6 billion transaction involving the sale of weapons by Israel Aerospace Industries to Azerbaijan was reported. The transaction included unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and satellite systems. Over the past three years, Azerbaijan has become an even more significant destination for Israeli arms exports, and it is believed that transactions worth $4 billion were signed.[8]

The Azeri Interests in Relations with Israel

From Azerbaijan's perspective, one of the main goals of its foreign policy is redeeming territory lost during the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh

in the early 1990s. Azerbaijan states that it does not rule out a return to violent conflict if the diplomatic negotiations to resolve the dispute are unsuccessful, and that it is preparing for such a conflict, in part through its relations with Israel.

The roots of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno Karabakh date back to 1920-21, when the question arose of delineating the border between the Soviet Socialist Republics Armenia and Azerbaijan in the framework of the Soviet Union. In 1921, Joseph Stalin, then Soviet Commissar of Nationalities, decided that Nagorno Karabakh, where most of the residents were Armenians, would be included as an autonomous oblast in Azerbaijan, not in Armenia. In 1988, the Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh declared that they wished to secede from Azerbaijan and unite with Armenia. In 1991, the Armenians conducted a referendum in Nagorno Karabakh, and declared the independence of the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh. The violent conflict in Nagorno Karabakh prompted 200,000 Armenians to flee from Azerbaijan to Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia, while 185,000 Azeris fled from Armenia and 45,000 from Nagorno Karabakh to Azerbaijan.[9] Despite international attempts at mediation, the situation escalated continually from 1988 until the ceasefire in 1994. Since that time, Armenia has controlled about 16 percent of what was Azerbaijan's territory in the Soviet Union. Azerbaijan cooperated with the mediation efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), but a solution to the dispute still appears a long way off, and Azerbaijan is also preparing for a scenario in which it will have to take military action. Israel is important in this context, because it is the only country willing to sell advanced weapon systems to Azerbaijan, largely given the embargo on arms sales to Azerbaijan and Armenia, at the declarative level at least, announced by the OSCE countries.

Another issue linking Azerbaijan and Israel is the Iranian threat, which the two countries regard as existential.[10] Iran's anxiety about aspirations among the Azeris in Iran (where they are the largest minority in the country, believed to account for a fifth of Iran's population) to secede from Iran and establish a "Greater Azerbaijan" constitutes part of the fundamental problems in relations between Iran and Azerbaijan. In addition, during the war over Nagorno-Karabakh and the nearby areas Iran was (and still is) an ally of Armenia. Another source of dispute between Azerbaijan and Iran is the division of natural resources in the Caspian Sea, and in addition,

the Azerbaijanis accuse Iran of encouraging a religious revival among their Shiite population.

Azerbaijan is also trying to maintain a delicate balance in its relations with Russia, and regards its relations with the West, especially Israel, as essential to its efforts to retain an independent foreign policy. Azerbaijan does not wish to be a Russian satellite, even though it is quite aware of how much damage Russia can cause if it decides to engage Baku in confrontation. Azerbaijan is actually convinced that without Russian aid to Armenia, Armenia would be unable to continue controlling Nagorno Karabakh and the nearby areas. Azerbaijan finds the existence of Russian bases in Armenia – one of the factors deterring Azerbaijan from acting against Armenia – disturbing.

Even though Azerbaijan attributes great importance to its relations with Turkey, there are also a number of disputed points between the two countries. First, Azerbaijan regarded the attempts to thaw relations between Armenia and Turkey in 2009, and the signing of protocols between them – though without any progress toward a solution to the Nagorno Karabakh question – as a betrayal.[11] Azerbaijan complained that Turkey did not even inform it in advance about the negotiations, and was surprised to learn about them in the press;[12] consequently, it was asserted, the bilateral relations have not recovered since. Aliyev's regime also views with alarm some of the Islamization processes promoted by the Justice and Development Party, which run counter to the secular heritage instilled by Ataturk, and regards also them as a threat to Azerbaijan's secular character. Beyond this, Azerbaijan feels that it cannot rely on Turkey being at its side in the event of a major confrontation with Russia. Following the signing of the protocols between Turkey and Armenia, Azerbaijan significantly increased its defense budget,[13] a measure that benefited, among others, the Israeli defense industries. A public expression of Azerbaijan's increasing interest in arms purchases and the Israeli context can be seen in the fact that Ya'alon's visit to Azerbaijan was in the framework of the first international defense exhibition organized in Baku. Approximately 20 percent of the display space was occupied by Israeli companies.[14]

