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THE BOSTON COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATE MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES JOURNAL



Identities' Boundaries

Amazigh Curators | New Askar | Democracy in Israel and Turkey
Levantine Cosmopolitanism | ISIS's Oil Wealth



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≈ MISSION STATEMENT ≈

Al Noor, the Boston College Undergraduate Middle Eastern Studies Journal, aims to: ♦ Facilitate a nonpartisan, unbiased conversation within the Boston College community and beyond about the Middle East. ♦ Provide a medium for students to publish research on the Middle East and Islam. ♦ Promote diverse opinions and present a comprehensive view of the myriad of cultures, histories, and perspectives that comprise the Middle East. ♦ Be considerate of the complexity of the region while pursuing the utmost objectivity.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

From the stark physical and rhetorical frontiers of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the deep plurality—alternatively fruitful and tragic—that has defined Syria and Lebanon, to the Maghreb, where Berber tribes are fighting a rearguard action against gradual acculturation, this new edition of *Al Noor* examines identity in its formation and at its extremes.

To start off, the issue features an interview with Hanan Ashrawi, a senior member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization who is widely known as one of the most formidable advocates for the Palestinian cause. In wide-ranging conversation spanning her personal history, experience in international diplomacy, literary work, and observations on the role of women in the Palestinian movement, Ashrawi's positions are expressed with grace and certainty.

Our focus on Palestine continues in a photo essay by Jenna Williams, depicting the West Bank's New Askar refugee camp. Her images and interviews reveal a deep material deprivation, but also attest to residents' determination to uplift themselves and their children within the limits of their present situation.

Moving on from these critical perspectives on Israel's human rights record, we shift our attention to the success of Israeli democracy, exceptional in a region of the world where representative government is more than a rarity. In "Foundations of Freedom," Stephen Varshavsky explores the social and institutional factors that have enabled Israel to retain its democratic character during the 21st century—and the reasons why Turkish democracy has broken down so precipitously over the same period.

The next two articles address a theme that our staff has long regarded as important: the survival of the Middle East's inherent diversity amidst homogenizing currents of Islamism and pan-Arabism.

First, in "Amazigh Curators," Christina Taulet relates how rural women became stewards of Berber culture

and the Tamazight language in the Arabized landscape of post-independence Morocco. Her essay also addresses a dilemma relevant to many language preservation efforts—recent efforts to standardize Tamazight threaten to alienate the language's current speakers and to elide their distinctive linguistic contributions.

Next, in "Unfinished Identities," Sarya Baladi analyzes the theme of cosmopolitanism as treated by Amin Maalouf and Adonis, Levantine writers who eschew fierce confessional loyalties while also resisting the assimilating force of modern Arab culture. Through their works, Baladi traces an individualist ideal of Levantine cosmopolitanism, in which cultural identities are neither exclusive nor predetermined, but rather evolve continuously in concert with one's moral and intellectual development.

Our issue closes with "Black Gold under the Black Flag," in which Sean O'Brien reviews a large array of sources to provide a look inside the oil operation that sustained the Islamic State. In a paper with many surprising revelations, O'Brien describes the group's success in marketing its oil in Turkey and even directly to the regime of Bashar al-Assad, and accounts for the reluctance of state actors in the conflict to destroy the oil fields sustaining their common enemy.

As a final note, this issue of *Al Noor* marks the end of my tenure as Editor-in-Chief, a role now passing to Jaq Pyle and Joshua Holtz, whose energy and expertise promise to inaugurate an exciting new period in the life of our journal. I can think of no better way to end my term than expressing my gratitude to our wonderful editorial staff, faculty advisors, contributors, and all of you who read *Al Noor*. Thank you, and enjoy our work.

