



Rethinking Nation and Nationalism

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The Project on Middle East Political Science

The Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS) is a collaborative network that aims to increase the impact of political scientists specializing in the study of the Middle East in the public sphere and in the academic community. POMEPS, directed by Marc Lynch, is based at the Institute for Middle East Studies at the George Washington University and is supported by Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Henry Luce Foundation. For more information, see <http://www.pomeps.org>.

You couldn't swing a dead imperialist last summer without hitting an essay about the unraveling of the Sykes-Picot system in the Middle East. The bloody disintegration of Iraq and Syria seemed to have finally ripped apart the borders created by the British and French governments in the aftermath of World War I (even if the borders in question were actually forged at San Remo). It wasn't just the rise of the so-called Islamic State spanning and erasing the Syrian-Iraqi border. The unprecedented, synchronized popular mobilization across borders during the early Arab uprisings of 2011 gave potent form to the ideals of transnational Arab political community supplanting the limits of nation-states. As the uprisings turned darker and most of the democratic transitions failed, new challengers to nation-states in the Middle East rose to the forefront: the Islamic State; the growing de facto independence of Kurds across Iraq and Syria, with ramifications extending into Turkey and Iran; the rise of sub-regional identities carried by heavily armed militias in failing states such as Yemen and Libya; unprecedented forced displacement moving millions of people within and across borders; and raging sectarianism dividing Sunnis and Shiites.

These developments have not had a singular effect on national identities, however. While some states have collapsed, creating space for new subnational identities to challenge national cohesion, most have retrenched into a fiercer form of authoritarianism. Egypt's military coup, for instance, has been sustained by the heavy-handed promotion of extreme nationalism. Many states in the Gulf have drawn upon sectarianism to consolidate support for their regimes in ways that could have an enduring impact on popular conceptions of national identity. Battles over the proper role of Islam in public life have reshaped political discourse from Egypt and Turkey (see Senem Aslan and Kristin Fabbe in this collection) and Tunisia (Elizabeth Young). Kurds imagine new political possibilities in very different contexts, as Nicole Watts demonstrates from Halabja and Serhun Al demonstrates through the historical experience of Turkey and Iraq.

In February, therefore, I convened a Project on Middle East Political Science symposium with Laurie A. Brand at the University of Southern California to examine national identity in the face of such challenges. Their essays have now been released as *Rethinking Nation and Nationalism*, a special issue of POMEPS Studies.

The "Sykes-Picot" framing of recent events has not been completely fruitless. The recent deluge of fascinating books timed to the centenary of World War I (including Eugene Rogan's "Fall of the Ottomans"; Leila Fawaz's "A Land of Aching Hearts" and Kristian Ulrichsen's "The First World War in the Middle East") make clear how profoundly those epochal events reshaped every dimension of the society, economy and state of what became the Middle East. However, as Meghan Tinsley recounts, Sykes-Picot itself is remembered and invoked very differently by competing political constituencies. This framing also tells us little about the formation of states beyond the Levant. National struggles against French settler-colonialism shaped North African nationalism in ways deeply divergent from the experience of the Levant or, for that matter, from the process of state and nation formation in the

Gulf. Even in the Levant, those “artificial” states are nearly a hundred years old. They have engaged in ambitious, if never perfectly successful, efforts to socialize their citizens into national identities through educational systems, the media, national service, museums, festivals, public space and official rhetoric. No wonder that, as Nadav Shafir shows, states are less likely to fight for land which has not been fully incorporated into ideas of the national homeland.

The invocation of national identity might be taken to imply a singular identification with the nation, but this has never been so simple. There has never been a shortage of challengers to regional nation-states, and a vast academic literature has examined national and transnational identity contestation in the region. My first book detailed the complex ways in which Jordan’s national identity had been publicly contested both at home and in the broader Arab public arena, a theme that has run through much of my writing. National identities are typically only one of multiple identities. There is no necessary contradiction between identifying as a Sunni Muslim, a member of a tribe, an Arab, a Jordanian, a university professor and a mother, with each component of identity taking priority at different times and for different reasons. Thus, it should not be surprising that the early Arab uprisings were both national and transnational, local and regional. The first months of 2011 witnessed extraordinary levels of transnational identification and mobilization, with Yemenis taking inspiration from Tunisians as part of a shared Arab narrative. But even during such moments of pan-Arab sentiment, the potency of national identity could be seen in the ostentatious waving of national flags and chanting of national slogans by Egyptian and Jordanian protestors.

National identity also offered the material for the demonization of the protestors, whether in regime discourse warning darkly of “foreign hands” behind the demonstrations or in the aggressive response of “honorable citizens” to the protestors. Whether or not patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel, it certainly proves useful for embattled regimes determined to rally popular support against enemies at home and abroad. It should be no surprise, then, that the authoritarian backlash against the Arab uprisings involved the appropriation of nationalist symbols and the attempt to define popular challengers as aliens beyond the pale of the national community. Unreformed state-dominated media sectors, so central to earlier state efforts to cultivate and promote national identities, proved especially effective in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia at mobilizing this nationalist resurgence.

One new way to research such questions of nation and nationalism is to use online behavior to evaluate the intensity and the terms by which Arabs relate to one another. When Arabs talk politics online, do state borders constitute meaningful national communities? Deen Freelon, Sean Aday and I offer some intriguing new evidence about these interconnections in a recent article in the open access

journal *Research and Politics*. Using a dataset of every tweet including the word “Syria” in English or Arabic over nearly three years—nearly 58 million tweets composed by almost 7 million unique users—we constructed an index of “Arab Springiness” by extracting every mention of other Arab countries. During 2011, roughly 30 percent of these tweets included at least one other Arab country, with references spiking to an astonishing 41.5 percent in November. An additional 8 percent named two or more countries (increasing to 15.5 percent in November), often linked together through shared hashtags. However, after 2011, the “Arab Springiness” of Syria tweets sharply declined, with other countries rarely being named more than 20 percent of the time and the number of multi-country tweets dropping dramatically.

Using a similar dataset, Freelon, Aday and I trace persistent national clusters in the online discourse about Syria and Egypt for a forthcoming study. Egyptians, Kuwaitis and Tunisians were indeed tweeting about Syria, Yemen or Libya, but they were still mostly interacting with fellow nationals. Especially in the early months of 2011, online citizens would identify with, closely observe, and draw lessons from the experiences of other Arab countries, but they still mostly engaged with fellow-nationals on the issues confronting their own state. In later years, sectarian and religious identities became more prominent, in line with events on the ground. For example, Kuwaitis still tweeted often about Syria in 2012 and 2013, but the framing of those tweets shifted from politics to fundraising for Syrian rebels. The data reveals not only cross-border networks linking together ideological, sectarian or political groupings (Egyptian anti-Islamists and UAE politicians, Sunni Islamists around the Gulf, Shiites across the Gulf and the Levant), but also persistent patterns of national conversation. Such network analysis of the actual online behavior during and after the Arab uprisings helps to illustrate the dynamic interaction between the national and the transnational.

Nations, then, are evolving and adapting under the pressures of the post-Arab uprisings but have hardly faded. The intensity and depth of the challenge to these states drives both intense new manifestations of nationalism and the emergence of intense new forms of subnational and transnational identities. Thus, sectarianism surges in a shattered Syria or Iraq, while hypernationalism flourishes in a post-coup Egypt. This could well lead to the creation of new national identities or to the resurrection of national identities from the dead and forgotten would-be states of which David Patel reminds us. Either way, these new identity projects are refracted through national communities that, after decades of institutionalization, continue to structure politics, anchor networks and shape the political imaginary.

*Marc Lynch, Director of POMEPS
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Kurds, state elites, and patterns of nationhood in Iraq and Turkey

By Serhun Al, University of Utah

Today, both Iraq and Turkey falter with the dilemma of accommodating their Kurdish populations into the common national community on the one hand and preventing any current and future risks of territorial loss and ethnic violence on the other. Turkey's limping peace process with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and Iraq's unsteady relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) reflect the unintended consequences of these states' nation-building strategies in their post-Ottoman eras. While modern Iraqi national identity was mostly affiliated with Arab identity by state elites throughout the 20th century, the monolithic construction of Turkish national identity lacked any space for the expression of Kurdish identity in the public sphere. As the gradual partition and the final demise of the Ottoman Empire occurred amidst wars and conflicts over identity claim-makings by a variety of external powers and internal communities, the quest for an appropriate nationhood has become a question of ontological (in)security for the post-Ottoman state elites in Iraq and Turkey.

Thus, the cycle of construction, persistence, and change of modern Iraqi and Turkish national identities, particularly in relation to the competing modern Kurdish identity, entails analytical and theoretical exploration in the sense of revealing what actually motivates state elites in accepting or rejecting an identity category other than the one defined by the state. Challenging the conventional *security versus liberty* dichotomy as a mutually exclusive policy options in dealing with minority identities, this article argues in a macro-historical trajectory that the logic of state elites in Iraq and Turkey in granting liberty for the Kurdish identity has also been primarily motivated by the state security. Thus, liberty itself has functioned as an instrument for the security of the state in the sense of protecting the territorial integrity and preventing future anti-state uprisings.

Post-Ottoman Iraq and Two Visions of Nationhood

Historically, there have been two major competing visions of Iraqiness. The first is Iraqi patriotism (*wataniya*), which is more favorable to cultural diversity since it promotes an overarching Iraqi identity without prioritizing the Arab culture, history, and language. This approach crosscuts group identities such as Kurds, Shiites, and Sunnis in order to strengthen a sense of belonging to the Iraqi state rather than to a particularistic collective group. The second vision of Iraqi nationhood is based on Arab nationalism (*qawmiyya*), which envisions a homogenous nation by placing Arab identity as the dominant marker of the state in addition to the pan-Arab unity with other states in the region.¹

During the British mandate (until 1932) and under the monarchical rule (1921-1958), Iraq was governed by the Arab Hashemite dynasty, which primarily idealized an (Sunni) Arab state especially through the means of public education and army.² The ruling elites of the Iraqi monarchy were intermittently challenged by tribal Kurdish opposition such as the Sheikh Mahmud Barzanji uprisings in the 1920s and the Kurdish revolt by Mullah Mustafa Barzani in 1943 that later led to the foundation of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in 1946. These anti-state challenges reinforced the securitization of Kurdish identity on the one hand and the concern for the security of the state on the other.

It was only after the regime change in 1958 under the leadership of General Abd al-Karim Qasim who established the republic that patriotic Iraqi identity was endorsed. The new constitution of 1958 recognized Kurds and Arabs as the equal partners of the Iraqi state. This

1 Eric Davis (2005). *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

2 Eli Amariyo (2015) "History, Memory and Commemoration: The Iraqi Revolution of 1920 and the Process of Nation Building in Iraq," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 51:1, 72-92.

paradigmatic policy change toward Iraqi nationhood was not independent of the transnational context of other anti-colonial liberation movements as it was in tandem with socialist worldviews in the bipolar world of the Cold War.³ Due to this anti-colonial nature of the new regime, pan-Arabists also showed some support to Qasim. However, their reference of national development was Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt whose policies were fostering pan-Arab unity as seen in the short-lived United Arab Republic of Egypt and Syria (1958-1961). On the other hand, Qasim and his core coalition of power consisted of Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), Kurds and other non-Arab communities who were not in favor of pan-Arabism.⁴

Despite the inter-ethnic euphoria of the 1958 revolution, the rule of Qasim was far from stable and sustainable since pan-Arabists, especially through their influence in the military, functioned as veto players to the development of Iraqi patriotism. Besides, demands for Kurdish autonomy by KDP would hardly find support from pro-Qasim supporters. Thus, the Baghdad-Kurdish conflict broke out again in 1961. Qasim and many of his supporters were removed from government by the Baath party in 1963, yet the Baathists could only control the state in 1968.⁵ Amidst these chaotic decades of elite changes, military coups, and power struggles, the pan-Arabist Baath Party gradually consolidated its power along with the rise of Saddam Hussein to the presidency in 1979. In between, two accommodation attempts with Kurdish opposition failed that proposed autonomy and national rights for the Kurds (e.g., al-Bazzaz Declaration of June 29 in 1966 and the Manifesto of March 1970). These attempts were more an outcome of security-driven concerns of the ruling elites in the sense that both territorial integrity of the state and survival of the regime would be at risk unless the strong Kurdish opposition in northern Iraq was appeased. For instance, even after the Gulf War (1990-1991), Saddam's

regime was voluntarily ready to leave northern Iraq to the control of the Kurds in order to survive the regime in the rest of the country.⁶ It was only after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 that the Baath regime was toppled and the de facto Kurdish autonomy became officially and constitutionally secured.

Turkey's Puzzle between Ottoman Future/Past and Kemalist Past/Future

Post-Ottoman Turkey has also become a site of competing visions of collective identity for building the ideal nation. There have been basically two powerful currents. The first and historically dominant one has been the founding ideology of Kemalism, which envisioned a strictly secular, linguistically homogenous nation which would culturally face towards Europe. The collective memory building was mostly based on rejecting the Ottoman past which was seen as 'backward', 'despotic', and culturally too heterogenous. Especially the idea of ethnically heterogeneous society was seen as the main reason behind a weak state. A strong state for the republican founding elites was possible only through a homogenous nation and a unitary state. This Kemalist worldview became the *raison d'état* throughout the twentieth century under the firm protectorate of the military.

The second discourse of nationhood, which has become hegemonic by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2002, envisions a nation with Ottoman nostalgia and neo-Ottoman future along with Islamic undertones.⁷ Under this framework, public expression of the Kurdish identity has found more refuge due to the emphasis on the overarching Muslim identity on the one hand and the common Ottoman heritage on the other. This is why the AKP government since 2002 has uttered the notion of "new Turkey" to make a sharp distinction

3 Orit Bashkin. (2011). "Hybrid Nationalisms: Watani and Qawmi Visions In Iraq under 'Abd Al-Karim Qasim, 1958-61," *IJMES* 43, No. 2, 293-313.

4 Sami Zubaida (2002). "The Fragments Imagine the Nation: The Case of Iraq," *IJMES* 34, 205-215.

5 Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett (2003). *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship*. New York: I.B. Tauris.

6 Burak Kadercan (2013). "Making Sense of Survival: Refining the Treatment of State Preferences in Neorealist Theory," *Review of International Studies*, 39 (4): 1005-1037.

7 Jenny White (2012). *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

with the old regime.⁸ Recent steps such as state promotion of the Kurdish TV channel, the foundation of living languages institute, and the ease on the public expression of Kurdish identity have led to the de facto recognition of the Kurds by the state.⁹ Additionally, the recent ambiguous peace process with the PKK has become the most efficient propaganda apparatus of AKP's 'new Turkey.'

It was within these two visions of nationhood in the post-Ottoman Turkey that the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion have become a contested zone. In the first two decades of the Republic, tribal Kurdish uprisings were harshly suppressed (e.g., Sheikh Said rebellion in 1925, Agri rebellion in 1930, and Dersim rebellion in 1937-38). The possibility of an independent Kurdish state as stated in the "infamous" Treaty of Sevres in 1920 along with local uprisings convinced the founding elites of the Turkish Republic that any recognition of Kurdish identity would endanger the territorial integrity of this newly established post-Ottoman state. As a reaction, the politicization of the Kurdish identity and mass-mobilization of pro-Kurdish political movement in Turkey has been a late-comer compared to the Iraqi Kurds. Until the late 1980s, there was neither a strong, well-organized, externally networked party such as the KDP nor a national figure like Mullah Mustafa Barzani. The rise of the PKK, the personality cult of Abdullah Ocalan as its founder, and pro-Kurdish legal parties constituted the major challenge to the Turkish state after the 1980s.¹⁰

Patterns of Nationhood and the Logic of the State Elites

If one looks at the ebbs and flows within the boundaries of nationhood in these two states, there seems to be a common pattern of policy change toward the Kurds in the

name of national security. However, what is interesting is that both exclusionary and inclusionary policies have been primarily motivated by state security concerns rather than rights-based concerns. As the Kurdish opposition in Iraq has historically been more threatening (or more beneficial) to the central state and survival of particular regimes, fluctuations between carrot and stick policies seem to be more frequent throughout the twentieth century than that of in Turkey. When exclusion and repression was thought to be more useful to secure the central state, regime power, and territorial integrity, the framework of the Iraqi nation (more pan-Arabist) was adjusted accordingly. However, when appeasement and accommodation was considered to be serving the state security and particular regimes, Iraq was envisioned more as a land of both Arabs and Kurds. Similarly, if the Kurdish identity has been de facto recognized in Turkey after the 2000s, it is mostly because the status quo policy throughout the 20th century has itself become a threat to the security of the state (*devletin bekaası*).

In other words, state elites have been more pragmatic and strategic actors than blindfolded nationalists or wholehearted democrats. Overall, either in excluding Kurds from the narratives of nationhood or incorporating them within the boundaries of nationhood, the logic of the state elites in Iraq and in Turkey has been primarily based on securing the state from potential territorial disintegration and anti-state oppositions. Then, the conventional dichotomy of *security versus liberty* should not be necessarily seen mutually exclusive in this context since liberty is an instrument of security as well. Unless this security pattern is overcome, distrust rather than mutual assurance is more likely to prevail between the state actors and non-state ethnic agents in Iraq and in Turkey.

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8 M. Hakan Yavuz, Ed. (2006). *The Emergence of New Turkey: Democracy and AK Parti*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

9 Serhun Al (2015). "Elite Discourses, Nationalism and Moderation: A Dialectical Analysis of Turkish and Kurdish Nationalisms," *Ethnopolitics*, 14 (1): 94-112.

10 Serhun Al (2015). "Local Armed Uprisings and the Transnational Image of Claim Making: The Kurds of Turkey and the Zapatistas of Mexico in Comparative Perspective," *Globalizations*, DOI:10.1080/14747731.2014.991541.

Different faces of Turkish Islamic nationalism

By Senem Aslan, Bates College

This piece appeared on The Monkey Cage on February 20, 2015.

On Dec. 17, 2013, Turkish prosecutors started a corruption investigation into the activities of the sons of three ministers of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, businessmen close to the government, and bureaucrats. The corruption allegations later included then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan after wiretapped telephone conversations between Erdogan and his son about hiding large sums of cash were leaked on the Internet. The prosecutors were believed to be followers of Fethullah Gulen, an Islamic scholar who lives in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania.

The scandal exposed a conflict between two longtime Islamist allies, the AKP and the Gulen movement, which has rapidly reshaped the Turkish political scene. Many analysts have argued that the rift emerged from a power struggle. Erdogan was threatened by the growing influence of Gulenists within the state while the Gulenists were concerned about Erdogan's increasing authoritarianism and personalization of power. While there is certainly something to this, there are also deeper reasons for the schism. The AKP-Gulen conflict also resulted from an ideological clash about the nature of the relationship between Islam and Turkish nationalism.

The AKP, which has ruled Turkey since 2002, is typically described as a moderately Islamist party. The less well-understood Gulen movement is Turkey's most influential and internationally active religious network. The community refers to itself as the Hizmet (service) movement, encompassing a large commercial, media and education network, inspired by the teachings of Fethullah Gulen. Although Gulenists portray themselves as members of an apolitical, civil movement, this image is misleading. The movement has been an influential player in Turkish politics since the late 1980s. In the 2000s, it openly allied

with the AKP government, supporting a number of its key policies, most importantly the weakening of the power of the military and secularist judiciary. Many have alleged that the Gulenists have come to dominate many cadres in the state bureaucracy, particularly the police and the judiciary, making them a significant political force to reckon with in Turkish politics. Today the AKP government accuses the movement of forming a parallel organization within the state to capture state authority. Since the corruption probe the government has purged hundreds of alleged Gulenists from the cadres of the police and the judiciary.