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Azerbaijan regards help from the pro-Israel lobby as a counterweight to the extensive influence on American foreign policy that it attributes to the Armenian lobby. In Azerbaijan's relations with the Israel lobby, it also relies on the narrative (shared by representatives of the Jewish community in Azerbaijan) that there has never been any anti-Semitism in Azerbaijan.[16]

The Israeli Interests in Relations with Azerbaijan

The fact that it borders Iran makes Azerbaijan an ideal site for gathering intelligence about the Islamic republic. Electronic intelligence gathering stations were built along the border between Azerbaijan and Iran in the 1990s in cooperation with Israel, and in 2011, Israel began to supply Azerbaijan with unmanned aerial vehicles to monitor the border.[17] From time to time, allegations are sounded that the two countries are engaged in tactical cooperation against Iran. Israel also cooperates with Azerbaijan in the war against terrorism and helped expose Hizbollah terrorist cells poised to take action, including against the Israeli ambassador to Azerbaijan and a Jewish school run by Chabad in Baku.[18] In March 2012, a report published in *Foreign Policy* stated that Azerbaijan had granted Israel permission in principle to use a number of bases for an attack on Iran,[19] a report that attracted a great deal of attention. The Azeri authorities fervently denied the report, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Liberman commented that some of the military correspondents had an overactive imagination and would be better off writing science fiction film scripts.[20]

The relations between Israel and Azerbaijan developed with American encouragement as part of a triangular relationship between Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Israel. In the 1990s, the idea was that the Israel-Turkey-Georgia-Azerbaijan axis, supported by the US, would be a counterweight to the Syria-Iran-Armenia-Russia axis.[21] The crisis in relations between Israel and Turkey over the past decade and the war in Georgia in 2008 challenged the idea of this axis, but Azerbaijan and Israel still regard the relations between them as matching the interests of the West in the region.

Another important Israeli interest is the import of oil from Azerbaijan. A significant portion of the oil consumed by Israel (an estimated 40 percent) is imported from Azerbaijan or by way of Azerbaijan through the Baku-Tbilsi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline. A subsidiary of the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) even took part in the oil drillings by Shemen Oil off the Ashdod coast. The drilling was unsuccessful, but indicated Azerbaijan's willingness to cooperate with Israel and invest in its energy

matters.[22] Following the natural gas discoveries off the Mediterranean coast, Israeli Ambassador to Azerbaijan Rafael Harpaz also stated that Israel could learn something from Azerbaijan's experience in the energy sector,[23] in particular from the founding of the national oil company.

Israel's relations with Azerbaijan should be regarded as part of its attempt to breach its isolation in the Muslim world, and as part of the continuing influence of the notion of the "Peripheral Alliance."[24] The close relations with Azerbaijan are likewise part of an attempt to foster close relations with countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia in accordance with the plan by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs to enhance its partnership with Georgia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekhistan.[25]