Thomas Toghramadjian
Editor-In-Chief



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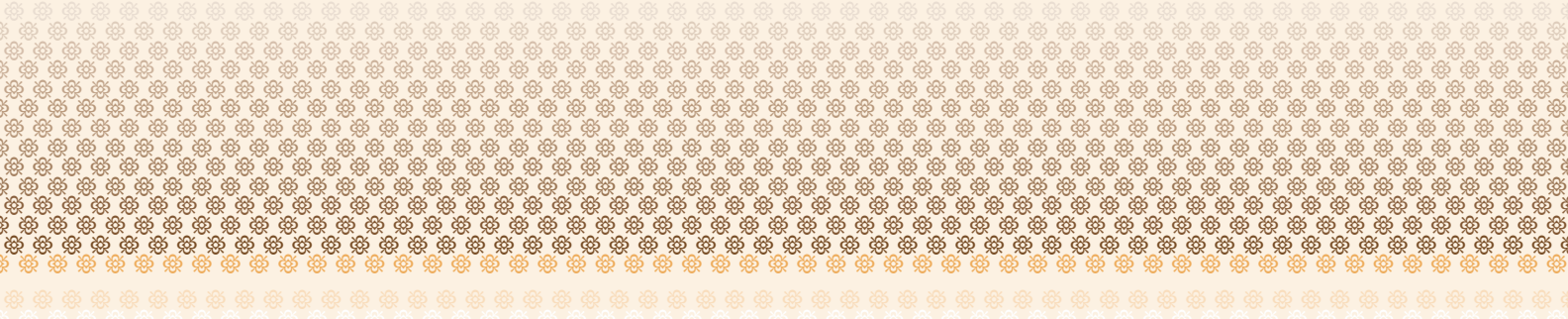
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Born into Struggle

AN INTERVIEW WITH HANAN ASHRAWI

The Al Noor Staff

Hanan Ashrawi has been a leading figure within the Palestinian national movement since 1991, when she served as the official spokeswoman for the Palestinian delegation at the Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid. After the Oslo Accords of 1993, she headed the Preparatory Committee of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights in Jerusalem. Ashrawi was elected to the Palestinian legislative council in 1996, and to the Executive Committee of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in 2009. In addition to her political activities, Ashrawi has been a prolific writer and literary scholar, editing an anthology of Palestinian literature and authoring several critical works on the subject, in addition to her 1995 memoir *This Side of Peace* and many works of poetry. She holds bachelors and masters degrees in literature from the American University of Beirut, and a PhD in medieval and comparative literature from the University of Virginia.

In April 1988, during a much-publicized week of broadcasting from Jerusalem, NBC's "Nightline" program hosted a town hall debate between four Israeli government representatives and three Palestinians. In that contentious setting, one guest drew particular attention for her eloquence and self-possession—Hanan Ashrawi, then a professor of literature at West Bank's Birzeit University. In the aftermath of that success, Ashrawi embarked on a speaking tour of the United States, and was appointed spokeswoman for the Palestinian delegation at the Madrid Middle East Peace Conference of 1991. By 1996, her international stature had grown so much that the *Los Angeles Times* called her "without a doubt, the second most widely recognized Palestinian in the Western world after Yasser Arafat." Initially turning down high office in the PLO, Ashrawi became increasingly involved in that group and in Palestinian politics.

A close confidante of Arafat, she served on the Palestinian Legislative Council from 1996 onwards, and in 2009 became the first female member of the PLO Executive Council, Palestine's highest governing body.

Over her thirty-year career, Ashrawi has established herself both as an unapologetic critic of Israeli policy and as a negotiator respected in many quarters for her pragmatism and commitment to peace. In recognition of her achievements, she was awarded the Sydney Peace Prize in 2003. The following interview took place on April 23, 2018.

Today you're recognized as one of the most unique, influential, and powerful voices in the Palestinian movement. What drove you to dedicate your life to this cause?

Ashrawi: What a question! Being a Palestinian leaves you very little room for free choice because you are born with a responsibility. You are born into a situation which is not entirely free, but instead into exile or captivity and oppression. I'd much rather be an academic and stay in an academic setting, but I couldn't do that. It started with the '67 [Israeli occupation of the West Bank]. I was a young undergraduate at the American University of Beirut. I saw the misery of the refugee camps and life without rights or protection. I felt that it was no longer my parents' issue, it became my issue. My house, my family, everybody came under occupation. I didn't get a permit to come back, so I went to the States, I finished my PhD, and I joined the General Union of Palestine Students. I worked in the refugee camps and I dealt with consciousness raising. I entered the struggle, so to speak.