In the past decade, scholars have noted the rise of a different conception of Turkish nationalism, called Muslim or Islamic nationalism, which has led to a transformative shift in the official state discourse. The AKP and the Gulen movement share some broad tenets of Muslim nationalism. Challenging the secular and Westernist character of Kemalist nationalism, they emphasize Muslim identity as the key element in defining Turkishness. Accordingly, the ideal Turk should have a strong moral character informed by Sunni Islamic values. They criticize Kemalist nationalists for being elitist and imitative, forcing people to change their authentic selves in the name of Westernization. Muslim nationalists endorse this strong discourse of victimhood and present themselves as the genuine representatives of the Turkish nation. Building on this sense of victimhood, they hold Kemalist nationalists responsible for Turkey's loss of status in the international arena, attributing it to the defensive and inward-looking character of Kemalist nationalism. Instead, Muslim nationalists imagine Turkey to be a major world power, guided by an assertive and ambitious foreign policy that rests on building Turkey's soft power and economic strength. They associate national pride with economic success and desire that Turkey play a leadership role, particularly in the Muslim world.

Such commonalities aside, there have been significant disagreements between the AKP and the Gulen movement. It is true that these two groups' nationalist discourses can be fluid, and at times multi-vocal. Unlike the Gulen movement, the AKP is subject to the pressures of electoral politics. The Gulen movement's discourse can be inconsistent, partly because what its representatives say or do in their "window sites" can differ from what they say or do in private. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify the broad points of contention.

The most important difference between the Gulen movement and the AKP is that while the first advocates an ethno-cultural understanding of Turkishness, the latter prioritizes Muslim identity over ethnic identity. Fethullah Gulen is a leading advocate of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, endorsing the view that Turkish Islam is unique and superior to the Islam of other ethnic groups. According to this view, Islam did not come to the Turkish world from the Arabs but came to Anatolia from Central Asia by way of Sufi dervishes. This Sufi connection makes Turkish Islam more moderate, tolerant and open to interpretation and change than the Arab and Persian forms of Islam, which are more prone to radicalization. Gulen emphasizes the importance of Turkey's cooperation with the Central Asian countries to create a strong Turkic world. In his schools that are spread all around the world, his followers try to familiarize their students with Turkish-Islamic morality and culture, teaching them the Turkish language and history. In Gulen's writings and the movement's spectacles, such as the Turkish Language Olympiads, the central emphasis has been on exalting and praising the culture of Turkish Anatolia.

For the AKP, on the other hand, the main points of reference are Ottoman and Islamic history. The AKP's symbolic capital rests heavily on Ottoman and Islamic references as seen, for instance, in the official celebrations of the conquest of Istanbul or the prophet Muhammad's birthday. The AKP's nationalist view downplays the role of ethnicity. It does not emphasize a hierarchy of nations within the Muslim world and does not contain a critical discourse about other Sunni-Muslim ethnic groups.

In that sense, the AKP holds on to a more universalist-Islamist perspective. It is nationalist because it imagines a Turkey-centered Muslim world but the Muslim identity is more dominant in its conception of the Turkish nation than a unique Turkish ethnic identity. Erdogan's special interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and his outright support of activists who tried to bring humanitarian aid to Gaza in violation of Israel's naval blockade in 2010 were informed by his Muslimhood-centered nationalism. In contrast, Gulen criticized the initiative for violating Israel's sovereignty. The disagreement between the AKP and Gulen in fact first revealed itself during the Gaza flotilla crisis.

This divergence in their nationalist perspectives has important implications for their relations with minorities in Turkey, particularly the Kurds. While both groups use the discourse of Muslim brotherhood as a bond between the Turks and the Kurds, the AKP has endorsed a more pragmatic approach toward the resolution of the Kurdish problem. In his speeches, particularly those in the Kurdish provinces, now-President Erdogan frequently brings up the concept of citizenship, downplaying the discourse of ethnic Turkish identity. The AKP government's recognition of many Kurdish linguistic and cultural rights and its negotiations with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) have faced the Gulen community's opposition. What crystallized the rift between the two former allies were their clashing views about the Kurdish question. The movement has been much less compromising toward Kurdish nationalism. The movement sees the resolution of the Kurdish conflict through the recognition of Kurdish linguistic rights (with elective Kurdish classes in schools) and the provision of more social services to the Kurdish areas but stops short of any negotiations with the PKK and its affiliated groups. It refrains from forming relations with Kurdish nationalists and supports military solutions to end the insurgency. The pro-Gulen television channel, Samanyolu, is noted for its militaristic and nationalist TV series. Because of its heavy emphasis on Turkish nationalism, the Gulen movement has not been popular with Kurdish activists. Many believe that the movement was behind the mass arrests of pro-Kurdish activists.

Starting in 2009, thousands of journalists, politicians, mayors and publishers were arrested because of their alleged membership in the KCK, the urban, political wing of the PKK. While the movement has opened several schools in Turkey's Kurdish southeast as well as in Iraq's Kurdish autonomous region, Kurdish activists have perceived these schools as institutions of assimilation.

Unlike its relations with the Kurds, however, the movement has had closer relations with the leaders of Turkey's non-Muslim minorities, such as the Greek Orthodox and Jewish communities. Since the 1990s, the movement's Journalists and Writers Foundation has organized meetings on interfaith dialogue, bringing religious minority leaders together. The Gulen movement's public face has nurtured a discourse of religious tolerance and engagement and boasted of helping non-Muslim communities solve their daily problems resulting from social prejudices.

The AKP, on the other hand, has had a more distanced relationship with Turkey's non-Muslims. Despite pressures from the European Union, it refrained from addressing the major problems of Turkey's non-Muslim minorities. While it undertook legal reforms to ameliorate the institutional autonomy and property rights of non-Muslim minorities, it dragged its feet to enforce these changes. Particularly at times of political challenge, the spontaneity and ease with which the AKP's rhetoric can take an anti-Westernist, anti-Christian or anti-Semitic tone underline the stronger

weight of its Islamist tradition. The defiant, conspiratorial discourse of Erdogan, accusing the West, Zionists, secularists and non-Muslims during and after the 2013 Gezi protests, and his derogatory remarks about Jews and Armenians have recently made hate speech against non-Muslims more visible and ordinary in the public space. For example, in an interview, Erdogan stated: "Let all Turks in Turkey say they are Turks and all Kurds say they are Kurds. What is wrong with that? You wouldn't believe the things they have said about me. They have said I am Georgian. Excuse me, but they have said even uglier things. They have called me Armenian, but I am Turkish."

The analyses of Muslim nationalism in Turkey have largely ignored the conflicting trends within the Islamic discourse about Turkish national identity. Like Kemalists, Muslim nationalists have not been coherent and monolithic nor have they necessarily endorsed a more inclusive understanding of Turkishness. The two main constructions of Muslim nationalism have been exclusivist and intolerant of diversity, but in different ways. How the conflict between the movement and the AKP will be resolved is still not very clear. But the way it is resolved and the upcoming general elections in June will have serious implications for Turkey's democracy, social peace and relations with minorities.

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Iraqi Nationalism and the Iran-Iraq War

By Lisa Blaydes, Stanford University

Who bears the costs associated with the foreign policy decisions of dictators? And to what extent are the burdens of war borne by particular ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic society? Using internal Iraqi government documents amassed in the wake of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, I address the following three questions: 1) which ethnic groups within Iraq bore the greatest burden associated with Iran-Iraq War casualties, 2) how did the regime of then-President Saddam Hussein try to deal with declining citizen and soldier morale as a result of the tremendous human, and other, losses associated with the war, and 3) how can scholars weigh the net impact of war casualties versus government efforts at morale boosting on overall levels of nationalist sentiment across Iraqi ethno-sectarian groups in the years following the conflict?

To preview the main findings, I show that Shiite Iraqis were more likely than their Sunni counterparts – and much more likely than Iraqi Kurds – to have been killed, have become prisoners of war, or have gone missing in action during the first half of the Iran-Iraq War. Government efforts to counteract declining citizen morale during the course of the war took a number of forms, including compensation for families of fallen soldiers, educational programs, and symbolic displays. I argue that despite expending considerable political and material capital in response to concerns about morale, the differential war costs significantly hurt national sentiment and laid the groundwork for the uprisings that were to take place in 1991.

Identity, Conflict, and Nationalism

Despite initial fears within the Saddam regime about Iraqi Shiites defecting to the Iranian side, this did not turn out to be major source of concern for the regime during the course of the conflict.¹ Why didn't Iraqi Shiites identify to a

greater extent with the Iranians? Chubin and Tripp discuss a variety of relevant factors including the fact that there did not exist a “distinct community” of Iraqi Shiites given the many differences within the community, particularly tribal and occupational variation.² This has led analysts to argue that Iraq's Shiites “were not automatic enemies of the regime.”³ Indeed, according to Johnson, Shiite Iraqis were largely unsympathetic to then-Supreme Leader of Iran Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and may have feared Shiite Islamist organization that could bring violence to their communities.⁴

The war had a very different impact on Iraq's Kurdish population. At the start of the Iran-Iraq War, animosity between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) gave the Saddam regime confidence that Kurdish factions were so busy fighting each other that they would not pose a challenge to regime interests.⁵ The Iranian offensive into Kurdistan in 1983, however, changed the value of Kurdish loyalty and resistance. When the KDP assisted Iranian forces, the regime “vanished” over 8,000 civilians affiliated with the Barzani tribe.⁶ The PUK was engaged in negotiations with the Saddam regime in 1983 and 1984; these negotiations ultimately broke down, however, when the group failed to obtain the primary objectives of political autonomy and fixed oil revenue.⁷ Eventually both groups came to be engaged in harassment of Iraqi forces, at times with assistance from the Iranians (Chubin and Tripp 1988, 106). By 1985, the regime had lost control of the Kurdish countryside to the Kurdish Peshmerga, but it was able to

1 Chubin, Shahram and Charles Tripp. 1988. *Iran and Iraq at War*. London: I.B. Tauris and Co.: 98

2 Chubin and Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War*: 99

3 Johnson, Rob. 2011. *The Iran-Iraq War*. London: Palgrave Macmillan: 122

4 Johnson, *The Iran-Iraq War*: 122

5 Chubin and Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War*: 105

6 Kirmanj, Sherko. 2013. *Identity and Nation in Iraq*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner: 144

7 Chubin and Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War*: 106

retain influence in northern towns and cities.⁸

The Human Cost of War

Data about war casualties in the first four years of the Iran-Iraq War were found in a series of internal Iraqi government memoranda that provide province, and in some cases, district or village-level information on three dimensions: number of individuals killed, number missing in action (MIA) and number taken as prisoners of war (POW).⁹ These memoranda were dated October 1984. Khoury has argued that after 1984-5 desertions among rank-and-file members of the Iraqi military increased exponentially,¹⁰ suggesting that the casualty estimates generated in October 1984 would not be highly impacted by desertions. In order to calculate the number of casualties per capita, I calculate a weighted average of the 1977 and 1987 province-level population estimates from the Iraq census.

Southern provinces, which are predominantly Shiite, saw an average of 4.9 individuals killed per 1,000 individuals in the province population. In northern Iraq, which has a large Kurdish population, the average was only 1.7 per 1,000. For the central provinces of Salah al-Din and Diyala, predominantly but not exclusively Sunni provinces, the average number killed was 2.4 per 1,000 and for Anbar province in the Sunni west, the rate was 2.7 per 1,000. The number killed, MIA, or POW for southern provinces was 11.0 individuals per 1,000 compared to 3.7 in the north. Salah al-Din and Diyala averaged 5.7 killed, MIA, or POW per 1,000 while that figure was 6.2 in Anbar. This suggests that the predominantly Shiite southern areas of Iraq not only saw higher rates of war deaths but also more MIA and POW soldiers. The Kurdish areas saw the lowest number killed, missing, or taken prisoner.

The Regime Response

Maintaining the morale of both the population and the army itself became an important priority of the Saddam

regime. In the early years of the war, when Iraq was still flush with oil revenue, Saddam recognized the hardship associated with war casualties. Families of fallen soldiers received thousands of dinars and a car – originally a Toyota Corona and, later, the less expensive Volkswagen Passat.¹¹ Negative inducements were also common. During the war, party members who exhibited cowardice might be forced out of the party and have their party-related privileges taken away from them. One memorandum describes those benefits as including special loans and contracts, life insurance benefits, housing, health care, the right to travel, acceptance into colleges or institutions of higher learning, the right to facilitate tourism investment, and licenses to work with foreign companies in Iraq.¹² This memorandum is interesting in multiple ways. First, it makes clear the myriad of benefits party membership awarded Iraqis during the early 1980s, particularly access to opportunities that were not widely shared in lucrative industries and scarce benefits. But it also suggests that cowardice in the war might lead these privileges to be taken away if dismissed from the party.

A variety of Baath Party memoranda describe the challenges associated with improving morale on the part of citizens and soldiers during a period of large and rising number of casualties. For example, one January 1983 memorandum from northern Iraq describes meetings with Kurdish Special Forces fighters with the goal of making the fighters feel more confident and less hesitant about their participation in policing the North and fighting the Iranians.¹³ During the meeting, Baath Party officials emphasized that the Iraqis had destroyed the Iranian war machine despite Iran's much larger population. The goal was to suggest that small groups of saboteurs would not stand a chance in impacting the stability of the Iraqi state. Party officials further emphasized that detachments that fought with honor and courage on behalf of national safety and sovereignty would never be abandoned or forgotten, nor would their children and families be forgotten or abandoned. In these meetings, it was emphasized that one

8 Kirmanj, *Identity and Nation in Iraq*: 145

9 See BRCC Boxfile 01-2202-0003.

10 Khoury, Dina Rizk. 2013. *Iraq in Wartime: Soldiering, Martyrdom, and Remembrance*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press: 73

11 Bashir, Ala. 2005. *The Insider: Trapped in Saddam's Brutal Regime*. London: Abacus: 59

12 BRCC Doc. No. 01-3388-0001-0171, January 18 1982.

13 Iraqi Politics Files (Boulder) Doc. Nos. 30703 to 05, January 11 1983.

should only listen to official government mouthpieces and avoid saboteur propaganda.

In general, problems of morale among the rank and file were considered to be more common than within the officer corps. According to the internal analysis, problem soldiers fell into five major categories: 1) those politically affiliated with the opposition, 2) those who pursue their own agendas even if not affiliated with the opposition, 3) those who are hesitant, confused, and lacking in determination, 4) those who are completely ignorant, driven only by survival instincts, and 5) those who prioritize their traditional tribal or other personal commitments over the interests of the country. Wide-ranging educational programs were believed to be the solution to this problem. Soldiers would be instructed about the achievements of the regime, including cleansing the internal front of spies, agents, and vandals, and achieving equality of citizens (regardless of race or sect), as well as policy achievements in the areas of petroleum industry development, rural development, education, and health.¹⁴

Impact on Nationalist Sentiment

In 1980, the Saddam regime was poorly positioned to anticipate the duration, intensity, and political impact of the decision to initiate conflict with Iran. Expecting a limited war lasting weeks or months rather than years, the regime was confronted with the challenge of handling the political implications of war casualties and declining citizen and military morale.

There is little doubt that the Saddam regime was concerned with the heavy cost of war for population. The regime collected a great deal of information about the war burden with an eye toward compensating the families of war martyrs. Using this information, I have sought to provide more precise information about the relatively uneven distribution of war burden across Iraq's multi-ethnic community. These results provide evidence for the existence of a hierarchy of burden associated with the conflict where Iraqi Shiites were subjected to higher

casualty rates than either Arab Sunni or Kurdish Iraqis. This differential war burden exists not only for deaths but also for MIA and POW status.

Within the existing scholarship on Iraqi politics, there are multiple interpretations regarding the impact of the Iran-Iraq War on nationalist sentiment within Iraq. On the one hand, some scholars have argued that the only way Iraq could have sustained such a long conflict with so many casualties was through a surge in nationalist sentiment.¹⁵ This perspective was shared by the Saddam regime which believed that helped to forge "a new Iraqi national community out of the ethnically diverse population."¹⁶ Yet others have argued that the war had a tendency to undermine nationalist sentiment and, instead, "atomize Iraqi society, throwing its members back on the security of primordial loyalties and collective identities."¹⁷ Jabar argues that in the years immediately following the Iran-Iraq War, "cracks in the union of popular and official nationalisms began to surface among the restless war generation."¹⁸ The data and information that I have presented do not provide direct evidence on the net impact of the war on nationalism but do suggest which communities, within Iraq, might have been most susceptible to declining nationalist support. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War, popular uprisings first emerged in Shiite areas of southern Iraq that also had witnessed the largest casualty counts during the Iran-Iraq War.

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15 Jabar, Faleh. 2003b. "Clerics, Tribes, Ideologues and Urban Dwellers in the South of Iraq: The Potential for Rebellion." *Iraq at the Crossroads: State and Society in the Shadow of Regime Change*. Editors, Toby Dodge and Steven Simon. International Institute for Strategic Studies. Adelphi Paper 354.

16 Chubin and Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War*: 84

17 Chubin and Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War*: 84

18 Jabar, Faleh. 2003a. "The Iraqi Army and the Anti-Army and the Anti-Army: Some Reflections on the Role of the Military." *Iraq at the Crossroads: State and Society in the Shadow of Regime Change*. Editors, Toby Dodge and Steven Simon. International Institute for Strategic Studies. Adelphi Paper 354: 118

14 BRCC Doc. Nos. 01-2479-0004-0259 to 0273, October 22 1986.

The Islamic State and the politics of official narratives

By Laurie Brand, University of Southern California

This piece originally appeared on The Monkey Cage on September 8, 2014.

While its exploits in battle and crime in conquest have captured most of the headlines regarding the group formerly referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), since the June declaration of the Islamic State, increasing attention has turned to how it governs, most specifically how much actual “state” there is and how its state-like institutions function.

The sources of the Islamic State’s budget – from ransoms of foreign hostages and “foreign aid” from wealthy Gulf Arabs to the sale of oil from production facilities that have come under its control – have been widely reported. Its high profile destruction of the border crossing between Iraq and Syria, which the Islamic State framed in terms of overturning the legacy of Sykes-Picot, demonstrated its ideological rejection of existing state boundaries as it extended its own realm. Recent developments in Mosul, the largest Iraqi city to be conquered by the Islamic State, certainly call to mind Charles Tilly’s famous piece “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime;” however, it is in the Syrian city of Raqqa, where the Islamic State established its first major seat of power, that the basic institutions of its nascent state can be most effectively observed.

Courts, prisons, tax collection, a complaints department (*diwan al-mazalim*) and the morality patrols (*hisbah*) – the Islamic State’s version of Saudi Arabia’s religious police (*mutawwain*) – are obvious manifestations of its assumption of control over regulating daily affairs. Most recently, however, the Islamic State has turned its attention to what Ernest Gellner once claimed was “more central than the monopoly of legitimate violence” to the state: the monopoly of legitimate education. Reports from Raqqa during the last week in August detailed a “General Directive to all Educational Institutions” issued by the Islamic State’s Bureau of Curriculum, on official stationery and with its own official stamps, which sets preliminary guidelines for

instruction. The first order in the directive is that all of the following subjects are to be annulled: music, art, civics, social studies, history, math, philosophy and social issues, and Christian and Islamic religious education. However, the directive also states that the Bureau of Curriculum will “compensate” for their removal, a phrase that suggests that what is underway is not the wholesale abolition of most courses of study, but rather the first stage in a massive reworking of the curriculum.