Weaknesses of the Alliance

Pressure from the Neighboring Countries

Among the major weaknesses of the bilateral relations is the fact that Azerbaijan is subject to pressure from the neighboring countries, some of which look askance at the alliance between Israel and Azerbaijan. Iran, for example, severely criticizes the strategic links between Azerbaijan and Israel. During President Peres' visit to Azerbaijan in May 2009, the Iranian military chief of staff said the visit was "a step in the wrong direction," adding that the visit was considered an unfriendly act in Azerbaijan-Iran relations.[26] And indeed, despite the existing disputes between Iran and Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan has no wish to enter into a direct confrontation with its southern neighbor. Azerbaijan recognizes its weakness vis-à-vis Iran, and therefore stresses that it will not allow an attack from its territory against the nuclear facilities in Iran. Azerbaijan fears that in the event of an attack against Iran and/or any state of confrontation between Iran and the West, it will be the first to suffer from an Iranian response. In effect, it fears that even if there is an internal coup in Iran, there will be negative consequences for Azerbaijan.[27] Azerbaijan is also dependent on Iran for a passage to Nakhchivan, an Azerbaijani exclave that is the origin of the Aliyev clan.

Azerbaijan fears that in the event of an attack against Iran, or any state of confrontation between Iran and the West, it will be the first to suffer from an Iranian response.

Following the crisis in relations between Israel and Turkey and the May 2010 *Mavi Marmara* incident, Turkey tried to pressure Azerbaijan to cool its relations with Israel. For example, it was alleged that in September 2011 the Turkish ambassador to Azerbaijan threatened

that Israel would have to take into account possible disruptions of the supply of oil through the Baku-Tbilsi-Ceyhan pipeline.[28] From Azerbaijan's perspective, there is no strategic change that undermines the reasoning behind their alliance with Israel, but over the years, Turkey and Azerbaijan have emphasized the narrative of "one people, two countries" to reflect the closeness between them, and it is therefore difficult for Azerbaijan to completely ignore Turkey's views.

Despite Azerbaijan's wish to cultivate and preserve its relations with the West, including Israel, fear of Russia is also a stumbling block. For example, the Russia-Georgia war was perceived as a sign of Russia's neo-imperialist ambitions in the Caucasus. The war in Georgia likewise dramatized to Azerbaijan that the US regarded the Caucasus as being on Russia's backdoor, and it was therefore unwilling to confront Russia about conflicts in the area. The close relations between Russia and Armenia and the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh constrain Azerbaijan's ability to achieve progress in its relations with the West, and also make Azerbaijan very vulnerable to an increase in Russian influence in the region.[29] Indeed, Russia has tried a number of times to pressure Israel not to sell sophisticated weapon systems to Azerbaijan.[30]

Stability of the Aliyev Regime and Azerbaijan's Secular Identity

Another weakness in the alliance is its dependence on the continued rule of the Aliyev dynasty, or at least the preservation of the country's secular identity. Heydar Aliyev, the father of the current ruler, a former senior KGB official and first Secretary of Azerbaijan during the Soviet era, managed to cultivate support based on his strong personality. His son Ilham lacks his father's charisma, and when he assumed the post many doubted his ability to retain his seat[31] – although he too is developing a personality cult. The clan aspect is important in Azeri politics and many of the Aliyev clan benefit from the spoils of government, but this contributes to corruption in the country.[32] The fairness of most elections in the country since it became independent in the 1990s is disputed, and the restriction on the number of presidential terms was eliminated in 2009, thereby stressing the autocratic intentions of the Aliyev regime.[33] In recent years, criticism of human rights violations and the harsh restrictions on freedom of expression in Azerbaijan has increased (as well as arrests of journalists[34]), as reflected more frequently on the social networks and in the international media.[35]

The secular identity of most citizens of Azerbaijan is still strong, but some degree of religious revival is discernible, mainly among young people (in part as a result of attempts by religious groups in Iran, Turkey, and the Persian Gulf to gain influence).[36] The regime's attempts to counter what it defines as religious extremism are sometimes perceived as an overreaction and a violation of freedom of expression.[37] The army also suffers from corruption problems,[38] in which the families of conscripts pay bribes to have their sons stationed far from the front. The replacement of the Minister of Defense following the 2013 elections was regarded as an attempt to set things right in the army,[39] but the problems have not yet been solved.

In addition, there are question marks about the future of the energy resources, which account for about 90 percent of Azerbaijan's exports. Azerbaijan's oil production peaked in 2010, and since then the reserves have diminished. Without significant new discoveries, Azerbaijan will be left without oil resources by 2025.[40] The authorities in Azerbaijan have belittled this threat, at least publicly. For example, an Azerbaijani official has stated that "we won't run out of oil in a day and there are also prospects for gas production as well as other projects."[41] At the same time, the ability of the Azeri economy to prosper and the Aliyev regime to survive without energy resources is questionable.

In many respects Azerbaijan is irreplaceable for Israel, and the proximity of this country to Iran makes it especially attractive. It can therefore be argued that the current gains from the relations are worth the risk that Israel is running with regard to the possibility of a future regime change in Azerbaijan.

Pressure from the Muslim World

Another weakness in the bilateral relations is that Azerbaijan is finding it difficult to withstand pressure from the Muslim world to refrain from tightening its relations with Israel (at least publicly). This is the basis for Azerbaijan's opposition to opening an embassy in Israel, and for its votes against Israel's views in international forums.[42] It is feared that opening an embassy in Israel would contribute to the Muslim world's hostility on decisions relating to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.[43] In particular, of all the international organizations, only the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation supports the Azerbaijani position in this conflict.

Conclusion

While many countries perceive Iran, and especially its nuclear program, as a threat, most do not regard it as an existential threat; the few countries that do, include both Israel and Azerbaijan. At the same time, the fact that Azerbaijan is a neighbor of Iran forces it to act cautiously in coping with this threat, while attempting to preserve a degree of communication and relations with the regime in Tehran.

As with Israel's other "special" relationships, doubts arise about the stability of the relations with Azerbaijan in the event of significant regime changes there. The lesson that can be learned from the collapse of previous relationships is that it is difficult to predict the collapse of regimes in real time, and in the event of a change in regime, relations with the new regime will almost certainly be poor (the most prominent examples in this context are Iran and South Africa, but Turkey can also be cited). In order to avoid this situation, signs of weakness in the current regime should be monitored closely. At the same time, in many respects Azerbaijan is irreplaceable for Israel, and the proximity of this country to Iran makes it especially attractive. It can therefore be argued that the current gains from the relations are worth the risk that Israel is running with regard to the possibility of a future regime change in Azerbaijan. In any case, caution should be exercised, and a situation in which there is no prior preparation for a change in regime should be avoided as much as possible. The positive strong statements by Israeli spokesmen about the Aliyev regime, which are deemed objectionable by the part of the population protesting against the regime, should also be reviewed.[44] Azerbaijan regards the community of immigrants from Azerbaijan in Israel as an asset for it, and as one of the reasons for the current close relations between Azerbaijan and Israel. Israel should likewise see this community as an asset that can help solidify a link between the countries and as a source of information about changes in internal Azerbaijani politics.

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The Politics of Peace in Israel from 2003 to 2013

Maya Kornberg

"Peace is a sort of candy for suckers, a trap…[that the] campaign management is selling, not different from the sale of anything else. The fact that they don't use peace is evidence that its currency is weak. If they could sell it they would use it…. The political electorate is a currency,"[1] explains Lior Chorev, a political strategist who worked with Ariel Sharon. The peace process and how it is alternately utilized or brushed aside in political campaigns has long been a central part of Israeli politics. This article explores Israeli public opinion on the peace process lens of political campaigns from 2003 to 2013. The findings indicate that political campaigns in Israel are inextricably bound up with the opinion of the electorate, and thus there is a direct correlation between attention paid to the peace process by political campaigns and the public's prioritization of the issue. The directionality of the issue remains uncertain, with the data and interviews pointing to a complex relationship in which the two components influence each other. What is clear is that the Israeli public appears increasingly detached from the peace process, as the conflict becomes a less salient feature of their daily lives.