Decades ago, the need for an educated population was widely recognized by the first generation of post-independence leaderships in the developing world as one means of confronting the myriad challenges of post-colonial economic and political development. Just as important, however, was the role that education was to play in inculcating a new national narrative, one that would “correct” the history and mission promulgated by the former colonial power. In their place, an heroic story would be constructed, aimed at building a unified national identity, establishing the vision of that nation, and – crucially – consolidating power through reinforcing the regime’s legitimacy to rule. Thus, taking control of the curriculum in the early stages of state development, what the Islamic State appears to be engaged in, has been a common policy across regions and over time.

My research on national narratives in the Middle East and North Africa bears this out. One of the most basic tasks of narrative reconstruction undertaken by new leaderships is establishing a new founding story. In both Egypt and Algeria, as part of this process, the name of the country was changed, a different flag was introduced and revised history, civics and other texts were developed that promoted the vision and values of the revolutionary leadership. In the case of Egypt, while the Free Officers who overthrew King Farouk in July 1952 by no means rejected the role of Mehmet Ali in establishing the bases of the modern Egypt state, the textbooks that were produced shortly after the revolution constructed the overthrow of

the monarchy as the beginning of a qualitatively new era in Egyptian history. In the case of Algeria, it took longer for indigenous textbooks to be produced, in large part because of the sorry state of indigenous schools at the time of the French departure, but when they were, the bloody war of liberation was clearly marked as a glorious and heroic rebirth for the Algerian people.

Previous work has shown that the constituent elements of national narratives are often open to multiple interpretations, hence allowing for investing them with altered or new meanings as the polity evolves and as the leadership may need. As a result, even deeply rooted narratives have a degree of flexibility, leading to relative stability in most tropes over time. Only during periods of crisis – economic, political, military, etc. – does it appear that sufficient “space” opens up for major revisions or reconstructions of basic story lines and values. My research revealed that in the cases of Egypt, Algeria and Jordan, certain types of regime transition – particularly unexpected leadership changes, as with Gamal Abdel Nasser’s death in 1970 and Houari Boumediene’s death in 1978 – seemed to open the way for significant, if not sudden, narrative revisions. However, only in the cases of the implantation of a completely new ruling group does it seem that attempt is made to generate a wholly new founding story.

What we see now with the Islamic State is in keeping with these examples. If one reads the entirety of its recent curriculum directive, the outlines of a new narrative under the declared caliphate can be discerned. The term “Syrian Arab Republic” is to be removed completely and replaced with “the Islamic State,” and the Syrian national anthem is to be discarded or suppressed. There is to be no teaching of the concepts of national patriotism (*wataniyyah*) or Arab nationalism (*qawmiyyah*); rather, students are to be taught that they belong to Islam and its people, to strict monotheism and its adherents, and that the land of the Muslim is the land in which God’s path (*shar’ Allah*) governs. The words “homeland” (*watan*), “his homeland,” “my homeland,” or “Syria” are to be replaced wherever they are found with the phrases “the Islamic state,” “his Islamic state,” “land of the Muslims” or the “*Sham* (or other the Islamic State-governed) Province.”

The teacher is instructed to replace any gaps in Arabic language and grammar instructional materials that may result from the suppression of these terms with examples that do not conflict with *sharia* or the Islamic State. In addition, all pictures that violate *sharia* are to be removed, as are any examples in mathematics that involve usury, interest, democracy or elections. Finally, in the science curriculum anything that is associated with Darwin’s theory or evolution is to be removed and all creation is to be attributed to God.

Thus the nascent narrative has several key bases that reveal its radical nature. First is the change, not only of the name, but also of the form of state – for it is not really “national” – affiliation. Second is the rejection of the national anthem and all of the history and values it represents. Third is the suppression of existing types of belonging, well established in the Arab world – *qawmiyyah* and *wataniyyah* – and their replacement with a particular version of a religious creed. A new founding narrative is clearly in the process of being constructed and inculcated.

While it may be tempting, upon seeing the brutal videos of the Islamic State’s campaign of “shock and awe” to call it a “death cult” as some commentators recently have, much of what it is currently engaged in has clear parallels in other historical examples of conquest aimed at securing control over both territory and people. How far the Islamic State will be able to extend its aspirations to state-like control, and to what extent it will be able to consolidate those structures currently in place remain to be seen. For those keen to counter and defeat it, as well as those simply intent upon understanding its origins and prospects, nascent entity-consolidating activities like the promulgation of a new narrative through, among other means, a reconstructed educational curriculum, demand closer attention and analysis.

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Turkey's secularization in reverse?

By Kristin Fabbe, Claremont McKenna College

This piece appeared on The Monkey Cage on February 9, 2015.

Critics of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) have long voiced suspicion that the party harbors a "hidden agenda" of "Islamizing the state." Those concerns have been inflamed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's increasingly repressive governing style at home, regional support for the Muslim Brotherhood and the allegedly ambivalent response to the rise of the Islamic State, whose violent bid to resurrect a caliphate is pressing up against Turkey's south eastern borders. What does the claim of "Islamizing" the state actually mean, however? A closer look at two key sectors – the Directorate of Religious Affairs and education – provides a window for analyzing such claims.

The AKP's efforts in these two sectors also intersect with its increasingly acrimonious power struggle with the Gulen movement. The followers of the exiled cleric Fethullah Gulen constitute a large and influential religious community in Turkey. The movement originally helped bring the AKP to power, long supported its politics and was instrumental in using its supporters in the police and the judiciary to launch a barrage of court cases starting in 2007 that helped to cement the AKP's dominance. The cracks in the Gulen-AKP alliance began to surface in February 2012, when pro-Gulen prosecutors attempted to subpoena Hakan Fidan, the head of the National Intelligence Organization and a close Erdogan confidant. In November 2013, Erdogan hit back by announcing his plans to abolish Turkey's vast network of cram-schools (*dershaneler*), an educational system dominated by Gulen's sympathizers and an important source of the movement's revenue. The Gulenists then unleashed a corruption probe targeting a number of AKP members that came dangerously close to Erdogan himself. Throughout 2014 Erdogan intensified his rhetoric against the Gulenists, accusing the movement of creating a "parallel state"

and attempting to foment a coup. The year was marked by waves of AKP retaliation against Gulen affiliates in the judiciary, police, media and even financial sector, culminating in December 2014 with government raids and arrest warrants for 31 of the movement's alleged members on terrorism charges.

While there is no doubt that Erdogan often justifies political maneuvering through an appeal to religious attachments, this is hardly unique in Turkey's history. Although officially "secular" in name as based on the constitutional principle of "*laiklik*," the Turkish state has never been secular in sense of being "neutral" toward religion. Since the establishment of the Turkish republic, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyamet), which was created to operate directly under the control of the Office of the Prime Minister, has maintained a firm grip on the production of an officially sanctioned version of Sunni Islam.

The Diyanet was at its weakest during the Kemalist heyday of the 1920s and 1930s, though President Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's government still made nominal appeals to Sunni institutions, elites and attachments. Kemalism is typically thought of as synonymous aggressive secularization, though in practice the Kemalists created a protected place for official Islam under the purview of the state. The Kemalists tasked religious elites at the Diyanet with producing modern Turkish translations of the Koran and other sacred texts, as well as publishing sermons for use in mosques across the country in an effort to create a sacred-synthesis between religion and nation. Today, under Law 633 (last updated in 1965), the Diyanet has a mandate to "operate affairs related to belief, worship, and moral principles of the Islamic Religion, enlighten the public about religious issues and administer places of worship." In practice, this means that the Diyanet is responsible for the creation of sermons and mandatory school textbooks on religion as well as staffing mosques and Koran courses.

Many observers claim that the AKP has expanded the Diyanet's authority and reach since taking executive power through elections in 2002 (and further consolidating power in 2007 when the AKP's Abdullah Gul succeeded Ahmet Necdet Sezer as president). Is this true? One often cited statistic is the increasing number of civil servants working for the Diyanet under the AKP's tenure. Others point to the Diyanet's massive annual budget, which was approximately 4.5 billion Turkish lira (around \$2.1 billion) in 2013 according official statistics.

Both of these claims need to be put into historical perspective. According to research by Nihat Ayturk, Yasar Celik, and Enver Sahinaslan published in the Diyanet's official journal (*Diyanet Dergisi*) the number of Diyanet employees also rose considerably in the three decades between the political opening of the late 1940s and the 1980 military coup, from approximately 1,200 to 50,000 individuals. Consistent Diyanet personnel data from 1980s until the present has been more difficult to locate; but this is the data needed to put any more recent personnel increases in proper perspective. Regarding the Diyanet's budget, Istar Gozaydin finds that from 1993 until 2008, the Diyanet's funding remained fairly consistent relative to other government expenditures. Indeed, since as far back as 1951, Gozayadin tracks that the Diyanet's share of the state budget has held fairly steady between 0.5 and 1 percent. I find that the most recent statistics do not deviate much from the trend Gozaydin identifies, with the Diyanet having approximately 1.1 percent of the overall government budget in 2013.

This is not to say definitively that the AKP has not or will not use the Diyanet as a political tool. Problems could arise if the AKP decides – and is able – to leverage the Diyanet as a political weapon against the Gulen Movement. A 2003 wikileaks cable noted that the cooperation between the AKP and the Gulenists “dovetails at the Diyanet and other elements of the bureaucracy.” One of these “other elements” was the judiciary, which has since been torn asunder by the Gulenist-AKP power struggle. In a rare and lengthy televised interview with the Turkish media on Jan. 31, Diyanet President maintained that the organization

remained “above politics,” though he also lamented that many of the Diyanet's imam-civil servants had recently lost their jobs after having been sucked into the political fray.

A second prong in the claim that the AKP is “Islamizing” Turkey is the highly publicized controversy regarding the government's alleged expansion of the Imam-Hatip schools, which nominally provide Islamic “vocational education” (*mesleki egitim*). The New York Times recently called this the “latest front in Turkey's cultural wars,” in which the AKP has “gradually injected religion into public life over the past 12 years in an effort to reshape Turkish society.”

The number of Imam-Hatip schools, which were originally created at the founding of the republic with the expressed purpose of training religious functionaries, has waxed and waned since the 1920s as the result of complicated changes in vocational and overall education policy. The schools were closed between 1930 and 1948 and were then gradually reinstated in 1949 (together with elective religion courses in state schools). The number of Imam-Hatip schools grew steadily throughout the 1950s and even increased after the “secularist” military intervention in 1960. This growth continued for well over three decades: Imam-Hatip students made-up 2.6 percent of the overall secondary students in 1965, growing to 8 percent in 1985 and 10 percent in 1997. Policies carried out by Turkey's military government in the 1980s also firmly secured religion's place in “regular” public schooling when it included article 24 in the new constitution, obliging all students to take religion classes from grades four through twelve.

Given the long historical lineage of the Imam-Hatip system and state-sponsored religious education, observers should perhaps worry less about the Islamization of state education and more about how the imminent closure of cram-schools and other Gulenist schooling institutions will shape the overall educational and political landscape. Many Imam-Hatip teachers and students are believed to sympathize with the Gulenmovement and a number of public school teachers – both in the Imam-Hatip and “regular” public

school system – have supplemented their income for years by working at cram-schools after hours. The AKP’s assault on Gulenist infrastructure could thus have unpredictable ripple effects across education and politics. According to a bill passed in parliament in the spring of 2014, the cram-schools will either have to shutter their doors or covert themselves to state monitored private schools by September 2015. Cram-school teachers who lose their jobs are being promised a place in the state system, though it is unclear how the state plans to absorb affiliates of a movement that it is simultaneously trying to purge.

In Turkey, unlike the Arab world, opposition to the state has rarely taken a strong religious form. Turkey has also been largely immune to the influence of Salafi-style religious ideologies. The question is whether or not this could change given recent domestic divisions, which are not between Islamists and secularists as Turkish politics is often cast, but amongst Islamists with pro-regime and anti-regime politics. There is also the issue of whether the Gulenist-AKP split may force other religious orders (*tarikatarlar*) to take a more definitive political stance, thereby shaping the upcoming 2015 general elections.

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Do Jordan’s tribes challenge or strengthen the state?

By Kristen Kao, UCLA

This post appeared on The Monkey Cage on May 28, 2015.

In the spring of 2013, a fight between two students of different tribes at a university in southern Jordan killed four people and injured many. Tribe members on both sides reportedly supplied the students with weapons and closed the roads surrounding the area for days after the event so that they could personally punish the perpetrators.

Bystanders complained that state officials’ failure to intervene effectively escalated the conflict. Order was restored only once a pact was brokered between the sheiks of the two tribes in a process known as *al-atwa*.

This relatively common incident — 40 tribal fights at universities in Jordan were documented in 2013 alone — offers a window into how new forms of tribalism help to

sustain political order within increasingly embattled Arab states.

The role of neo-tribalism in local-level political order reframes common theoretical perspectives on how Arab states relate to societal challengers. Despite the predictions of modernization theorists, rapid development in the region has not reduced tribes as a primary source of social identity. Instead, tribes have become an integral element of Arab regime-maintenance strategies, becoming powerful players in civil wars and insurgencies and a key part of the counterinsurgency toolbox developed in Iraq.

Tribes’ impact largely depends on the strength and institutional structure of the states in which they operate. In failing or fractured states, such as Iraq or Libya, tribalism may seriously threaten the rebuilding of nations by contributing to the rapid decline of nationalism when

states are collapsing. Yet studying non-failed states such as Jordan also helps to highlight the more subtle ways in which “neo-tribalism” sustains both the social power of tribes and the political stability of regimes.

The tribal conflict described above is typical of local dynamics in Jordan. In April 2014, the *sheikh al-shiukh* (literally, the sheik of the sheiks) of the largest tribe in Jordan, DaifAllah al-Qulab, described for me how the state court will almost always wait until the tribes have come to an agreement among themselves before sentencing a perpetrator. If money for the deceased is paid, the sentence will be significantly reduced. Such arrangements have considerable popular support. In the Governance and Local Development (GLD) Jordan 2014 survey, 29 percent of participants preferred that this sort of tribal law be employed to solve issues involving murder, and 59 percent favored a mix of tribal and civil law. Only 12 percent of participants wanted the formal court system and government officials to resolve the conflict. In other social and political realms, states in the Middle East accommodate customary law and grapple with how much autonomy tribes should be accorded.

What links the local to the national is Jordan’s distinctive conception of nationalism based upon the legitimacy of a ruling sheik of a tribe to which all other tribes in the country have sworn allegiance. In this discourse, all tribes continue to play an integral role in governance. This follows a pattern across the region, by which state-building elites took historically reliable means of social organization and cloaked them in national sovereignty and legitimacy, adapting very traditional forms of social relations to the new realities of rentier or semi-rentier states.

For much of Jordan’s population, tribes provide the main source of access to basic government services and benefits through *wasta*, which is akin to a personal network of connections. *Wasta* can mean either the middleman who obtains the favor or the act of his intercession on behalf of someone to obtain a desired outcome or good. Rather than being delegitimized as corruption, *wasta* serves as a social and economic lubricant in the often-tense interactions

between the state and society. Through such practices, in turn, the regime reifies and reinforces tribal structures by relying on — and thus empowering — tribes to take care of their own.

When the state is strong, this strategy of governance can work quite well and can serve to buttress the power of the regime. However, when tribes take over the critical role of administering justice, tribes and states compete for claims to the legitimate use of force in the eyes of their citizens. This is one of the most significant areas in which the tribe confronts and conflicts with the nation-state. Identifying the social spheres in which traditional authority challenges formal state authority also offers an interesting and important topic for future research. Moreover, determining the extent to which tribal identity takes precedence over national identity within differing contexts could illuminate sources of inherent instability and weakness in established states in the region today that rely on tribal governing structures. Even if there is an overarching national ethos that the nation-state has concocted around the idea of shared tribal ideals, in practice, tribes and clans are customarily suspicious of and in competition with one another. For example, about 85 percent of respondents to the GLD survey in Jordan believe that one should worry about being cheated when interacting with members outside one’s own tribe.

The modern nation-state demands that there be only one centralized governing power with a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Yet tribes expect to be at least partially autonomous. At their most basic level, tribes are segmented communities based on putative kinship ties. Tribalism is more than kinship, though. It is a cognitive way of looking at the world: an ideology of believing oneself to be part of a tribe, submitting to the social norms, informal rules and formal laws governing that tribe, and relating oneself to the rest of the world through the lens of that tribe. People may simultaneously belong to both a nation and a tribe, just as an American may also identify as a Latina. Tribes and nations tap into a fund of myths, symbols, values and shared memories — and different identities can be mobilized depending on context.

Tribes challenge, rather than support, nations when they become the dominant way of seeing the world for a person in a context that causes detriment to the nation. If tribalism is a government official's primary source of identification, more of his time and effort in office is likely to be limited in scope to helping members of his kinship network with targeted benefits from the state at the expense of the nation as a whole. Analysis of constituent casework logs I collected from a variety of Jordanian lawmakers confirms that tribal favoritism in the provision of state benefits exists in many areas of the country. In the GLD survey, 75 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that elected officials respond more quickly to kinsmen than other citizens. This scenario is a commonly cited feature of politics in states where tribes and clans are employed as official distributors of state resources to the broader population. In this sense, tribalism is antithetical to the nation because it places the interests of kin before all others for no reason other than putative shared ancestral ties. In these circumstances, the tribe mediates the citizen's membership in the nation-state.

The recent deterioration of states like Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya encourages consideration of whether the nations associated with these states will survive and, if so, how they will adapt to new circumstances. It is easy to see how tribes may shift from bolstering the nation-state to challenging it

within the contexts of nation-state collapse. The advantage of the nation's larger size as an imagined community is most beneficial when there is a stable political institution, such as a state, that can organize, provide for and protect all of its members. When large governing institutions are in shambles and failing in these regards, the smaller size of tribes that results from their stricter rules for membership makes it much easier for them to maintain collective unity and protection for their members. Tribes in the Middle East offer a convenient auxiliary structure for social organization in times of chaos in large part because they already have a degree of legitimacy in the eyes of the people, who have long relied on them to resolve disputes, administer justice and provide goods and services. Moreover, the failure of collapsing nation-states to meet their people's daily needs invites other ideologies and ways of organizing the world to fill the vacuum. Amid current turmoil in the Middle East, tribalism may provide an avenue for reestablishing order, but it also has the potential to exacerbate the decline of the nation, threaten its stability or hinder its reunification once the fighting stops.

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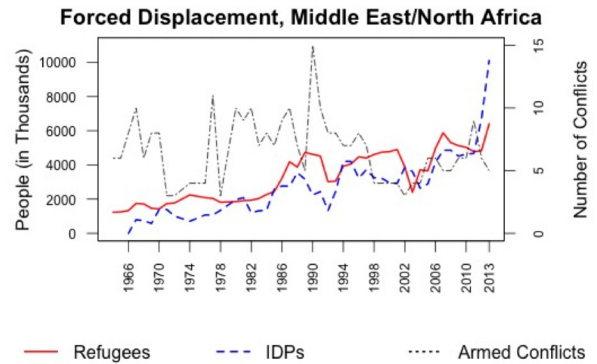
The identity politics of displacement in the Middle East

By Adam G. Lichtenheld, University of California, Berkeley

This piece appeared on *The Monkey Cage* on March 4, 2015.