As Israel has many political parties, some of which do not survive more than one election, this paper focuses on the parties that presented a viable candidate for prime minister. Over the last decade, these parties were Kadima, Likud, and Labor. In determining the focus of each campaign, the essay concentrates on media campaigns and ads rather than party platforms. The importance of platforms has decreased in Israel to the point that Likud, the largest party in the 2013 election, did not even have a platform in the campaign. As political strategist George Birnbaum notes, "Platforms

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don't matter any more. People pay attention to media. The inputs are so diverse, but people also are used to getting small packets of information."[2] The media is the main instrument for Israeli politicians to communicate with voters, and is therefore the most effective medium for analysis of any politician's central focus and strategy. Journalist Nahum Barnea observes that "the things people say during elections are more important than the platforms, because sometimes people get themselves into trouble trying to blur things. Election coverage tries to shed light on this attempt to blur."[3] The present analysis looks at ads, slogans, and media coverage devoted to issues in the respective election cycles in order to pinpoint the focus.

The 2003 Election

The 2003 elections pitted Likud's Ariel Sharon against Labor's Amram Mitzna. The backdrop for the 2003 campaign was the "death of Oslo" and the second intifada, yet Likud's campaign focused mainly on Sharon as a personality and less on the security issue. According to Birnbaum, the strategist who built Sharon's campaign, "with Ariel Sharon's ads, we had him with his grandchildren clipping roses on his farm...We made him the grandfather, and his personality became larger than life. Personality campaigns are sometimes so big that nothing else matters."[4] Indeed many of the ads highlighted Sharon himself, and a Likud election slogan was, "The nation wants Sharon,"[5] a spin-off of the popular Israeli slogan "The nation wants peace." Labor's campaign attempted to combat this approach with lines such as, "We will not be in Sharon's government,"[6] or "Only Mitzna can, not the Likud."[7] These slogans further illustrate the focus on personalities rather than on the issue of security. A study by Tsfati et al. on media coverage, which looked at news items on television channels 1, 2, and 10 in the three weeks preceding the 2003 elections, found that only 7.2 percent of coverage dealt with Palestinians and negotiations and 9.6 percent of coverage dealt with terror and security, while 5.8 percent of coverage was dedicated to education, health, and welfare and 33.2 percent to crime and corruption.[8] This study establishes that terror and the peace process were not exclusively at the center of the campaign. Similarly, according to Shamir and Arian, "the 2003 election...was held under the cloud of the ongoing al-Aqsa Intifada....nevertheless the issues pertaining to this round of confrontation did not dominate media coverage."[9] Although the backdrop for the 2003 election was the intifada and security, personalities emerged as the main story.

The stance of public opinion prior to each election can be assessed from public opinion polls conducted by the Peace Index, a renowned public opinion project run by the Israel Democracy Institute and the Open University that systematically follows Israeli public opinion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, along with other polling data. This data was supplemented with personal interviews to achieve a more comprehensive picture of Israeli public opinion.

The 2003 Israel National Election Study pre-election survey found that 67 percent of voters cited peace and the territories as a major voting consideration, 66 percent cited terrorism, 63 percent cited the economy, and 51 percent social policy.[10] Although security still came first in the public mind, socioeconomic issues were a close second. In the January 2003 Peace Index poll, Hermann and Yaar wrote that "in the latter stages of the election campaign most of the main parties' propaganda efforts focused on the security issues, with social and economic issues pushed to the side. Yet it seems that for the public, the social-economic issue does not lag behind the security issue."[11] The Peace Index findings confirm the split in public opinion between resolving the conflict and rehabilitating the economy. In addition, they showed that 45 percent of voters believed that rehabilitating the economy should assume first place on the new government's order of priorities, with 42 percent believing the top priority should be solving the conflict.[12] The emphasis in media coverage on social issues, with less attention to security issues, may be reconciled with the near even split in public opinion, if the focus on personalities and its implications is taken into account as well.

The 2006 Election

The 2006 election followed the withdrawal from Gaza in August 2005 and the creation of the centrist political party Kadima by Ariel Sharon in 2005. The 2006 race revolved around Olmert and the Kadima party, versus Peretz and the Labor party, versus Benjamin Netanyahu and Likud.