Amnesty International recently released a scathing report that took Western countries to task for their failure to address the sharp uptick in human displacement in 2014. No part of the world has been more affected than the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), where recent upheavals have spawned the region's largest forced migration crisis since the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians during the First Arab-Israeli War in 1948. Between 2008 and 2013 alone, the number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Arab world roughly doubled, propelled by the 2011 uprisings and violence in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and the Palestinian territories. MENA is now the main region of origin of refugees worldwide, and contains nearly one-third of the global IDP population. This surge mirrors a broader, and troubling, global trend. Despite a steady decline in the incidence and lethality of armed conflict, the number of people forcibly displaced by violence has swelled to levels not seen since World War II.

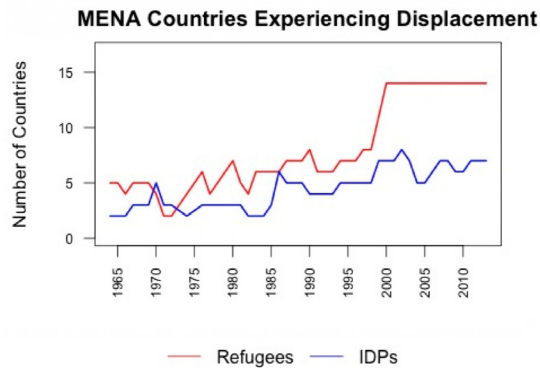
While there is a discernable shift in global attention toward forced displacement, this issue remains largely neglected by scholars. In the Middle East, this growing feature of contemporary politics is not only an urgent concern for humanitarian agencies: Examining displacement has important implications for enhancing our understanding of the region's shifting identity politics. Since mass involuntary movements of populations have long been a catalyst for political and social transformation – and are linked to an array of security threats, from conflict spillover and terrorism to the spread of infectious disease – it is critical to consider how the most recent waves of displacement will shape the future landscape of the Middle East.



Data Sources: *Forcibly Displaced Populations Dataset*, updated for the years 2008 to 2013 with data from the *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre* and *UNHCR Population Statistics*. (Adam G. Lichtenheld)

Population displacement has a unique legacy in the Middle East, which claims the world's largest protracted refugee situation (the Palestinians) and the greatest gaps in legal protection for forced migrants, as most countries are not parties to the UN Refugee Convention. Yet outside the voluminous literature on Palestinian refugees, displacement remains relatively understudied in the Arab world. Most research is refugee-centric and focuses on encamped populations, even though the number of IDPs in the region now nearly doubles the number of refugees, and the vast majority of the displaced – including an estimated 70 percent of Syrian refugees and 95 percent of IDPs in Yemen – do not live in camps or formal settlements.

Meanwhile, displacement patterns in MENA have become increasingly complex. More countries are experiencing displacement than at any point in the past 50 years (see below). Syrians, Iraqis, Libyans, Yemenis and Palestinians have been uprooted multiple times and across multiple borders. The per-capita refugee populations of Lebanon and Jordan are now three to six times greater than any other country in the world, placing significant strain on these states' economies, social services and local communities.



Data Sources: Forcibly Displaced Populations Dataset, updated for the years 2008 to 2013 with data from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and UNHCR Population Statistics. (Adam G. Lichtenheld)

Political scientists tend to overlook these trends, despite the fact that forced displacement engages fundamental questions surrounding the organization and consolidation of political authority; the very process of state formation has been described as a “refugee-generating process.” One reason for this neglect may be the tendency to treat displacement as an *inadvertent* byproduct of violence and instability, rather than a strategic tool. But recent research by Kelly Greenhill, Abbey Steele and Yuri Zhukov has demonstrated that the uprooting of civilian populations is frequently orchestrated, manipulated and sustained by political actors.

In the Middle East, displacement has been commonly employed as a weapon of war and a tool of statecraft. According to data that I have collected from media reports, historical records and academic studies, military forces and other armed groups have strategically uprooted civilians in at least 40 percent of all armed conflicts in the region since 1945. Although “cleansing” territories of religious rivals has become a popular tactic for sectarian militias in Iraq and a cornerstone of the Islamic State’s bid to erect a quasi-state, in a vast majority of cases, it is the state that perpetuates these displacements. The Turkish military has systematically depopulated Kurdish villages as a counterinsurgency measure against the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK). Beginning in the 1970s, “Arabization” campaigns, which expelled ethnic minorities and

resettled Arab families in their place, became a hallmark of Baath Party rule in Iraq and Syria. Saddam Hussein resurrected these measures after the first Gulf War, responding to Kurdish and Shiite uprisings by uprooting entire communities, including residents of the Hammar, Amarah and Huwizeh marshes. In Syria, President Bashar al-Assad’s forces have bulldozed neighborhoods to force civilians out of insurgent-held areas, adopting a strategy used in the 1980s by his father and then-President Hafez al-Assad, to put down revolts by the Muslim Brotherhood. The Israeli government has routinely expelled Palestinians from their homes in the West Bank. And in recent months, the Egyptian military has forcibly displaced thousands of Sinai residents to establish a buffer zone with the Gaza Strip aimed at stemming the influx of arms and militants across the border.

The use of these measures has enabled governments (and aspiring governments) to assert control over contested areas, monitor restive populations and engage in social engineering as a part of state-led development. Displacement has been more than an expedient military tactic; it has been an essential state-building instrument. Inducing population movements helps leaders consolidate their authority while achieving a critical requirement of modernization: The physical concentration of the populace into regimented units, rendering even the most unruly or inaccessible territories “legible,” in the words of James Scott.

These displacement strategies are nothing new. Population transfers have been a feature of territorial acquisition, military domination and imperial subjugation since antiquity. Yet as colonial rule and wars of conquest have become increasingly obsolete, the role of political actors in intentionally triggering displacement is often overlooked in the modern era. These strategies differ in type and intensity: Authorities not only expel civilians from an area, they also relocate them to designated settlements or monitored makeshift camps elsewhere. Therefore in many cases, the strategic displacement of civilian populations are not static, one-off events, but dynamic processes whereby political actors continuously seek to regulate people’s physical locations and movements. No matter how officials justify

these measures, they rarely provide the resources needed to adequately address their humanitarian consequences.

Many Middle Eastern scholars, most notably Edward Said, have captured the essential links between displacement and identity politics. Nationalism – the pursuit of recognition and rights by self-defined collectives – is often cited as a *driver* of forced migration, but as Said and others have shown, is it also a consequence of it. These connections remain mostly unexamined outside the context of Palestinian nationalism, for which dislocation and dispossession have become critical features. But the Palestinians do not appear to be a unique case. Scholars have recognized the role of displacement in constructing Kurdish nationalism in Turkey and Sahrawi identity in North Africa. Since identities tend to be territorially anchored, being violently uprooted can lead people to cling to their homelands, and promote an exaggerated sense of group solidarity based on the very characteristics by which individuals were displaced. Refocusing attention on how displacement is weaponized within the contemporary context can help us better understand the impact of displacement on identity politics in two important ways.

First, displacement highlights the role of the state and its agents in reifying, politicizing, and institutionalizing national and subnational identities. According to Dawn Chatty, the Ottoman Empire's orchestrated expulsion and resettlement of problematic or undesirable groups made forced migration "the characteristic mark of nationalism" across much of the Middle East. Scholars tend to perceive the development of national consciousness as a bottom-up, rather than a top-down, process. But as states have increasingly "monopolized the legitimate means of movement," the ways in which authorities create and respond to forced migrations play a pivotal role in constructing nationalism. For displaced Palestinians, the policies and actions of the Israeli government, the discriminatory treatment of refugees by Lebanon and Jordan and the management practices of U.N. relief agencies have all enhanced the distinctiveness and political salience of Palestinian identity.

Second, focusing on the state's role in inducing and managing displacement draws attention to the material drivers of identity politics. Studies of nationalism often emphasize its subjective and ideational dimensions, with less attention paid to the ways in which nationalism is rooted in laws, policies and institutions. Forced migration activates nationalism by attaching specific rights, resources and recognition to particular ethnic, sectarian or national affiliations. For all the talk of Kurdish transnationalism, border restrictions, visa requirements and citizenship benefits preserve salient differences between Iraqi, Syrian and Turkish Kurds.

Displacement therefore remains an underutilized prism for observing the dynamics of identity production in Middle Eastern politics. It also challenges popular narratives surrounding the origins of sectarian conflict in the region. Many observers claim that Arab autocrats suppressed long-standing subnational divisions only to have them erupt after these rulers were overthrown or undermined. This obscures the fact that measures undertaken by these regimes, particularly the strategic uprooting of civilian populations, were instrumental in deepening these divisions and essentializing the identities attached to them. While frequently exercised under the auspices of national unity, these displacements had the opposite effect: They aggravated, rather than subdued, patterns of sectarian or ethnic dominance.

Likewise, the more recent episodes of forced displacement appear to be intensifying subnational rivalries in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. By fragmenting society and categorizing people not as citizens but members of homogenous ethno-sectarian enclaves, displacement has inhibited attempts to develop a national identity. These processes are abetted by the fact that the primary providers of humanitarian supplies and public services for displaced communities are faith-based NGOs and local religious, ethnic and tribal groups that directly or indirectly cultivate dependency on subnational affiliations, particularly among population displaced within their countries – who lack the international legal protections afforded to refugees. As Melani Cammett has shown, the provision of welfare

can engender or reinforce community solidarity. Thus the activities of these aid groups could help augment or preserve the ethno-sectarian identities of displaced populations, just as the services provided by the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees have played a pivotal role in reconstructing Palestinian identity.

Yet we should refrain from taking these developments as evidence that religious or ethnic identities are bound to overtake national ones in a region purportedly beset by vanishing borders. Despite the seeming predominance of subnational affiliations, the salience of *de jure* nationality – nationality based on legal citizenship – will persist as states increasingly lay claim over the regulating techniques of the politics of movement. More research is therefore needed on the impact of different forms of displacement on the production, contestation and institutionalization of political identities. Previous studies have demonstrated that displacement can consolidate or disperse identity among exiled communities, from so-called refugee warriors to diaspora communities. But

given that civilian displacement *within* countries has become far more prevalent than displacement outside of them, it is critical that researchers focus on more localized patterns of displacement. Is being uprooted within, as opposed to across, state borders less likely to rouse nationalist sentiments? Do different processes of exclusion, assimilation and integration shape identity construction for the internally displaced *via-à-vis* refugees? These questions have profound importance for grasping the impact of population displacement on reordering the Middle East. If the twentieth century was the “century of the refugee,” then the twenty-first is shaping up to be the century of the IDP. Scholars must keep pace with these trends.

Adam Lichtenheld is a PhD student at the University of California, Berkeley, where his research focuses on the use of population displacement as a tool of statecraft, U.N. peacekeeping and the links between displacement, nationalism and violence. He is a contributor to UN Dispatch and serves as a consultant for implementers of USAID and other international development programs.



Lebanon’s national politics in the face of a changing region

By Christiana Parreira, Stanford University

Lebanon’s politics are often characterized as exceptional within the context of the modern Middle East. The weak capacity of the state to facilitate stability or provide basic social welfare has long existed in uneasy tension with Lebanon’s diverse religious composition, in stark contrast to many of its regional counterparts. Yet the last four years have brought about bold challenges to the state strength of a number of other religiously diverse Middle Eastern countries, such as Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. In light of these changes, many of the prevailing frameworks through which scholars view these states deserve to be reexamined

and supplemented. In this sense, we have much to learn from Lebanon – particularly from how coalitions between and cleavages within identity groups and their parties have evolved in response to a rapidly changing region.

Existing literature provides a theoretical framework through which to understand shifts over time in how Lebanon’s often-messy national politics are conducted. Scholars have examined the way in which political cleavage structures, manifested through parties and alliances, represent the culminations of critical periods of

change at the national level that facilitated the heightened saliency of some identities over others. These cleavages carry significance both for governments – specifically, their ability to function and enact policy – and their constituencies.¹ Drawing from these ideas, some have examined the ways in which preexisting institutions and identity-based societal divisions interact to produce political cleavages with tremendous staying power.² Others, in turn, have linked changes in institutional structure to individual-level behavior, allowing for shifts in the dynamics of party politics.³

What can the study of the Lebanese case add to these discussions, and to what end? Central to national political life in Lebanon are its assortment of religious identities and the confessional system (*nidham al-taifyya*) that strategically situates these sects in relation to the state's elected parliament, tripartite executive branch, and bureaucracy. Since its inception, this system has dictated the sectarian framework through which politics are conducted at the local, regional, and national levels in Lebanon – yet, as I intend to demonstrate, alliances and divisions of Lebanese political parties have periodically shifted even as the confessional system remained a relatively stable national institution. The pullout of Syrian troops in 2005 and the start of the 2011 Syrian civil war, in particular, have prompted substantial reformulations of the national party cleavage structure. Most recently, the alignment of Lebanon's political parties into two main groups – March 8 and March 14 – has been complicated by a division between those who support and oppose the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, with Christian parties playing a pivotal role in this recent split. These changes, I argue, can only be fully understood by examining the history of how regional trends interact with domestic political agendas in frequently overlapping, yet also distinct ways.

1 Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, *Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments*. (Toronto: The Free Press, 1967).

2 David Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Change Among the Yoruba*. (Chicago: U. Chicago Press, 1986).

3 Daniel Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*. (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 2005).

The sensitivity of Lebanese party politics to regional trends dates back to the early years of the Republic. By the late 1950s, a number of elites within the Sunni opposition to Maronite President Camille Chamoun adopted the rhetoric of Nasserist Arab nationalism, incited in part by Chamoun's public display of support for the U.S.-sponsored Baghdad Pact. By 1958, tension between those opposing and allying with the president had become violent, with Chamoun and his supporters alleging not only ideological, but also financial ties between the opposition and the newly formed United Arab Republic (U.A.R.). The United States, inferring (somewhat obtusely) from this dynamic an affinity between Lebanese Sunnis, the U.A.R., and the Soviet Union, eventually intervened in the civil conflict, brokering an agreement between the government and the opposition. Yet Sunni opposition at this time converged around a set of domestic concerns, specifically the sense of dispossession felt by that sect as a result of the disproportionate allocation of power to the Maronites by the confessional system. As Michael Johnson points out, ideas derived from regional trends provided a basis by which Muslim opposition parties could demand changes to the distribution of power.⁴

A divide between Lebanon's leftist and conservative camps also interacted with the confessional system in the prewar era. Under successive governments in the 1960s and early 1970s, policy initiatives aimed at addressing rising inequality and urban poverty were continually proposed and stymied, largely by opposition from elites at the local level. These leaders, Tom Najem argues, feared that a stronger state presence would threaten the influence they exercised under a confessional system in which sectarian institutions assumed responsibility for social welfare provision.⁵ Clearer fault lines began to emerge as widespread violence broke out in 1975, with those supporting systemic reform to the confessional system fighting against those committed to preserving the traditional order. The former group united formally under

4 Michael Johnson, *Class and Client in Beirut*. (London: Ithaca Press, 1986).

5 Tom Najem, *Lebanon: Politics of a Penetrated Society*. (New York: Routledge, 2012).

the banner of the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), and the latter largely as the Lebanese Front.

This division, too, was colored by sectarian affiliation, with Sunni Muslims fighting against a system they believed to be biased against them, and Maronites committed to an arrangement that had historically been to their advantage. Shiite Muslims, also disadvantaged by the failure of confessional system to account for national demographic changes, also began organizing around this time.⁶ A 1976 initiative to adjust the proportionality of the confessional system, put forward by then-centrist Lebanese President Suleiman Frangieh, gained some political traction and even received pledges of support from the Syrian government. Yet Syria soon flipped its position, signaling an abrupt shift in stance by sending its own troops to fight on behalf of the Maronite Kataeb Party. As the civil war wore on, the Syrian about-face, the assassination of LNM leader Kamal Jumblatt, and the 1982 Israeli invasion led to the dissolution of the LNM and the splintering of the war into a vast array of identity-based groups. Many of these groups aligned both with and against different members of their own sect, and most were supported in some way by a variety of foreign actors.

The war-ending Taif Agreement of 1990 brought some changes to the confessional system. Slight adjustments to the distribution of parliamentary seats were made, along with the addition to the executive branch of a Shiite speaker of the house, to sit alongside the Sunni prime minister and Christian president. The Taif Agreement's more significant contributions, however, were to allow Hezbollah to continue its existence as an armed force within the country and to institutionalize the indefinite occupation of Lebanon by Syria. Several agreements signed between leaders of the two states in 1991 created further ties between the domestic and foreign goals of Lebanon and Syria, crucially intertwining their intelligence

6 For an assessment of the disparity between the confessional system and Lebanon's demographics, see Rania Maktabi, "The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited: Who Are the Lebanese?" *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, no. 2 (1999).

and defense sectors.⁷ The sectarian parties that emerged from the aftermath of the civil war, many led by the same militiamen who had fought one another over the prior decade, came to dominate Lebanese politics once again.

The 2005 popular movement aimed at ending the Syrian occupation brought broad transformations to the Lebanese political order. Following the successful removal of Syrian forces from the country, the now ubiquitous March 8 and March 14 Alliances – both named after the dates of mass protests organized by coalition leaders for and against the Syrian presence in Lebanon, respectively – came to dominate national party politics, with sectarian groups filing into one camp or the other. The division between the Hezbollah-dominated March 8 coalition and the Future Movement-led March 14 camp was solidified by the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah and a 2008 power struggle between the two parties.

The bifurcated nature of party politics in the post-occupation era has been at once strengthened and complicated by the ongoing conflict in Syria. Since 2011, the March 14 and March 8 Alliances have divided along coalition lines into respectively anti- and pro-Assad regime stances, with assassinations and targeted bombings associated with both sides of the Syrian conflict drawing forceful statements from political elites. Hezbollah has professed its support for the Assad regime and called for a negotiated solution, while Future Movement leader Saad Hariri has publicly referred to the Syrian president as "a monster"⁸ and called for his removal. At the popular level, the northern port city of Tripoli has at times become a microcosm of the conflict occurring in Syria, with violence playing out on multiple occasions between the city's Sunni and Alawite neighborhoods.⁹

7 Bassel Salloukh, "Syria and Lebanon: A Brotherhood Transformed." *Middle East Report*, no. 236 (2005).

8 Diab Youssef, "Hariri on Syria Arrest Warrants: Assad a Monster," *The Daily Star*, December 12, 2012.

9 For some coverage of this conflict, see Damien Cave, "Syrian War Plays Out Along a Street in Lebanon," *The New York Times*, August 24, 2012 and Josh Wood, "Sectarian Conflict Kills at Least 17 in Northern Lebanon in Spillover of Syrian Civil War," *The New York Times*, December 10, 2012.

Under these circumstances, non-Muslim parties under the umbrellas of both camps have come to occupy somewhat uncertain, often confusing, and critically important ground. The Christian-majority Lebanese Forces remain under the banner of March 14 with their leader, Samir Geagea, professing vehement opposition to the Assad regime, having fought the occupation in past decades. Meanwhile, the officially secular yet Christian-dominated Free Patriotic Movement aligns itself with the March 8 Alliance and supports Assad despite its leadership by Michel Aoun, who conducted a final stand against the Syrian regime's occupation of Lebanon in the final years of the civil war. Finally, in 2011, Walid Jumblatt's Druze-dominated Progressive Socialist Party, linked to Syria in the 1990s, split from the March 14 Alliance in favor of March 8 despite its leader's professed opposition to the Assad regime. Yet in an interview later that year, Jumblatt declared, "I'm not a part of March 8. I'm a part of the alliance," adding further confusion to his party's stance in relation to Syria.¹⁰

Opinion at the level of Lebanon's national political elite within Christian groups, then, appears divided and tenuous. The effects of this added noise introduced into the government's bifurcated party system have yet to manifest fully, particularly as the national parliament continues to

exist in near-total paralysis. Some observers have begun to express frustration at how the hegemony of the March 14 and March 8 blocs limits the terms of substantive political discourse.¹¹ This is in no way to suggest that splits within Lebanon's Christian population are new – over the course of the civil war, the community became highly polarized, culminating in a split over whether or not to support the terms of the Taif Agreement. Rather, this recent shift supports the notion that splits along party lines within identity groups have consistently surfaced during critical moments of domestic or regional change – and that these divisions often reshape the framework through which national policymaking is conducted.

Though confessionalism plays a critical role in determining the consistently sectarian nature of party politics in Lebanon, the structure of alliances and divisions between political parties has proven malleable at critical national and regional junctures. Through understanding the patterns underlying these changes, scholars can work toward developing a fuller understanding of the remarkable dynamism of national politics in both Lebanon and the region in which it is situated.

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10 Josh Wood, "Syrian Uprising Spills Over Into Lebanon's Raucous Political Scene." *The New York Times*, November 30, 2011.

11 For an eloquent framing of these frustrations, see Maya Mikdashi, "The Space Between: March 14, March 8 and a Politics of Dissent." *Jadaliyya.com*, August 6, 2011.

Remembering Failed States in the Middle East

By David Siddhartha Patel, Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University

In mid-November 2011, four weeks after the fall of the Moammar Gaddafi regime, residents of Msallata, Libya celebrated the 93rd anniversary of the proclamation of independence of the Tripolitanian Republic. They marched in the streets and listened to stories about the founding in 1918 of the first republic in the modern Middle East: *al-Jumhuriya al-Trabulsiya*. Although that state survived only a few years, until 1923, these commemorations suggest that “memories of stateness” have lasted much longer. Similarly, on June 1, 2013 in eastern Libya, Ahmed al-Senussi declared Cyrenaica to be a “self-governing region,” echoing his great-uncle King Idris’s declaration of independence of the Emirate of Cyrenaica on June 1, 1949.

The central government of Libya is weak: When Prime Minister Ali Zeidan was seized from a hotel in the capital in 2013 by a rebel militia, another rebel militia purportedly freed him. Many analysts speculate that Libya could break up, either de facto or de jure. If it does, could memories of the Tripolitanian Republic and the Emirate of Cyrenaica provide bases for new political communities? Arab notables from the coast, tribal chieftans from the hinterland, and Berbers from the Nafusa Mountains came together to form a republic in 1918. Could memories – real or invented – and the flags of those defunct states unite tribes and factions today?

These two “Libyan” states are not the only inchoate polities that vanished from the map of the modern Middle East and North Africa. Depending on criteria, between 29 and 62 autonomous territorial polities that existed in the region after 1914 have disappeared, most often by being absorbed into or conquered by other states. Only a few of these “failed states” have received focused attention from scholars, such as Joshua Teitelbaum’s study of the Kingdom of the Hijaz, Madawi Al-Rasheed’s history of the Emirate of Jabal Shammar, Graham H. Stuart’s account of the city-state of Tangier, and Anne K. Bang’s thesis on

the the Idrisi State of Asir.¹ As far as I know, no one has attempted a comprehensive study of them as a group.

My new book project studies and compares these failed states.² I am interested not just in how they came to be and how they died, but I also propose to document and study how they are remembered today by residents of the Middle East and the ways in which political entrepreneurs could use their histories and symbols for mobilization. If Syria, Iraq, and Libya break up because of unrest, might the past – the failed states of the past – shape the future map of the Middle East?

This memo describes several parts of my book project and is organized into three sections: 1) identifying the universe of these failed states and presenting some descriptive findings; 2) briefly discussing my plans to compare “polities that passed” to states that survived; and 3) suggesting ways to explore “memories of stateness” today.

Part I: The universe of failed states

The first step in this project is to identify the full universe of states that have failed in the Middle East since 1914. As far as I know, I am the first to attempt this. I have identified a minimum of 29 and up to 62 such territorially-based polities, depending on how I code various sultanates,

1 Teitelbaum, Joshua. 2001. *The Rise and Fall of the Hashimite Kingdom of Arabia*. New York: New York University Press. Al-Rasheed, Madawi. 1991. *Politics in an Arabian Oasis: The Rashidi Tribal Dynasty*. New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Stuart, Graham H. 1955. *The International City of Tangier*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bang, Anne K. 1996. *The Idrisi State in Asir, 1906-1934: Politics, Religion, and Personal Prestige as Statebuilding Factors in Early Twentieth-Century Arabia*. Bergen: Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies.

2 If I cannot reappropriate the term “failed state,” I might call them “states that failed” or “polities that passed.” I am trying to avoid referring to them as “dead” states because part of the project explores the extent to which they continue to survive through memory and the conditions under which they might be revived.

federations, and states that existed in South Yemen under British protection.

International relations scholars typically define “stateness” in terms of membership in international organizations or recognition by great powers.³ This operationalization misses almost all of the inchoate states in the Middle East. Instead, I employ a modified version of Scott Abramson’s neo-Weberian definition of a state, which emphasizes domestic capacity, including a quasi-monopoly of violence over a fixed territory.⁴ Norman Davies’s 2012 study of European polities that vanished identifies five mechanisms of death: implosion, conquest, merger, liquidation, and “infant mortality.” I adapt his coding scheme.⁵

A few preliminary observations from the dataset:

1. Polities died in every decade from the 1920s to the 1970s, and new polities continued to emerge through the 1950s. The map of the Middle East was not set at the San Remo Conference.
2. Of the 19 extant states in the MENA, 10 contain the territory of at least one failed state.
3. States failed throughout the region, not in a single sub-region.
4. States failed in areas influenced by the British, French, Spanish, and no colonial power.
5. The IR literature on state death tends to focus on

3 See Correlates of War Project. 2011. “State System Membership List, v2011.” Online, <http://correlatesofwar.org>. The COW project defines membership in the international system after 1920 as membership in the League of Nations or United Nations or a population of 500,000 or more and establishment of diplomatic missions from any two major powers. And see Fazal, Tanisha. 2007. *State Death: The Politics of Geography and Conquest, Occupation and Annexation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 14-17.

4 Abramson created a dataset of European states from 1100-1789. Abramson, Scott. 2013. “The Economic Origins of the Territorial State.” Unpublished Manuscript. Princeton University.

5 Davies, Norman. 2012. *Vanished Kingdoms: The Rise and Fall of States and Nations*. New York: Viking.

conquest and overlook cases of collective abdication.⁶ Both causes of death occur among states in my dataset.

6. Many (arguably, most) states in the MENA perished by voluntarily merging with others.
7. No MENA states died via implosion or violent dissolution. There is no regional precedent like the Soviet Union, Federation of Yugoslavia, or Austro-Hungarian Empire.
8. Iraq possesses only one failed state within its borders: the Kingdom of Kurdistan, a city-state that existed in Sulaymaniyah from around 1921 to 1924. Iraq has no reservoir of substate “memories of stateness” for Arab Sunnis or Shiites to draw upon in the event of partition. In contrast, Syria and Libya do.

I am creating a geographic information system (GIS) to map and visualize these failed states, as well as collecting a variety of information about them. Using GIS in this way helps us see where these states existed and the extent to which their borders reflect current national identity contestations. How did these states come to exist? How many pre-date the arrival of colonial powers, how many were created by colonial powers, and how many were indigenous attempts to resist colonialism? To what extent did their boundaries and membership cross linguistic, tribal, and sectarian boundaries? Once I map these states, I will be able to analyze the extent to which their actual or claimed borders are coterminous with the international and subnational borders of today’s states. One question I will answer is the extent to which these failed states continue to determine subnational demarcations. Is the purported weakness of national identity in the Middle East today partly a legacy of early state formation and dissolution?

6 On conquest see Fazal, 2007. On collective abdication see Ermakoff, Ivan. 2008. *Ruling Oneself Out: A Theory of Collective Abdications*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Part II: Comparing failed states to extant states

Charles Tilly and several other scholars have observed that to fully understand the process of state formation, we cannot focus only on states that survived but must also consider those that did not. This part of my project matches and compares a sample of failed polities to extant states to identify factors that might account for why some autonomous polities survived (e.g., the Emirate of Transjordan, later the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan) and others (e.g., the Kingdom of the Hijaz, 1916-25) did not. A tremendous amount of literature focuses on state-building in existing states, such as Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq. Some scholars occasionally compare those states to one another. But no one asks if we can learn about state-formation by comparing Kuwait with Hatay State (1937-39).⁷ Although they seem like an unlikely pair, both Kuwait and Hatay were new coastal states with high linguistic and religious diversity and large and powerful neighbors who sought to annex them.⁸ Why did Kuwait's diverse population (Arab and Persian, Sunni and Shiite) unify to fend off Saudi irredentism at the Battle of Jahra in 1920 while Hatay's population split along linguistic lines, facilitating annexation by Turkey in 1939? These questions are relevant to the contemporary Middle East and of interest to political scientists, as well as historians.

Part III: “Memories of stateness”

Figure 1 presents two images from Western media of how civil unrest might lead to a redrawing of the map of the Middle East. The map on the left, which appeared on the cover of *The Atlantic* in early 2008, depicts more than a dozen changes to the region's borders and regimes. Some new states have no precedent as independent polities, such as a unified Kurdistan or the partition of Iraq into Sunni and Shiite states. In Syria, however, several autonomous polities that existed during the French mandate reemerge as independent states with similar borders and flags:

7 The one exception to this is the tendency of histories of Saudi Arabia to briefly explain why the Al Saud defeated the Al Rasheed. See, for example, Al-Rasheed, Madawi. 1992. “Durable and Non-Durable Dynasties: The Rashidis and Saudis in Central Arabia.” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 19, 2:144–58.

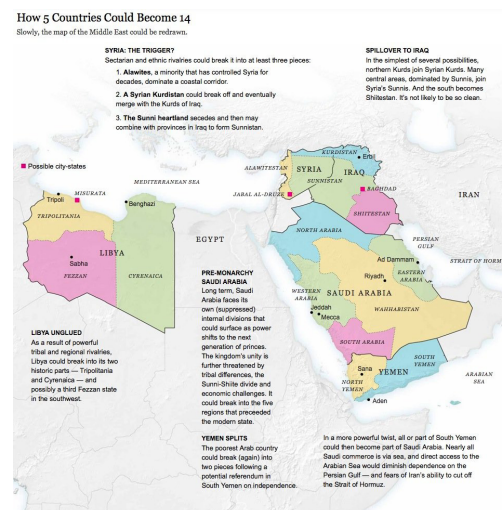
8 Britain had to come to the defense of Kuwait in 1899, 1901, 1914, 1920, 1928, and 1961. Not to mention 1991...

“Druzistan” is Jabal Druze (1922-36, 1939-42; a.k.a. State of Suwayda), and “the Alawite Republic” reflects the historic Alawite State (1920-1922, 1924-36, 1939-42; a.k.a. Government of Latakia). The map on the right, which accompanied a piece by Robin Wright in *The New York Times*, does not depict the “reemergence” of states that failed from Syria, but it shows Libya and Saudi Arabia breaking apart largely along the lines of states that existed before those countries were unified by Idris and Ibn Saud's Ikhwan respectively.

Figure 1: Redrawing the map of the Middle East



Source: *The Atlantic*, January/February 2008



THE NEW YORK TIMES ANALYSIS BY ROBIN WRIGHT

Source: Robin Wright, “Imagining a Remapped Middle East,” *The New York Times*, Sept 28, 2013

Scholars know little about how states that failed are remembered by residents of the contemporary Middle East, and little useful theory exists that would allow us to deductively restrict the conditions under which political entrepreneurs could use or invent symbols of those states to successfully mobilize populations. I propose to study the ways in which a subset of these states are remembered.

In my preliminary work I have focused on how Kurds “remember” the short-lived Republic of Mahabad (1946), also sometimes referred to as the Republic of Kurdistan. Memories of Mahabad resonate far beyond Iranian Kurdistan. They heavily shaped the organization of the Kurdish Peshmerga and the worldview of Iraqi Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani, who served as Mahabad’s Minister of Defense. His son, Massoud Barzani, was born there and referred to the state as “an ideal time and place to be born a Kurd.”⁹ The Mahabad flag remains the flag flown in Iraqi Kurdistan. Chwar Chra Square – where the Republic was proclaimed and where its founder, Qazi Muhammad, was hung – remains a powerful shared symbol among Kurds (not coincidentally, a major hotel in Erbil/Hawler is the ChwarChra Hotel). As Syrian Kurdish parties form a transitional administration to run Kurdish-majority areas in northeast Syria and coordinate with Kurds in Turkey and Iraq, the history and symbols of the Republic of Mahabad might be useful in the creation of a shared sense of identity. I speculate that a reliance on those shared pan-Kurdish symbols will make it more difficult for Kurds to credibly signal to the Turkish and Iraqi governments that they will not seek greater unification. Similarly, I am trying to track if and how Syrian Druze invoke the history of the state of Jabal Druze in their self-governance efforts. The flag of Jabal Druze has begun to appear with Druze military units serving in Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s army. If the Assad regime crumbles, I would not be surprised to see the rediscovery of the Alawite State’s flag and symbols as Alawites retrench to the coastal governorates of Latakia and Tartus. Examples from Libya began this memo. I will use online sources to track the “revival” of symbols and memories of failed states.

9 Barzani, Massoud. 1997. “An Ideal Time and Place to be Born a Kurd.” *The International Journal of Kurdish Studies* 11, 1-2:49-52.

I think this project will challenge conventional understandings of how current conflicts might reshape the map of the contemporary Middle East. It should also reshape the state-building literature by demonstrating the extent to which existing scholarship truncates the dependent variable. To understand states that survived, we need to examine those that did not.

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From Jim Crow to ‘Gentlemen’s Agreement’: The legal and soft barriers to equality and integration of citizen-Palestinians in Israel

By Gershon Shafir, University of California, San Diego

Introduction:

For the first two decades after 1948, most members of the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel lived under a military government that regulated their freedom of movement and enforced legalized barriers that prevented their free access to land and to employment in the Jewish-run economy. These legal barriers then came down one at a time: In 1959 the exclusion from the Histadrut labor union ended, the military government was abolished in 1965, and exclusion in land allocation was struck down by the Supreme Court of Israel in 2000. It seemed that an exclusionary ethno-national citizenship was giving way to a liberal citizenship framework that would encompass both Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel. Nevertheless, citizen-Palestinians, who currently make up about 20 percent of Israel’s population, remain poorer, less-educated, and concentrated at the lower rungs of the occupational hierarchy. The government appointed Or Commission of August 2003, concluded that: “Israel’s Arab citizens live in a reality in which they are discriminated against as Arabs.”

During the years of Oslo process, parallel with negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin also undertook efforts to begin to remedy systemic discrimination against citizen-Palestinians. These were years of “unparalleled openness” in Yousef T. Jabareen’s words, expressed through expanded budgets and the Supreme Court decision mentioned above. However, with the decline and collapse of the hopes for a peace accord, Israel has taken a turn toward a more nationalist and ethnocentric citizenship discourse. The older legal barriers have been, in part, replaced by softer barriers. Since the 2009 legislative elections there has been a discernible backlash against the expanding liberal citizenship discourse that was expressed in attempts, such as the proposed “Nation-State Law” of late 2014, to reconstruct legal barriers as well.

Even so, the attempt to close the socio-economic gaps have not completely abated on the governmental level and new integrative initiatives have been put forth by the internationally-oriented parts of the private sector.

This goal of this research project is not to record the massive disparities in the socio-economic status of Israel’s Jewish and Palestinian Arab citizens; these are well documented. Nor it is to evaluate the relative effect of the social structure of Palestinian Arab communities versus official discrimination in maintaining these disparities; a great deal of work has been done on such comparisons as well. My goal is to identify and inquire into the concrete mechanisms that maintain the exclusion of and discrimination against Israel’s Palestinian citizens even in the absence of legalized segregation and exclusion. Some of these mechanisms use republican virtue, others ethno-national, and ironically even liberal, neo-liberal, and multi-cultural citizenship incorporation to achieve exclusion. My hypothesis is that soft barriers, especially of the recent local (regional and municipal) and consumer-based variety, emerge with the termination of state-level boycotts and legal barriers but produce similar results to the earlier legal exclusions. What was Jim Crow now becomes a so-called “Gentlemen’s Agreement,” though *plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose* (the more it changes, the more it stays the same).

Barriers to Land:

One of the most significant barriers has been the exclusion of Palestinians from public land that was owned or run on behalf of the pre-state colonizatory bodies, the Jewish National Fund (JNF) and the Jewish Agency, and by the Israel Land Authority (ILA). Palestinian citizens are, therefore, unable to purchase or lease land on around 80 percent of Israel’s territory on the basis of their nationality.

The Qaadans, a citizen-Palestinian couple, petitioned the

Supreme Court in 1995 to intercede on their behalf after the ILA refused to lease them land in Katzir, a “community settlement” established by the Jewish Agency. In a path-breaking decision in March 2000, the Supreme Court, led by Court President Aharon Barak, determined that it was illegal for the state to discriminate between its Jewish and Arab citizens in the allocation of land, even when that discrimination was affected indirectly, through Jewish “national institutions” (the Jewish Agency in this case). The ethno-national Zionist interest in “Judaizing” various regions of the country, Barak ruled, could not overcome the liberal principle of equality and, in effect, affirmed the distinction between the national and private spheres. The court pursued an integrationist approach, asserting that “a policy of ‘separate but equal’ is by its very nature unequal ... [because] separation denigrates the excluded minority group.” Even so, the court did not hand down a principled but only an ad hoc ruling, instructing the ILA to reconsider its previous decision.

There were several, but interconnected, responses to the Supreme Court Decision which, for all practical purposes replaced the legal barrier with a soft one. In a meeting of the representatives of agencies in charge of land policy, the ILA’s director general argued that “if the JNF land cannot contribute to the [state’s] Jewish character, then it shall be [done through] the structure of settlements’ Admission Committees.” These Admission Committees were first established in 1989 and tasked with admitting only individuals suitable for a communal life style. Committee members are drawn from the settlement’s founders, the regional council, and the Jewish Agency. In 2005, it was decided that the committee would remain in operation not only until it has 150 but 400 families per locale, thus approving large numbers of Jewish families before throwing the community open to Arab families. Such Admission Committees operate in 695 locales, which account for 68.5 percent of Israeli towns and 85 percent of villages.

Landed Barriers to Employment and Benefits:

A standing aim of Israeli policy has been enhanced state control of areas within the 1949 Green Line boundaries

by increasing their Jewish population. For a long time this policy was carried out by the construction of new towns along Israel’s borders and the direction of waves of immigrants to them.