Peretz shifted Labor's focus to social and economic issues. This is evidenced by the headline on the home page on the Labor newspaper website, posted in December 2005: "Labor is the only party that presents a real social alternative."[13] Labor's main ad poster had the slogan "a social economic plan for many years ahead."[14] Tsfati et al. found that 11.5 percent of media items dealt with terror, attacks, the intifada, and security, and 13 percent dealt with Palestinians and negotiations, whereas 20.3 percent

dealt with education, health, welfare, and social justice and 19.1 percent with crime and corruption.[15] In contrast to the 2003 election, the study found a significant rise in the coverage of social issues over the coverage of terror and the peace process, marking the shift in the campaign focus toward social issues.

Likud and Kadima paid more attention to the conflict in the campaign than did Labor. Likud used slogans such as "A strong Likud, a safe Israel"[16] and the jingle "my future, my security, Likud is right."[17] Kadima's campaign rested to a certain extent on Sharon's personality, combined with the issue of the conflict. Olmert, Kadima's prime ministerial candidate and guiding force in setting the tone for the 2006 Kadima campaign, explained that "in 2006 I knew I wanted to pull out of all of Judea and Samaria and why I wanted this to be on the agenda. I wanted to receive a mandate from the public so that if it happened they would not say to me after, 'You asked for a mandate for one policy and pursued a different one.'"[18]

In one telling Kadima television ad, different Israeli politicians speak of Sharon's leadership and valor. The ad ends with Olmert saying to the viewer, "Say yes to permanent borders, a Jewish state with a Jewish majority, and a stable economy."[19] Olmert's words are in a deliberate order, an order that pegs resolving the border issue and ensuring a Jewish majority, two issues that relate directly to the conflict, above the economic issue. Another campaign ad prominently displays the words "Kadima, in Sharon's path. Strong leadership for peace."[20]

The combination of attention paid to foreign affairs and to internal issues is indicative of a general movement toward the center of Israeli public opinion. Labor's campaign shows the increasing appeal of social issues, but Likud's and Kadima's campaigns demonstrate that the conflict was also relevant. Israelis cared about both social issues and the conflict.

Several Peace Index polls are noteworthy regarding public opinion in the run up to the 2006 elections. A November 2005 poll showed that 52 percent of voters named socioeconomic considerations as the major factor in their voting decisions, while 27 percent named security-political issues.[21] A Peace Index poll in February 2006 showed that 47 percent of the electorate saw security as the paramount factor in deciding the elections, while 37 percent thought socioeconomic issues would decide the election.[22] While it is difficult to pinpoint the cause of the change between November and February, the polls show that both socioeconomic and security concerns were strong. This campaign, with one party focusing exclusively on socioeconomic issues,

demonstrated that although the conflict was never far from people's minds, other issues began to take precedence. Likewise, the public opinion polls of the 2006 election, with security and socioeconomic issues trading places at the top of people's voting considerations as the reality on the ground changed, establish the rising prominence of social and economic issues, even as security concerns remained strong.

The 2009 Election

Looming over the 2009 elections were both the recent war in Gaza and the worldwide economic crisis. The two viable candidates for Prime Minister were Tzipi Livni of Kadima and Benjamin Netanyahu of Likud. Media coverage showed a focus on the security issue. Tsfati et al. analyzed all of the political party broadcasts aired on television by the major parties in 2009, as well as the video segments each party posted on its website, and found that 28.3 percent of party broadcasts dealt with terror, attacks, intifada, or security, and 6 percent with negotiations.[23] Only 23 percent of party broadcasts dealt with education, health, welfare, and social justice, and a mere 2.3 percent dealt with economy and finance. This study also found that 19.9 percent of the news items on major channels dealt with terror, attacks, intifada, and security; 10.6 percent with Palestinians and negotiations with Palestinians; and 18 percent with Israeli Arabs. In contrast only 14.9 percent dealt with education, health, welfare, and social justice, and 11.8 percent with crime and corruption.[24] The number of news items devoted to terror and negotiations was markedly higher than in previous elections, whereas the number of pieces dealing with crime and social issues decreased from 2006 to 2009.

Likud's campaign focused on the peace process from the standpoint of security threats. One Likud ad presented Tzipi Livini as a security threat, depicting outcomes of voting for smaller parties and ending with Tzipi Livni dividing Jerusalem, returning to 1967 lines, and Qassam rockets falling on Israel. The ad then declared, "Only Likud will stop the withdrawals, beat terrorism, and protect Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. A large Likud means a strong Israel."[25]

Kadima's campaign also centered on the conflict. In an ad that tells the story of her rise to power, Livni appeals to the viewer to vote for her in order to ensure that the conflict is dealt with in a pragmatic manner.[26] Against the background of the military campaign in Gaza that ended a

few weeks before the election, the 2009 campaign evinced a general shift in focus back to the conflict.

Regarding public opinion in the run up to the 2009 elections, an October 2008 Peace Index poll found that 47 percent of interviewees said the parties' positions on security and peace were most important, 23 percent named social and educational issues, and only 13 percent cited the economy.[27] Another survey taken a few months after the new government was formed showed that the majority of Israelis (62 percent) believed that the economic crisis was the most important problem facing the government, and only 27 percent named negotiations with Palestinians.[28]

The 2013 Election

The 2013 election campaign avoided the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more than any previous campaign in Israel. Likud retained its slogan of "a strong Israel"[29] but there was no mention of security. Instead its signs read, "Free education from the age of 3" or "Lowering the price of gas,"[30] indicative of the focus on people's wallets rather than on the peace process. Labor's campaign evoked the protests of 2011, which called for social justice and economic equality; it even used pictures of the social protests in its posters. One sign read, "Fighting for our home,"[31] the slogan used by the social protesters in their campaign to lower housing costs. Labor's signs and campaign messaging made almost no mention of the conflict. One *New York Times* article on the eve of the election declared, "In this campaign... voters here...said the issues that have been staples of Israeli politics for generations have been largely invisible, and social values or pocketbook concerns have been front and center."[32]

Public opinion is reflected in the 2013 Peace Index poll, which found that 51 percent of Jewish voters cited domestic issues (religion, society, and the economy) as the issues driving their vote, while only 22.8 percent of voters cited foreign and defense issues. The Peace Index report declared that in the 2013 elections "domestic issues are paramount."[33]

The Story of the Interaction

The data shows the gradual but steadily declining interest of the public in the peace process. At the same time, the number of Israelis supporting a two-state solution has remained relatively constant. A poll commissioned by the S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace showed that between 2003 and 2013, there was a strong consistent majority among

Jewish Israelis of 50-70 percent in support of a two-state solution.[34] These numbers remained high even during times of war and crisis. In an interview with *Yediot Ahronot* in July 2013, Mina Tzemach, an Israeli polling veteran, explained that over the years Israeli support for a peace agreement has remained relatively stable, around 67 percent, regardless of the government or the situation on the ground.[35] These findings demonstrate that it is not Israelis' support for peace that has changed, rather their prioritization of the peace process relative to other issues.

The analysis of campaign focus versus public opinion shows a clear correlation; figure 1 shows the comparison on an election-by-election basis. The graph relies on data of Tsfati et al. on media coverage as a quantitative indicator of the focus of election campaigns, and data from the Peace Index and National Election Studies as a measure of public opinion. The graph clearly points to a positive correlation between the focus of election campaigns and public opinion on the peace process. The only discrepancy is the change from 2003 to 2006. The discrepancy in the trends in media coverage and public opinion may be corrected by inclusion of ads focused on Sharon in the category of security for 2003; alternatively, the discrepancy may be a result of a different source of public opinion data for 2003. Peace Index data was unavailable for that year so the data was taken from the National Election Studies, which may conduct surveys in different ways