Since February 1998, Israeli governments have provided priority and subsidies in housing, development, educational, cultural, sport, and environmental protection funds through its relevant ministries to communities designated as National Priority Areas (NPA) on the basis of three criteria: 1) geographic distance from the center of the country, 2) location in ‘friction zones,’ and 2) low socio-economic ranking. The NPA designation is a “main channel for allocating additional resources” to local communities. This list is regularly revised and updated.

In 2006, Justice Barak’s Supreme Court rejected the use of geographical criterion for the designation of NPA, which had been employed to provide such status to some 550 Jewish and four Arab communities. The Court rejected the criterion because it “is contaminated by one of the most suspect distinctions, which is distinction based on race and nationality.” On July 14, 2009, the Law for Enhanced Economic Efficiency introduced a new mix of criteria, including the enhancement of the state’s social-security immunity (*khosen*). Though, the new law established whole geographical regions as NPAs areas – within which 40 percent of the population lived in Arab communities – it simultaneously decided that individual ministers have exclusive jurisdiction to decide whether a community located within a NPA region will, in fact, be entitled to the corresponding benefits. In effect, the new law separated the classification of a community as a NPA from the allocation of benefits to it by muddying the selections process.

Barriers to Employment:

Another powerful but less visible barrier to equality and integration is the use of security, in particular military service criteria, to award benefits to individual citizens in a way that excludes Arab citizens. This is commonly a two step-exclusion: In the first stage, most Palestinian citizens

are exempted from military service and, in a second stage, they are found ineligible for benefits allocated to veterans. These benefits have to be earned and are available only to those who, according to a republican virtue tradition of citizenship, attend to the common good which, however, is defined in terms of ethno-nationalist citizenship.

Military service is viewed as a broad filter of trust, rather than a qualification required for the performance of many jobs. Israel's internal security service, the Shin Beit, has to provide security clearance to employees in the public sector, however the criteria for determining appropriate security fit remain covert. In the past, the Electric Company, the Telephone Company (Bezek), and the Airport Authority have rejected Arab applicants for security reasons, using national origin as a proxy for security clearance instead of examining the suitability of individual candidates.

Veterans enjoy preferential treatment under the 1994 Absorption of Veterans Law that authorizes universities to prioritize veterans in the allocation of university dorms and other benefits. Similarly, the Ministry of Construction and Housing uses among its criteria for loans and grants to new couples not only length of marriage, number of siblings, number of children, and location of the home, but also the duration of each spouse's military service. Since the ministry's declared goal is to help the socio-economically disadvantaged, military service is an arbitrary criterion of allocation.

Israel has forbade discrimination by its Labor Exchanges since 1959. In 1981 it legislated an Equal Employment Opportunity Law, and in 2008 Israel established the Equal Employment Opportunity Authority to enforce existing legislation. Even so, only 2 to 4 percent of the complaints that reach the Authority seek remedy for discrimination based on national origin and only a handful of these have yielded results in favor of the plaintiff. The reason is that they focus on single instances rather than on the structural causes of discrimination, which require structural remedies.

Between 1992 and 1995, when Rabin was prime minister,

policies were instituted to reduce Jewish-Arab socio-economic gaps. These efforts are still continuing. In the past decade and half, several affirmative action programs to build industrial parks and foster vocation training, have been enacted in response to the Or Commission Report's criticism. Though some progress has been made, only a portion of the new budgets were expanded. Plans to increase participation in the public sector, by setting designated target rates for both Arab men and women, have also not been very effective. Since 2007 there have been several private sector initiatives to promote the integration of Arab college graduates into the private sector and create high-tech hubs in Arab municipalities. Though there have been notable individual successes, it is difficult to assess how effective these programs have been and how they stack up against the legal and soft barriers examined here.

Other, more recent soft, but hard-edged barriers, are put up by agents or social movements that actively seek to promote employment discrimination against citizen-Palestinians. These range from calls by Rabbi Chaim Kenievsky on other yeshivot to fire Arab employees after a bombing in Yeshivat Harav to Rabbi Dov Lior's injunction not to employ Arabs or rent them housing as ways of fighting against terrorism. More recently, local movements, such as Hebrew Labor discourage the employment of Palestinian Arabs in Jewish-owned shops, while others, such as Lehava seeks to halt intermarriage to prevent 'assimilation,' and some of its members firebombed an Arab-Jewish school.

Conclusion:

It seems that legal and soft barriers, as well as practically every citizenship framework, can, and have, been used to discourage or prevent equality or integration of citizen-Palestinians into Israeli society. Maintaining separation, through a top-down centralized national Ministry of Education plays an important role in upholding an ethno-nationalist citizenship framework and thus makes discrimination easier through differential allocation of resources. Frequently, exclusion and differentiation are

based on a notion of republic citizenship that rewards contribution to the common good. And more recent decentralized, community-level, multiculturalist policies, allow for closing of Jewish communities to Arabs who wish to live in mixed towns.

The rulings of the liberal Barak Supreme Court have done the most to break the legal barriers to integration. It would seem that a liberal citizenship incorporation framework, which uses neutral, individual criteria would be immune to, and maybe itself be a barrier to discrimination. In fact, the transition in Israel to a neo-liberal, though frequently monopolistic, economy led to a particularly high poverty rate of 19.8 percent compared to OECD states, second only to Mexico, above the 17.4 percent of the US, and certainly above the OECD average of 11.1 percent for 2010. Over time, Israel's poverty has risen at differential rates: from 18 percent in 2002 to 20 percent in 2011, but among Jews the rise was from 13.9 percent to 14.1 percent while among Arabs it was especially large, from 47.6 percent to 53.5 percent. A weak welfare state is particularly punishing for lower-class minorities.

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Which borders will states fight for?

By Nadav Shelef, University of Wisconsin-Madison

This piece appeared on The Monkey Cage on May 18, 2015.

The Islamic State's very graphic attempt to redraw borders in the Middle East has understandably drawn significant attention. This effort, however, is only one of a number of attempts to reshape borders in the region. Although the location of the border between Israel and Palestine (and Israel's other neighbors) are the most commonly explored cases, since World War II border-reshaping projects have taken place in Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, the former United Arab Republic, Algeria, Iraq and Yemen, among others. Yet, projects to reshape state borders are not uniquely, or even primarily, a Middle Eastern phenomenon. Of all new borders drawn since World War II – excluding borders drawn as the result of decolonization – 88 percent lie outside the Middle East.

Given the recurring attempts to end conflict by dividing territory and the consistent finding that conflicts over territory are especially long, brutal and destructive, what is the likely impact of border reordering projects? My recent research, forthcoming in *International Organization*, finds that the link between territorial division and international conflict is mediated by the ideological meaning populations invest in the divided territory. Where populations believe territory that is newly located on the other side of an international border is appropriately part of their national homeland, violent international conflict is significantly more likely. Conversely, where and when states lose territory that is excluded from the scope of the national homeland, international conflict is less likely. Not all territory, in other words, is equal ground.

This research understands homelands to be products of nationalist political projects rather than objectively given realities. Yet, regardless of the reason for the identification of a particular parcel as the “home”land, once defined as such, the territory in question is transformed into an indispensable part of the nation's self-identity and control

of it becomes the sine qua non of national existence. This is not to say that the definition of homelands cannot change. They can.

There are a number of pathways through which the application of homeland territoriality to a specific parcel could increase international conflict. As Benjamin Miller has argued, the existence of homeland territory outside a nation-state's borders is likely to increase the domestic appeal of territorially revisionist forces because it provides a substantive issue for war and makes it easier for leaders to initiate international conflict as a way of diverting attention from domestic political challenges.

Relatedly, the successful application of homeland territoriality to territory may be part of what renders it apparently indivisible. Since populations that lost parts of their homeland are more likely to reject the legitimacy of the territorial status quo, they may be more likely to use force to change it if given the ability and opportunity to do so. Their irredentism, in turn, threatens the territorial integrity of their neighbors and intensifies the security dilemma in the region, making violent conflict even more likely. Finally, the centrality of homelands in nationalist thinking also makes homelands a likely focal point for collective action. This means that the loss of homeland territory would lower the barrier to violent collective action by acting as a focal point that leads members of a nation to believe that others would act with them if they seek its return.

Fully exploring these plausible mechanisms, however, requires a prior demonstration that homelands, despite their socially constructed and apparently ethereal character, do have an independent impact on international conflict. To date, this has been not been demonstrated because of the persistent gap between the realist and materialist measures frequently used to identify “homelands” and the constructivist underpinnings of the

intuition that homeland territory plays a different role than non-homeland territory in conflict. To address this gap, I developed an operationalization of the “homeland” status of a territory that is based on domestic discourse about land. Since this is a constructivist measure that operationalizes the way theories of nationalism understand homelands, it enables a sincere test of the constructivist expectation that losing homeland territory would lead to more conflict than losing non-homeland territory.

This measure of the homeland status of territory is based on the observation that nationalists sanctify the area that they consider to be their homeland and commonly use different language to speak of homeland and non-homeland territories. The rhetorical differences between how homeland and non-homeland territories are spoken of generate an instantly recognizable logo that penetrates the popular imagination and forms a powerful emblem for the nation. It also makes determining a territory’s homeland status for a given population possible. A discourse-based measure of the homeland status of territory also has the advantage of delinking homeland status from other dimensions of nationalism (most prominently ethnicity) and allowing the homeland status of particular territories to vary over time and within a nation.

I used the domestic discourse about territory captured by the U.S. government’s Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) to identify the homeland status of territory in the case of every new international border drawn between 1945 and 1996 – excluding cases of decolonization. As a source, FBIS has three main advantages: 1) it systematically transcribed open source news broadcasts from almost every country (it excludes Canada, the United States, Eritrea, Zanzibar, Tanganyika and the Seychelles) during this period; 2) its records are searchable by keyword; and 3) it translates all foreign news broadcasts into English. Because it provides reasonable access to how actors in nearly every case where a new border was drawn since 1945 talked about the land on the other side of this new border, discourse about territory captured by FBIS provides a feasible and theoretically consistent proxy for identifying areas that the relevant

populations consider part of their homeland.

Following the insight that discourse about homeland territory would differ from discourse about non-homeland territory, I coded land on the other side of a new international border as homeland territory if states, state executives or the leaders of political organizations in the state newly excluded from that territory flagged it as part of their homeland. Specifically, I coded territory as homeland territory if these actors lamented its loss as a loss of part of the “homeland,” “fatherland” or “motherland,” if they called for its “unification” or “reunification” with the metropole, if they described the territorial division in invidious terms as a “partition” or an “amputation” or if they described the presence of another state on that territory as an “occupation.” In each case, I conducted a search for the name or names, along with alternative transliterations, of the territory in question, as well as of major cities or significant historical sites in those territories, and of the border itself, to capture as much discourse about that territory as possible.

Coding the homeland status of divided territory in this way reveals significant variation in both the homeland status of adjacent territory that is lost and in the presence of international conflict. Violent international conflict following the drawing of a new international border occurred 43 percent of the time when homelands were not truncated, but 61 percent of the time when they were. The pattern persists for wars, with dyadic wars following the drawing of new international borders occurring 7 percent of the time when homelands were not truncated, but 19 percent of the time when they were.

Further analysis shows that the role of losing homeland territory in triggering violent international conflict persists even after controlling for other elements that could potentially account for the presence of homeland discourse about a territory and for conflict. These other elements include prior conflict, the presence of co-ethnics on the other side of the border, the economic value of the territory, the militarily strategic value of the territory, the regime type of the states facing each other, whether

those states are allies and their relative military and economic capabilities. Changing the character of a new border from one that does not divide homelands to one that does – while holding all these other variables at their mean – is associated with a roughly 20 percent increase in the probability of violent international conflict and an 11 percent increase in the probability of a war between the states on either side of the border.

So what does this mean? First, while the results of this study confirm the repeated finding that territory plays a significant role in international conflict, they suggest that not all territory is equally important. Rather, territory that is defined by a group's nationalism as part of the homeland is especially conflict prone. These results raise the possibility that the commonly observed relationship between territory and conflict may be driven by a subset of territorial disputes – those over homelands – rather than by territory, per se. In policy terms, the finding that

dividing homelands tends to lead to additional conflict should, at the very least, be taken into account when territorial partitions are considered as potential solutions to international conflict.

Second, the beliefs of populations about the extent of their homelands are at least as important as material reality in shaping the likelihood of international conflict. This research provides a template for how such ideological constructs could be integrated into systematic, quantitative studies of international conflict while maintaining fidelity to the constructivist theories that identify ideology as a relevant variable.

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Whose Colonialism? The Contested Memory of the Sykes-Picot Agreement

By Meghan Tinsley, Boston University

In memory of Daryl Carr.

The violent emergence of Daesh¹ in Middle Eastern geopolitics has brought unprecedented attention to the Sykes-Picot Agreement². Yet since June 2014, this notorious Anglo-French agreement has proven open to interpretation, as competing actors have referenced early twentieth-century history in support of particular national configurations. The exploitation of Sykes-Picot by various stakeholders—nationalist and pan-Arabist, religious and secular, Middle Eastern and European—demonstrates the importance of memory in establishing the legitimacy of

national borders. A content analysis of Daesh propaganda videos, eleven Middle Eastern newspapers, and eight British and French newspapers illuminates the place that each nationalist narrative affords to the past.

Nations and Nationalism

Nationalism is understood here as a modern ideal that originated in Western Europe, gained international credibility as an intellectual concept in the twentieth century, and is now widely associated with the fundamental right of groups to pursue self-determination

through statehood (Calhoun 1993; Tilly 1990). The nationalism of every society is constructed discursively, by actors with competing interests and unevenly distributed power (Zubrzycki 2010:514). Further, nationalism takes on numerous meanings, and holds varying degrees of legitimacy, as it is imposed, or interpreted, in regions beyond Western Europe. Thus, a major goal of nationalists is to unify their fragmented constituencies politically and/or culturally (Hayes 1960; Kedourie 1960; Weber 1976). To that end, memory plays a powerful role.

Memory and the Usable Past

The relationship of a political actor to the past is shaped by the actor's goals in the present (Filler 1947). To that end, governments, advocates, and dissidents identify a "usable past" as the basis for a particular set of knowledge, beliefs, sympathies, and judgments (Moeller 2001; Warner 1975[1959]). A particular event may be remembered, forgotten, or reinterpreted in order to grant legitimacy to a new actor. In each case, the usable past either appeals to or undermines the collective memory (Kertzer 1989; Mamdani 1996; Rich 1988). The contested character of memory—and, by extension, of nationalism—within and across societies is evident with regard to the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

Daesh

On June 29, 2014, Daesh released a fifteen-minute English-language propaganda video, entitled "The End of Sykes-Picot." Along with its Arabic-language counterpart, "Kaser al Hudud" ("The Breaking of the Borders"), the video depicts bulldozers destroying the earthen wall between Iraq and Syria, symbolically creating a single country. Enjoying unprecedented international media attention, Daesh chose this action as the focal point of its propaganda campaign (the videos were supplemented with a photo campaign called "Smashing the Sykes-Picot Border" and a Twitter hashtag, #SykesPicotOver). By this point, Daesh was active in both Iraq and Syria, and had captured Mosul and Tikrit, yet its most widely disseminated propaganda campaign to date chose to highlight the destruction of

the border. In "Kaser al Hudud", one militant provides an explanation:

"Alhamdulillah. Today we are happy to participate in destroying the borders placed by the tawaghit to prevent the Muslims from traveling in their lands. The tawaghit broke up the Islamic Khilafah and made it into countries like Syria and Iraq, ruled by man-made laws. Alhamdulillah, Allah blessed the mujahidin with destruction of these borders. . . Alhamdulillah, today we begin the final stage after the Ummah was divided. . . Their plot was to divide and conquer. That is what they had done with us."

For Daesh, the Sykes-Picot Agreement represents the fragmentation of the Middle East, which, further, represents the division of the global Muslim community and the imposition of the secular nation-state. By extension, the destruction of the border represents the reunification of the Muslim world under the rule of God. Sykes-Picot stands in for the ensemble of early twentieth-century decisions regarding the national borders of the Middle East, just as its signatories stand in for all Westerners who have intervened in the Middle East historically.

As the voice-over proclaims in "Kaser al Hudud", "The ember of jihad was lit, the Crusade campaign was broken, and the Islamic State was established despite the villainous. America left in humiliation, dragging behind it tails of failure, while broken and defeated. It left the map for the Islamic State to redraw the world in accordance with the methodology of the prophetic Khilafah." Here, the Sykes-Picot border is equated with European Christian Crusades and the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq. The significance of the Sykes-Picot Agreement is thus symbolic as well as geopolitical for Daesh: it provides a tangible line that stands in for centuries of abstract affronts.

Middle Eastern Media³

The Syrian government historically has condemned the Sykes-Picot Agreement and supported the inclusion of

Lebanon within Syria. However, since the rise of Daesh, Syrian President Bashar al Assad—along with former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki, and current Prime Minister Haider al Abadi—has been silent regarding the Agreement. Yet popular print media across the Middle East has actively participated in the conversation surrounding “The End of Sykes-Picot”.

The media’s perspectives are multifaceted; however, some common threads can be identified. Mainstream papers reject the Daesh narrative that advocates destroying national borders (even if they acknowledge that Daesh is succeeding), and typically argue for maintaining the existing borders. Yet given that the sources include government mouthpieces, supporters of pan-Arabism, and one Israeli paper, justifications for this stance are unsurprisingly eclectic. Journalists offer one of three general perspectives: first, some argue that the Sykes-Picot borders have gained legitimacy since 1916 through the consent and lived experiences of the local population, and through the sanctions of international organizations (“Despite Jihadist Drive, Mideast Colonial Borders Seem Intact”, *Daily Star*; “Syria’s Steadfastness Foiled Designs Perpetrated against the Region”, *Syria Times*). Second, and conversely, some argue that Sykes-Picot is no longer relevant because the local population is indifferent to the origins of the borders (“Local Sentiments, As Always, Will Shape the Middle East”, *Jordan Times*). Third, some claim that the alternative to the existing borders is not self-determination, but another set of artificial borders and authoritarian leaders (“Lines of the Game: Sykes-Picot is Dead”, *Al Ahkbar*). These findings are in line with Miles’ (2014) assessment of the resilience of the Sykes-Picot order. An important exception is *Ekurd Daily*, an Iraqi Kurdish newspaper that depicts the Kurds as the primary victims of the Sykes-Picot borders and calls on international actors to actively support the redrawing of national borders. Running through these diverse perspectives is a general pragmatism: while the Sykes-Picot Agreement is condemned as a colonial intrusion into Middle Eastern politics (a stance consistent with pan-Arabist sympathies), much more important to the papers’ assessments is its impact on the contemporary population.

British and French Media⁴

Like their Syrian and Iraqi counterparts, British Prime Minister David Cameron and French President François Hollande have been silent regarding Daesh’s use of the Sykes-Picot Agreement (both have vocally attacked Daesh itself), and have exhibited little interest in actively reshaping the borders of the Middle East (Gause 2014). The mainstream print media in each country, however, has addressed this issue in depth. In their representations of Sykes-Picot, the mainstream press is strikingly critical of the British and French role. Typically, when Sykes-Picot is introduced in an article, it is followed by a brief parenthetical explanation of the Agreement’s date, actors, and the fact that it “divided the Middle East”. Commentary on the Agreement and its legacies virtually never calls for the maintenance of the status quo; rather, it acknowledges the artificial character of the current borders (“Where the Wrong Beard Can Mean Death”, *The Times*; “Les frontières coloniales effacées par la poussée des djihadistes”, *Le Figaro*), and it most often accepts that their erasure is inevitable (“A Powerful and Merciless Force Has Emerged on the World Stage”, *The Daily Telegraph*). Where the authors call for a different successor to the Sykes-Picot borders, they advocate smaller, ethnic-specific polities (“Quel avenir pour les Kurdes?”, *Le Figaro*). No article in the eight papers surveyed attempts to defend the Sykes-Picot borders, or the governments that forged them. In contrast to the Middle Eastern papers, which take a pragmatic standpoint, the British and French papers are more likely to make abstract claims about the legacies of the Agreement—a stance that reflects the two countries’ present, more removed position with regard to the Middle East rather than their role in the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

Remembering the Usable Past: Implications for Nation-Building

For Daesh, the Sykes-Picot Agreement is a crucial component of the usable past. The memory of Sykes-Picot, which stands in for the memory of humiliation generally, shapes Daesh’s “national” narrative—even as it purports to reject the “idol of nationalism”, it mirrors the nationalist

practice of disseminating a particular set of beliefs, moral judgments, and lessons from history. In “The End of Sykes-Picot”, a member of Daesh proclaims, “We are not here to fight for the earth, or for the imaginary border of Sykes and Picot. We’re not here fighting to replace an Arab taghut with a Western taghut. Rather, our jihad is loftier and higher. We’re fighting to make the word of Allah the highest.”

Popular discourse throughout the Middle East attempts to undermine Daesh’s national narrative in the interest of existing states’ legitimacy. Thus, for most of the media outlets surveyed, Sykes-Picot is not usable; rather, these voices diminish its role in establishing and maintaining the status quo. Taking a pragmatic stance, some media outlets do not claim to theorize the nation-state; however, by emphasizing international legitimacy and contemporary lived experience rather than the usable past, they simply privilege different (but equally important) components of nationalism.

The British and French popular discourse, while concurring with Daesh that the Sykes-Picot borders are artificial, breaks from the militant group by upholding the conventional definition of the nation-state. Because Middle Eastern states are not unified by culture, ethnicity, or consent, the argument goes, they are not nation-states and thus are not legitimate. Consequently, their seemingly radical rejection of the existing borders is actually an affirmation of the Western model of nationhood and a call for its application to the Middle East—a far cry from the Khilafah that Daesh has proclaimed.

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(Endnotes)

- 1 Given the plethora of names ascribed to the militant group in question—among them Islamic State, the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), I refer to the group throughout this paper as Daesh, the term most widely used in the Arabic- and French-language press.
- 2 Officially termed the Asia Minor Agreement, but colloquially called the Sykes-Picot Agreement, this formed a general understanding (rather than a treaty with fixed terms) of British and French interests in the Middle East, which were concretized in the San Remo Agreement of 1920. Consequently, this paper uses the terms "agreement" and "understanding" rather than "treaty" to refer to Sykes-Picot.
- 3 Data is drawn from an online search for the term "Sykes-Picot" between June 2014 and January 2015 in the following papers: *Daily Star* (Lebanon), *E Kurd Daily* (Iraq), *Gulf News* (UAE), *Iraqi News* (Iraq), *Jerusalem Post* (Israel), *Jordan Times* (Jordan), *Al Monitor* (pan-Middle East), *Saudi Gazette* (Saudi Arabia), *Syria Times* (Syria), *Syrian Arab News Agency* (Syria), and *Your Middle East* (pan-Middle East).
- 4 Data is drawn from an online search for the term "Sykes-Picot" between June 2014 and January 2015 in the following papers: *The Daily Mail*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, and *The Times of London* (UK); and *Le Figaro*, *Libération*, *Le Monde*, and *Le Parisien* (France).

Redefining the Kurdish nation

By Nicole F. Watts, San Francisco State University

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University students march to support pro-democracy demonstrations in Sulaimani, March 2011. (Nicole F. Watts)

In early February, Kurdish lawmakers gathered in a special parliamentary session to put the final touches on plans to designate Halabja the fourth official province in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. News reports quoted Youssef Muhammad, speaker of the Kurdish parliament, as saying that making Halabja and its environs a province would “heal some of the wounds that Halabja has been carrying as they will run their province by themselves and for themselves.” Halabja, a town of around 100,000 people about eight miles from the Iraqi-Iranian border, was bombed by Iraqi warplanes on March 16, 1988, killing an estimated 5,000 people in one of the worst single chemical gas attacks of civilians of the 20th century.

The decision to make Halabja a province is striking for many reasons. First, it is a symbol of survival and reconstruction in the face of brutal repression. Additionally, it expands the administrative scope of

Kurdish rule relative to the rest of Iraq. Further, dis-attaching this symbolically crucial geography from the Sulaimani province of which it has been part can be seen as further evidence of the changing balance of power between the dominant Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the once influential Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) that until recently controlled the northeastern part of autonomous Kurdistan.

But Halabja-as-province is also significant as a story of ordinary Kurds’ pushback against the tight hold of both these parties over political and economic life in the Kurdistan region. Designating Halabja a province was among demonstrators’ key demands in the 2006 protest that destroyed the Halabja Monument of Martyrs, and politicians visiting the city had found themselves remonstrated again and again by local people demanding not just better services and infrastructure but a decentralization of power that would grant Halabja more say over its own affairs and how its symbolic legacy of suffering would be used.

More fundamentally, what is happening in Halabja demonstrates that even amid a new “Kurdification” of the Middle East political map, there are many Kurds demanding governance that goes beyond a simple ethnic rationale for rule. Kurds in northern Iraq struggled for decades to gain autonomy from Baghdad; in recent years thousands have taken to the streets in Halabja, Sulaimani, Ranya, and other towns and cities to challenge their own Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and its two leading parties. This politics of dissent does not reject Kurdish nationalist principles but, rather, seeks to redefine them in ways that offer ordinary people more influence over the resources of Kurdish state- and nation-building. As Halabja’s province campaign demonstrates, such redefinitions insist on the relevance of localized identities and experiences and on the necessity of the rule of law and good governance. At root, activists’ efforts

involve broadening and deepening understandings of the Kurdish national interest so that it involves how Kurds govern themselves as much as it does protecting them from Baghdad, the Islamic State group, and other real or potential regional threats.



Children in Halabja play on abandoned Iraqi army tanks left on display outside the Halabja Monument of Martyrs, March 2014. (Nicole F. Watts)

Many analysts have commented on the challenge to post-World War I order and existing state boundaries. Such challenges come not only from Islamic State forces but also from Kurdish groups constructing distinctly Kurdish zones of governance across the Middle East, producing a new congruence between political and cultural boundaries. The KRG in northern Iraq has been legally sanctioned as an autonomous governing entity since 2005. Kurdish-majority areas of northern and northeastern Syria have been governed since 2012 as three de facto autonomous cantons collectively referred to by Kurds as Rojava, or Syrian Kurdistan. Even in Turkey, where the central government fiercely resists decentralization and many Kurds still support the Turkish state, local and national elections show the Kurdish-majority provinces of the country at clear odds with political sympathies in the rest of the country.

This Kurdistan-ization of the political map has occurred not only because of wars and weak states but also because of shifts in internal political dynamics among Kurds themselves. Nationalist rhetoric to the contrary, Kurds have never uniformly supported Kurdish independence and throughout the 20th century participated in a variety of political projects (socialist, Islamist, democratic, etc.)

that involved multi-cultural governance of one sort or another. But the often-repressive policies of the region's states have encouraged many Kurds to conclude that only ethnic Kurds are fit – or can be trusted – to rule, and those who offer alternative ideas about how to imagine community and citizenship have found themselves marginalized. Increasingly, Kurds around the region see the only viable framework for governance as one based on principles of Kurdish ethno-nationalism.

Support for Kurdish nationalism is particularly apparent in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, where Baghdad's policies of forced re-settlement, chemical gas attacks and mass killings long ago lost it any claim to credibly represent its Kurdish citizens. Kurdish nationalism in this context can be summed up as a belief that there is a Kurdish nation and in the sanctity of a Kurdish national culture; in the idea that Kurds have the dominant if not exclusive claim to the territory governed by the KRG; and in the widespread agreement that the KRG, whatever its faults, is the appropriate governing manifestation of the Kurdish community in northern Iraq. Such support has been evidenced in many ways including high voter turnout in regional elections for the Kurdish government (generally 70 percent or higher) and, for instance, an unofficial 2005 referendum in which, given a choice between remaining part of Iraq or becoming independent, 98 percent of those questioned supported Kurdish independence. The prioritization of specifically Kurdish interests – and deep fears that the violence and instability of the rest of Iraq would infect Kurdistan – also manifested itself in the 2014 anti-Arab protests and outbreaks of violence in Erbil city. Though quickly and firmly quashed by Kurdish political authorities, who have also made significant longer-term efforts to offer protection and services to Arab refugees, they highlighted the Kurdish ethno-national underpinnings of popular perceptions of who is entitled to live in the area, and who belongs.

However, while Iraqi Kurdish citizens endorse the Kurdification of the map, they are not necessarily pleased with how that process is happening. This dissatisfaction has manifested in extra-institutional and conventional

opposition politics that, unlike in the past, do not target the central regime in Baghdad but the KRG. Throughout the last decade activists have taken to the street to demonstrate against corruption; for better services and infrastructure; in support of press freedoms; to challenge a more restrictive demonstration law; on behalf of the handicapped; against oil exploration; in support of fiscal transparency; and to call for democratization. In particular, activists and critics have demanded the disentanglement of party and state, and a more merit-based system of allocating jobs, contracts and other resources. In early 2011 the region saw its own version of the Arab Spring protests when demonstrators in Sulaimani occupied the city's central square for two months. Activists called on the government to resign and for substantial reforms to the system.

Several points about these protests stand out. The first is the geo-political basis of protest: Dissent against the KRG has been much more common in Sulaimani province (including Halabja) than elsewhere in the region. This is due to a number of factors including the erosion of PUK authority across Sulaimani, its traditional stronghold, which opened up the political arena there; to differences in the political culture and state-society relations of Sulaimani, on the one hand, versus Erbil and Duhok, on the other; and because the latter two provinces are dominated by the powerful Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of KRG President Masoud Barzani, which also exercises tight control over security in these provinces. A second point is that – within these geographic parameters – such protests have been broadly inclusive, involving both Islamist and secular opposition, as well as people from different socio-economic classes. They have also been largely nonviolent. Third, street protests have been sustained and augmented in the last decade by institutional developments that have provided a new capacity for mobilization. These include the growth of a vocal opposition and independent media and of social media sites, especially Facebook; the emergence of non-governmental organizations operating more independent of the political parties; and, in particular, the creation and electoral success of a new opposition

party, Gorran (Movement for Change), founded in 2009 through a schism within the PUK. Running on a reformist platform, Gorran won nearly a quarter of the seats in the 2009 elections for the Kurdistan National Assembly, and in the September 2013 elections it won the second-highest number of seats, surpassing the PUK, and in 2014 becoming a governing partner. Gorran played a prominent role in both instigating and supporting the 2011 protests, although the Sulaimani city demonstrations went well beyond Gorran to involve many different clusters of students, religious leaders, civic groups, intellectuals and other activists, along with other opposition parties such as the Kurdistan Islamic Union.

The vast majority of these activists and reformists are not seeking to challenge the Kurdish national underpinnings of governance or dismantle the KRG. This is clear from party platforms, election results, public opinion polls, and in the rhetoric and framing of dissent. Even among seasoned activists and critics of the regime, Kurdish leaders such as Barzani still command significant affection and loyalty for their role in the nationalist struggle, capable leadership, and commitment to the Kurdish cause. Rather, criticism of the KRG has revolved around three main issues: the distribution of material and economic resources, with demands for better services, less corruption and nepotism, and more equitable access to the resources of the state and public institutions; rule-making and rights, as demonstrated in campaigns and protests concerning human rights violations, laws, and the KRG's much delayed draft constitution; and national memory, and how the Kurdish cause is represented and commemorated. To address these concerns, activists and opposition figures have sought to shift the foundations of the Kurdish national project from the charismatic basis of leadership in the nationalist struggle to a system based on rights and rules, institutionalization, accountability and decentralization.

Recent protests and campaigns highlight two dimensions along which activists seek to reshape the state- and nation-building project in Iraqi Kurdistan. The first dimension is a national one. The 2011 Sulaimani protests constituted a

watershed in Kurdish political life because they were the first serious mass protests calling for national (Kurdish), systemic reform, focusing in particular on the need for an end to corruption, for more fiscal and political accountability and transparency, and for an end to the party-state. Activists framed reforming the KRG as a patriotic duty, and the 10 people who died in the course of the protests were depicted as a new kind of national martyr. This effort to reconfigure the framework of Kurdish governance was strengthened by Gorran's electoral victories and forcefully promoted in the opposition and independent media. Though broken up forcefully by Kurdish security forces in mid-April, the demonstrations significantly re-shaped the national conversation about power and the nature of political authority.

The second dimension of alternative state- and nation-building is one that seeks to incorporate localized interests into the homogenizing narrative prevalent in Kurdish national discourse. To some degree this was evident even in the Sulaimani protests, which can be seen as a general effort to reform the system but also as a particularly Sulaimani-based challenge. But it is in sites such as Halabja that the effort to reconstitute Kurdish national identity as simultaneously national (or even supra-national) and locally distinctive is most striking. This is both because of the high level of activism there and also because of the central role that Iraq's 1988 attack on Halabja plays in the construction of the Kurdish national mythos. On the one hand, "Halabja" has become discursive shorthand for the suffering of all Kurds and a kind of cornerstone legitimating the need for Kurdish self-rule. On the other hand, Halabja has often exhibited quite distinctive political interests and a high level of independent mindedness. Though it has a history of support for Islamist politics, electoral results for Halabja show it beyond the control of any one group: Its voters tend to split their votes fairly evenly between a number of different parties. Halabjans have also frequently taken to the streets. Certainly one of the earliest and most striking examples was the 2006 demonstration at the Halabja Monument of Martyrs, when activists argued party officials had lost their right to organize the annual commemoration at the monument,

accusing them of exploiting the city's suffering and of neglecting the development and reconstruction of the city. In 2014 the commemoration ceremony was organized for the first time by local civic groups rather than by the parties, and tens of thousands of local people took to the streets to both remember their dead and celebrate Halabja's designation as a province.



A banner is hung at the graveyard in Halabja at the 2014 annual ceremony commemorating the victims of the 1988 chemical gassing of the city. (Nicole F. Watts)

Both the ceremony and the province campaign can be read as successful local efforts to wrest control of Halabja's symbolic and material resources away from the parties, and to redefine Halabja as both part of but also distinct from the Kurdish national project. In their support for the province campaign, activists and politicians invoked several frames that highlight this juxtaposition. These included a national frame: "since Saddam Hussein tried to wipe Halabja off the face of the map, the KRG and the community ought to upgrade Halabja's status by making it a province;" a localist-legal frame that justified Halabja's designation as a province by alluding to earlier proposals to make it a province and by reference to what is depicted as Halabja's distinctive and illustrious past; and a good governance rationale that suggested Halabja would benefit economically and politically if it were locally governed,

with budgets controlled at the ground level and not through Sulaimani. Such narratives highlight the ways Halabjans have tried to situate the city as both within and distinct from the national project – as both central to its mythos and yet distinctive in its needs and experiences. Although some neighboring towns designated for inclusion in the new province grumbled (and themselves took to the streets in protest), and despite internal consternation from the Sulaimani-based PUK and Gorran at the administrative loss of control, the symbolic leverage commanded by Halabja made it very difficult for any politician to refuse this localized form of self-determination.

The politics of dissent under the KRG demonstrates how Kurds are re-thinking nationalism and the meaning of national governance. Such reconsiderations are in fact taking place across geographic Kurdistan as people in Turkey, Syria and elsewhere re-visit classic conceptions of top-down, national state-building and experiment with notions of “democratic autonomy” and micro-level governance structures. However, such considerations of ground-up governance interact uneasily with existing party structures, which tend to be hierarchical and intolerant of internal dissent, as well as with the unifying imperative of national state-building. That this tension has been manifested quite publicly in the Kurdistan region of Iraq is due in part to the existence of a legally sanctioned governing entity – the KRG – and the traditional parties’ neo-liberal, patrimonial ways of doing business, which have given the opposition movement a clear target. The public contestations over the nature of Kurdish state- and nation-building have also been possible because Kurdish authorities have succeeded in providing a sufficiently stable “form” of Kurdish governance to allow for the emergence of concern over the substance of this rule.

That ordinary people living under the KRG are seeking to redefine ideas about what is in the Kurdish national interest is important for several reasons. First, most basically, it complicates overly simplistic accounts of the region that map political preferences neatly over the top of religious and ethnic groups (“Kurds versus Arabs” or “Kurds versus Turks”). Second, the political geography of dissent and the varying articulations of Kurdish political interests highlight the relevance of multi-level political dynamics in the Kurdish north. How Kurds do politics – and the nature of those politics – is not just a factor of Erbil’s relations with Baghdad or other external players but is also contingent on the give and take between these internal forces. Third, activists’ efforts to make Kurdish authorities more accountable and efforts by the Kurdish leadership to respond, even partially, to some of these concerns demonstrates how the balance of power between rulers and ruled can shift, even in conditions of political insecurity. Somewhat counter intuitively, this case suggests that a broad consensus on the nationalist undergirding of state-making can in some ways facilitate democratization, because the fact that nearly all Kurds in the Kurdistan region agree on “the basic rules of the game” means the struggle over the nature of governance and the distribution of resources is not seen by the various players as a zero-sum game. Broad support for Kurdish self-determination may thus allow for a shift toward a more multi-faceted and ground-up conceptualization of the Kurdish national community.

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Sectarianism and authoritarianism in Kuwait

By Madeleine Wells, George Washington University

The prominent Kuwaiti Shiite lawyer and former member of parliament Khaled al-Shatti was arrested April 2 after posting tweets critical of the Saudi-led Arab coalition's fight against the Houthis in Yemen. His tweets suggested that the Houthis – Yemeni Shiite rebels supported though not controlled by Iran – are growing in power.

Shatti, who was released on bail April 6, was charged with challenging the emir, demoralizing Kuwaiti soldiers, offending the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and threatening Saudi relations with Kuwait.

His Twitter protest is not the only evidence of discord against Kuwait's foreign policy. Seven out of Kuwait's 10 Shiite parliamentarians (in a body of 50) also criticized the Kuwaiti Air Force's participation in Saudi Arabia's "Operation Decisive Storm," on the grounds that it violates Kuwait's constitutional prohibition on offensive war.

Their outspoken protest is unusual and telling: The Shiite MPs of Kuwait are the only such group in the region empowered by a positive legacy of regime-minority relations to take a stand against their government's foreign policy on an official, institutional level. This level of activism is nonetheless surprising even by Kuwaiti standards. A Kuwaiti political persona tweeting in favor of the Houthi rebels is shocking and out of the norm of Shiite actions in Kuwait since the 1990s. And Shiite MPs taking a stand against the Saudi campaign on any grounds stands out as quite significant as compared to both the quiet Shiite activists in neighboring Saudi Arabia, who are worried about local sectarian backlash from the war on the Houthis rather than contesting the foreign policy itself, and the more bellicose response of Shiite political factions in Iraq, who have publicly protested the Saudi campaign and even had one MP offer to send fighters to defend Yemen.