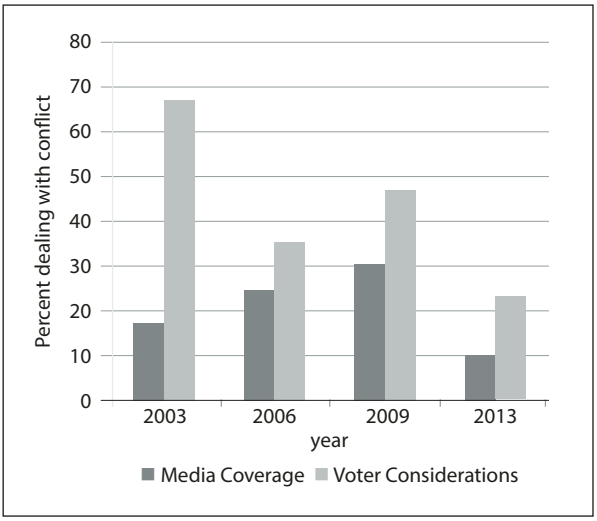

Figure 1. Campaigns and Voter Considerations

and therefore report different public opinion estimates. Otherwise, the past decade as a whole shows public opinion and election campaigns moving together in their emphasis on the conflict.

The directionality of the interaction between public opinion and political parties remains unclear, with evidence pointing to the two components influencing one another. Former Prime Minister Olmert asserted that, "If I were PM I would do what the nation needed and make the people understand that and accept it. This is the test of leadership, to do what the nation needs and rally the people to support it."[36] Politician Meirav Cohen echoed this sentiment, explaining, "Sometimes you need to do what Ben Gurion once said, 'not only what the people want but what is good for the people.' The people are sometimes confused and we lack someone who will say, I know what is good and set the tone instead of optimizing the vote." [37] These statements represent the view that politicians shape public opinion through their own actions and personal values.

At the same time, public opinion molds political campaigns because politicians appeal to the public interest in trying to win votes. Strategist Lior Chorev explained, "The considerations are purely electoral…Your job as the manager of a campaign is to get your politician elected."[38] Birnbaum reinforced the idea that campaigns manipulate what is already on people's minds in their favor, explaining that the right wing parties always use the security issue. [39] Dan Meridor commented that "the question became what the public wants to hear rather than what I want to say."[40]

Though it is unclear whether public opinion is the dependent or independent variable in the interaction with political campaigns, the data shows a decline in the public's commitment to the peace process. The pattern of disinterest appears to result from a combination of causes. Nahum Barnea spoke of a lack of a sense of urgency regarding the peace process on the part of the Israeli public, a perception that because there is no terror and "the issue is beyond the fence,"[41] it does not present a pressing threat that must be addressed right away. The second reason for public disinterest is the feeling of despair and exhaustion attached to peace efforts. A 22-year-old Israeli soldier active in politics said, "We are tired of hearing about this issue. It's all we have been hearing about our whole lives. We want to solve other issues that affect us every day."[42] The third reason for Israeli attitudes is what Barnea characterized as "benign neglect," the perception that nothing can be done that will move the issue forward in any case so there is no added benefit to thinking about it. Professor

Reuven Hazan explained that "two thirds of the electorate were born into the situation of Israeli occupation of the West Bank, and together with the sense of continued failure of negotiations, this creates cynicism...People understand that there is nothing to be done right now about the peace process."[43]

Conclusion

Analysis of public opinion and election campaigns reveals a correlation between the two and a growing disinterest in the peace process among Israelis. It is difficult to determine whether public opinion is the independent or dependent variable because they are so interrelated. The evidence is also unavoidably circumstantial. Nevertheless, there emerges a clear trend of disregard for the peace process on the part of the Israeli public that is reflected in the election campaigns. Remedying this distraction or demoralization is a necessary first step toward peace. The 2015 elections are fast approaching, and with them a new set of campaigns and another chance for leaders to sway public opinion through campaigns and the public to choose leaders who care about peace.

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