Sectarianism has been getting worse in the Gulf, and many analysts generally conceive of this as an international process.

Indeed, analysts have warned that a Saudi-led war on the Zaydi Shiite Houthis could devolve into a proxy war with Iran and further sectarianize the Middle East. The fact that Arab Sunni states have entered a coalition to fight a Shiite non-state actor in Yemen allegedly backed by Iran would, indeed, seem to be evidence of sectarianism. But sometimes what looks like sectarianism and regional ethnic hatreds is actually just good old domestic politics. As Marc Lynch argued in a 2013 Project on Middle East Political Science symposium, "The sectarian narrative radically exaggerates both the coherence of the 'Sunni' side of the conflict and the novelty of a long-standing power struggle with Iran. It is better understood as a justification for domestic repression and regional power plays than as an explanation for Middle Eastern regimes' behavior." That perspective applies to Kuwait's new sectarian tensions as well.

My dissertation research – which addresses why governments change their policies toward non-core groups such as the Shiites of Kuwait – suggests that policies such as these political arrests actually have very little to do with their ethno-religious characteristics or even with the Iranian boogeyman's growing power in the Gulf. Instead, they are calculated based upon their oppositional potential. That is to say, it is not Kuwait's sectarianism that we must worry about, but rather its re-emerging authoritarianism. The crux of the issue is rentier Kuwait's semi-authoritarian political structure and the type of dynamic it engenders. As a semi-constitutional monarchy, the highly mobilized Kuwaiti body politic can vote in free and fair parliamentary elections, and the Kuwaiti parliament is unique in the Gulf for having the power to remove confidence in individual ministers and override the emir's veto via majority vote. At the same time, their choices are ultimately limited by an appointed cabinet that serves at the discretion of the emir. This situation leads to a dynamic in which the shape of the political opposition and the threat it poses to the ruler are variables of primary importance in how *any* societal groups, Sunni or Shiite are treated by their ruler.

The Shiites of Kuwait, who make up 25 to 30 percent of the population, have a unique place in national and regional history. Recent work by Fred Wehrey, Laurence Louer and Toby Matthiesen demonstrates how Kuwait has long stood out for having the most amicable sectarian relations in the Gulf, especially as compared to its neighbors, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. With very few exceptions – such as proportional access to mosques and staffing in high-level defense and interior positions – Kuwaiti Shiites have equal access to the large coterie of welfare benefits offered by the rentier state, including free health care, education, public sector jobs and state subsidized fuel and housing. They are nationalistic and loyal toward their government and feel central to the state's history and its quest for survival. As such, with the exception of the 1980s – when, inspired by the Iranian revolution, a small group of Kuwaiti Shiites began to push for political reforms, including for Shiite equality, and were institutionally excluded and sometimes-violently repressed – Kuwaiti Shiites have most often been accommodated or co-opted by their government. The times when Kuwait did appear to be sectarian, it was usually doing so for reasons of managing political opposition.

In the 2000s, despite the perceived regional growth and threat of Iran's power after the fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq in 2003, the Kuwaiti regime did not repress its Shiite citizens but instead offered them more religious accommodation. In many cases, the Sabah ruling family has continued to defend the confessional group against growing societal and parliamentary Islamist and tribal sectarianism. Only four years ago, when Saudi Arabia sent troops to Bahrain to aid the Bahraini government in suppressing its Shiite-led Arab Spring, the Kuwaiti government decided *not* to send ground forces. Rather, it ended up sending a largely symbolic naval force instead, likely because the emir was highly sensitive to how its participation might impact Shiite allies in the government. In 2012, the Shiites briefly held 17 seats in parliament, the highest number ever, as a result of an opposition boycott of elections. Likewise, Shiite MPs seem to know their place in Kuwaiti Politics. Even their recent protest against Kuwait joining the Saudi coalition was carefully framed in

constitutional terms, demonstrating the extent to which they fear being perceived as going outside the norms of their political system.

What has changed since that would lead Kuwait to join with its Arab allies in a potentially controversial and sectarian cause that could rock the boat with its Shiite allies at home? The answer is that Kuwait, along with many of its neighbors, has become more authoritarian in the aftermath of the region-wide and domestic uprisings that started in late 2010. The ruling elites of the Sabah family are reeling from the cross-class Islamist-tribal-youth coalition that has only intensified its demands for political reform since the Arab Spring, in addition to intra-family factionalism and allegations of coup plotting. To deal with this situation, Kuwait has revived some unique ways of stemming the ongoing opposition movement. In 2014, over 30 people were deported and stripped of their citizenship for supposedly undermining the country's security. Most recently, at least 18 people were reportedly arrested at an March 23 anti-government protest, including regional human rights defender Nawaf al-Hendal, who had addressed the United Nations Human Rights Council only three days earlier. Hendal has since been released but his case has been referred to Kuwait's Criminal Court.

More importantly, in the past few months it has become clear that there is not only a red line for Kuwaitis criticizing the emir, but a taboo on criticizing Kuwait's regional allies as well. Several other Kuwaitis who have criticized the Saudi regime or involved themselves in public domestic opposition campaigns have been targeted as well. Shatti was joined by Shiite writer and academic Salah al-Fadhli, who was also arrested for speaking out about Yemen. Another Shiite MP, Abdulhameed Dashti is awaiting trial for criticizing the Bahraini government, and former Sunni MP Mubarak al-Duweileh was questioned over his criticism of the rulers of Abu Dhabi. Kuwait is not out of the norm for suddenly prosecuting regional dissent – Bahrainis criticizing the Saudi campaign in Yemen were immediately arrested, too. This regional criminalization of dissent is something that has been facilitated by the Gulf Cooperation Council's Security Pact, which Kuwait

was the last state to sign. The pact has given legal means for the persecuting of opposition forces all over the Gulf, ostensibly on security terms. As Madawi al-Rasheed explains, “Meant to enhance security for economic development and stability of GCC countries, the pact has now tuned into creating cross-border controls, evacuating the Arab Gulf of dissent and eliminating safe havens for dissidents of one country in another one.”

The Kuwaiti crackdown on Sunni and Shiite dissent alike reveals that if anything, the regime *does* share a strong threat perception with the rest of the GCC, but that it perceives its biggest transnational threat not from Iran, but from the diffusion of democratic movements that may uproot its allied Gulf leaders. Indeed, Saudi itself has partially framed the campaign on Yemen this way – emphasizing its intent to restore Yemen’s elected president to power – in addition to rolling back ostensible Iranian gains in the region. The arrest of Shiites who speak publically about Saudi Arabia’s Yemen campaign, as sectarian as it looks on a superficial level, must thus be seen within the overall context of the progressive tightening of domestic security by a continually stressed Kuwaiti regime.

In this light, regime-Shiite relations have more to do with how formidable the political opposition is becoming in the Gulf and the shared regional threat of empowered domestic constituents than any single other factor. It’s not sectarianism, but authoritarianism. It is the internal threats to Gulf regimes like Kuwait, driven by their lack of meaningful reform in the last decade, that drives Gulf regimes to internationalize domestic problems in terms of “security” and sometimes “sect” (read: Iran) in order to distort and drive focus away from meaningful, local grievances. Regime treatment of Shatti for supporting

the Houthi cause is one part of this larger authoritarian whole. Shatti’s tweets were outside the bounds of what he was allowed to do as part of a co-opted minority with traditionally good relations to the ruler, but also what is expected of him as a citizen of a beleaguered semi-authoritarian regime. As such, he has been bluntly told to stay out of oppositional and regional politics and go back to his lane. As one Kuwaiti source told me about the incident, after Shatti’s release, “He’s out, but they are keeping him close.” The question now is, will he and his co-sectarians stay there?

The answer is a bit of a catch 22. It depends on whether or not societal and regional anti-Shiite sentiment continues to burn from the spark the Saudis ignited. On the one hand, Kuwait’s participation in the invasion of Yemen may be just the catalyst its Shiite citizens need to move away from their longstanding alliance with the Sabah family. The semi-authoritarian Kuwaiti system that gave them the same freedom to criticize Kuwaiti foreign policy in constitutional, legitimate terms may offer them the opening they need. This would mean an even more formidable and further cross-cutting opposition to the Kuwaiti government and could perhaps augur for real political change. On the other hand, the Kuwaiti tribal-Islamist opposition has in the last decade become increasingly sectarian itself. This makes it likely the Shiites will continue to stand by the Kuwaiti regime in spite of their underlying disagreement with its foreign policies and lack of reform because they have no other alternative source of protection. In this sense, Saudi-driven sectarianism in the region seems to have inadvertently reinforced Kuwaiti authoritarianism as well.

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Islam and Islamists in the 2014 Tunisian elections

By Elizabeth L. Young, University of Michigan

While the Arab Spring protests were primarily framed around issues of economic inequality, dignity, and political inclusiveness, the role of Islam in political life has emerged as a central issue in the region leading to further political stability with the coup that removed the Muslim Brotherhood from government in Egypt and the Islamic State's expansion and destabilization throughout the region, most recently in Libya. Tunisia, with the successful completion of not one, but three elections this past fall, has justifiably been held up as a model for democratic transition. However, we shouldn't forget too quickly that Tunisia faced, albeit to a lesser extent, many of the same issues that undermined neighboring governments: attempts from non-Islamist political players to nullify Islamist electoral gains and increasing support for Salafi-jihadist, anti-state activities. By fall 2013, the exact path of Tunisia's transition was in question with the assassination of two political opposition figures in six months, increasing terrorist activities, an attempt to remove Ennahda from government, and the constitution and electoral law still not written.

Given the political instabilities the country faced, the successful elections held last year are all the more impressive as political leaders worked to find a consensus to move Tunisia out of political deadlock. However, the electoral campaigns also reveal an emerging consensus on how to address the role of political Islam in Tunisia. The press coverage leading up to the 2014 Tunisian presidential and parliamentary elections, framed the elections as competition between Islamists and secularists, an oversimplified binary that has been rightfully challenged. While broad societal divisions do indeed exist, the elections were notable for the degree to which there was a *convergence* of discourse on religion and politics with the Islamist Ennahda de-emphasizing its religious character and the "secular" Nidaa Tounes making a concerted effort to highlight its religious credentials during the electoral campaigns. Below I discuss the electoral campaign rhetoric

as a move toward the normalization of religious discourse in Tunisia and basis on which the country will refocus on other central issues, most importantly the economy, regional disparities, and security.

Religion and the Political Landscape Prior to the 2014 Elections

While survey data indicates that Tunisian citizens are far more concerned with economic and security issues than with questions of religion and identity,¹ highly publicized conflicts involving the role of Islam in public life seemed to dominate the Tunisian landscape following the 2011 overthrow of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. Tunisia faced the challenge of an increasingly diverse religious landscape. Following the Jasmine Revolution, prisoners, including Nahdawi Islamists and Salafis, were released and Tunisia faced an initially unregulated field of religious groups and discourses that had previously been banned. For several months the Ministry of Religious Affairs worked to replace many Imams, both those appointed by Ben Ali and Salafis who had gained control of mosques following the revolution. There were a number of public confrontations on the role of Islam in public life including what could be shown on television and whether the previously banned *niqab*, a headscarf that exposes only the eyes, could be worn in the classroom.

By summer 2013, many Tunisians had lost confidence in the Troika-government, a coalition of Ennahda and two secular parties, due to increasing economic issues, the protracted constitutional drafting period, and a belief that Ennahda was too soft on terrorism and the activities of the Islamist militia Ansar al-Sharia, which resulted in attacks on Tunisian security forces and the assassination of leftist political leader Chokri Belaid the previous February.

1 International Republican Institute. 2014. Survey of Tunisian Public Opinion: June 22 – July 1, 2014.

The Tamrod protest movement and July 2013 coup in Egypt sparked organized demonstrations in Tunisia demanding that the government step down. In this already charged atmosphere, the assassination of opposition leader Mohamed Brahmi on July 25, allegedly by Ansar al-Sharia, led to public demonstrations against the Troika-government, a parliamentary walk-out, and a five-month political deadlock. Only with the Troika's agreement to step down from ministry positions, but not from elected parliamentary seats, was Tunisia able to finalize the constitution and pass the electoral law to pave the way for presidential and parliamentary elections.

The 2014 Election Campaign

Early on the legislative election was framed as a showdown between "Islamist" Ennahda and "secular" Nidaa Tounes, which ultimately won 69 and 89 seats in the 217-seat parliament. However, despite the highly charged political environment that preceded the elections, each campaign to some extent rejected these labels and both parties tried to portray themselves as Islamic without necessarily being Islamist. While it is not a surprise that each party might seek to expand its level of support, the degree of overlap that emerged in their discourse is surprising.

Ennahda's campaign focused on portraying the party as a responsible, consensus-oriented actor that shepherded the country through a difficult period of institutional change. For example, Ennahda's political platform had no significant identifiably-Islamist element, with the exception of promoting the development of Islamic banking options.² Compared to the 2011 program, the 2014 program made subtler references to Tunisia's Islamic heritage than its predecessor, which listed the importance of "Islam as a supreme reference point" in the platform.³ This is not to indicate the religion or religious identity is less important to the party or its voters, but that Ennahda, unsurprisingly in the wake of both political tensions in Tunisia and the

banning of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, has focused on itself presenting itself as a mainstream political party rather than as an *Islamist* political party. In addition to this mainstreaming, the party affirmed both before and after the election its willingness to continue working with other parties, including Nidaa Tounes.

In contrast, Nidaa Tounes made concerted efforts to emphasize its Islamic credentials, and in particular Tunisian Islamic credentials, throughout the campaign. In contrast to Ennahda's public program that deemphasized religion, Nidaa Tounes issued a 20-page platform on religious issues that critiqued the Troika's actions, particularly the relationship between Ennahda and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and put forward its own platform. In its foreword, then-presidential candidate Beji Caid Essebsi drew a distinction between two opposing views on Islam. The first, represented by Nidaa Tounes, is "an authentic, national view based on *ijtihad*, renewal, and reform" is contrasted with a second view of Islam "based on tradition, inertia, violence, and terrorism,"⁴ which the campaign associated with Salafi-jihadism that Ennahda failed to stem.

This discourse of Tunisian Islam as a particularly pluralistic and moderate practice has been utilized by multiple political actors ranging from former President Habib Bourguiba to members of Ennahda to Nidaa Tounes. During the election, Nidaa Tounes and Essebsi sought to associate themselves with this tradition. Nidaa Tounes held a rally in front of the Uqba Mosque in Kairouan, Tunisia's most important religious site, and Essebsi made a highly publicized visit to an important Sufi saint's tomb in Tunis where he received the endorsement of the brotherhood. Additionally, Essebsi presented himself publicly as the political and ideological heir of Bourguiba, going so far as to launch his presidential bid at Bourguiba's mausoleum in Monastir and to imitate Bourguiba's dress and mannerisms throughout the campaign.

With this convergence in electoral rhetoric, the

2 Ennahda. 2014. *Ennahda Political Electoral Programme 2015-2020: A Rising Economy. A Secure Country.*

3 Ennahda. 2011. *Ennahda Movement Programme: For Freedom, Justice and Development in Tunisia.*

4 3, Nidaa Tounes. 2014. *Nidaa Tounes' Program on Religions Issues.*

parliamentary campaigns focused primarily on issues of economic growth and security. This isn't to say that fundamental issues on the role of Islam in public and political life don't exist. They do. Nidaa Tounes was founded following the 2011 elections in direct opposition to Ennahda's electoral victory. There are many constituents of Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes that see the other party as an existential threat to Tunisia's future, including Nidaa Tounes supporters who view Ennahda as responsible for past terrorist attacks and a danger to the country's civil nature, and Ennahda supporters who see Nidaa Tounes as a continuation of the former dictatorships that jailed and exiled any dissidents.

These divisions have not been wiped away, instead, as evidenced by the political rhetoric during the electoral campaigns these issues are not as immediately pressing as economic and security issues. However, they can and will emerge at points of tension as evidenced during the presidential campaign. Discussion of Islam, became even less pronounced during the first-round of the presidential elections, in which Ennahda had decided not to field a candidate. However, in a radio interview immediately following the first, presidential round, Essebsi accused his competitor in the run-off, then-incumbent President Moncef Marzouki, of only making it to the second round due to the support of Islamists, Salafi-jihadists, and those prone to violence, a pointed criticism that Marzouki's second place finish was a result of Ennahda supporters choosing to support him in the absence of an Islamist candidate. Essebsi's comments sparked a wave of protests and rioting in southern Tunisia, where Marzouki and Ennahda had their largest bases of support.

Islam and Islamist Politics Following the 2014 Elections

Essebsi's comments reveal an underlying tension over competing views of society that is unlikely to diminish in the immediate future. However, there are several signs that it is becoming a less important or explosive issue than it was in the period leading up to the elections. First, as mentioned previously, we can see this in the broad convergence of discourse that parties used surrounding the

issue with both Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes largely echoing each other on the centrality of a moderate, reformist, national Tunisian Islam to counter violent extremism. Rather than being monopolized by Islamists alone, this discourse is being normalized by major political actors who have shifted their attention to more immediately pressing public issues such as improving the economy and national security.

Second, Ennahda made the strategic choice to actively try to become part of a unity government and not to remain in the opposition. During the presidential elections, Ennahda, looking to play the long game, declined to support a presidential candidate, which left open the possibility of becoming party of the government, which it did in February, albeit with only one full ministerial portfolio. Additionally, in December, the newly elected Assembly of the People's Representatives met for the first time and elected its leadership. Mohamed Nasri, the vice president of Nidaa Tounes, ran uncontested as speaker, and Abdelfattah Mourou of Ennahda was elected as deputy speaker with 137 of 217 votes, an outcome not possible without support of the other party.

However, Ennahda's long-term vision of ensuring its future role in politics, particularly its willingness to participate in government with members of the former regime that persecuted the Ennahda, has alienated some of its base supporters who view the potential partnership as a portrayal of the party's values. Additionally, during the elections numerous Ennahda supporters not only voted for Marzouki, but also mobilized to campaign for him and to act as candidate agents on election day. This experience could result in former Ennahda supporters being more willing or prepared to support a party other than Ennahda in future elections. Later this year Ennahda will hold its party congress and current leader Rachid Ghannouchi has hinted that he may not run again for party leadership, which could pave the way for significant changes within the party.

However, while religion seems to be deemphasized in the current political landscape, the elections revealed three

other societal divisions that will be critical in addressing during the current political mandate. First, political actors must address the disenchantment of Tunisian youth with politics. Throughout the country observers noted that youth, the drivers of the revolution, voted in startlingly low numbers. Second, regionalism, more than religion, became the major societal divide during the presidential elections with the more economically-prosperous coastal and northern regions supporting Essebsi and the more economically marginalized south voting for Marzouki. Both campaigns emphasized the need to develop the interior regions and now must follow through. Third,

the competition between Nidaa Tounes and Ennahda and between Essebsi and Marzouki highlighted the tensions between figures representing the old regime and revolutionary ideals. Even with these tensions, the current government must find solutions to address the pressing issues of economic development and especially terrorism as the Islamic State expands in Libya and as Tunisians who left to fight in Syria return to Tunisia.

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