When you say I'm a Palestinian it's not a neutral term, it provokes responses. As a Palestinian you have to either say "it's not my issue," or take up the responsibility of your identity and history. When I went back to university, I worked with the students and I set up a legal aid committee to defend students who got arrested—they used to arrest them by the scores. I also used to look after students who were shot. I set up first-aid stations

in order to look after wounded students and I had some students die—killed by the Israeli Army—in my arms. And I wrote about this, I said this is not the life of an academic. I didn't become dean in order to cradle the head of a dying student. It was constantly a shock for me.

I wanted to follow up on something you just said – what it means to say "I am a Palestinian" – because one of the key objectives of the Palestinian national movement has been to tell the world that Palestine is a distinctive nation with its own identity, not just part of an undifferentiated "Arab" population. Could you speak about the role of Pan-Arabism within the Palestinian movement or the involvement of the Palestinian movement with the greater Pan-Arabist movement? How productive has the association been?

Ashrawi: Within the Palestinian movement, of course, there are lots of political affiliations, whether with the Pan-Arabist movement, or the Communists, or Socialists, or the Right Wing, or the Islamic movement. We are very diverse politically. Palestinians are not born in a neutral setting. We are born within a narrative that attempts to negate our very own existence, our own identity, our own history, our own culture, and our own rights. You're born with a responsibility of countering the forces of history. We really don't relish being tragic victims. We would like to live what has been called the "quiet miracle of an ordinary life." But as a Palestinian, you are met with preconceived notions, and, because your identity is under attack, you become possessive about it: your culture, your history, and your rights. I'm sure many Palestinians, had they been able to take their identity for granted, wouldn't be so defensive.

I believe we have the right to take our identity for granted, and we have the right to be part of the Arab world if we want to be. At the same time, we have the right to be our own independent country because our history has always been marked by colonial reality under the Ottomans, under the British mandate, by the terrorism of Jewish groups, and then by occupation and exile.

"Palestinians are not born in a neutral setting. We are born within a narrative that attempts to negate our very own existence"

We never had the freedom, the rights, the sense of being that other identities enjoy, so it becomes a personal issue. Palestinians have been deprived of protection, while Israel has been given preferential treatment without any accountability. As a Palestinian, you constantly are fighting against the prevailing narrative, which is unjust, unfair, and untrue.

Since the early 1990s, Palestinians have recognized the 1967 borders as a framework for a two state solution. You have argued that this was an enormous concession, whose magnitude went unrecognized by the United States and other international parties to the conflict. Considering that, retrospectively, do you regret the concessions to agree to those 1967 borders?

Ashrawi: That was the age of optimism. When we went to the talks in Madrid in 1991, we thought we had fulfilled all the requirements of getting recognition. Instead, we found ourselves on the slippery slope of constantly having to prove we deserved our rights. I think it was a very bad negotiating policy to enter having already made concessions. With hindsight you can say that, but even to be recognized as a partner, we were forced to make concessions. We always said all of Palestine is ours. Then we accepted the one state solution, as a pluralistic, democratic, inclusive, non-sectarian state. Then we were made to accept the principle of partition. For us to exist and to survive we had to accept the partition of historical Palestine and the existence of Israel on more than half of our land. Even that was not enough, we were made to go to the '67 borders, and we were told we had to accept not just UN Resolution 181 but 242 and 338 as well.

Within the peace process, Israel takes every concession and pockets it and says “what else?” Israel not only never made a single concession but never committed itself to international law, to terms of reference, or to any of the basic requirements of a genuine peace process. So we ended up with a process that had no substance, no relationship to reality, that didn't affect the behavior of the occupier at all. It was used to buy more time for Israel to expand. We entered a new and more painful era in which the process of peace talks was used as an excuse to destroy the chances of peace. We ended up with a process for its own sake and no peace at all. On the contrary, the



Hanan Ashrawi accepting the Mercator Professorship of the Duisburg-Essen University, Wikimedia Commons 2011.

expansion of Israel, the resort to greater violence, the language of ideology, the system of control that evolved, the racism, and the total negation of our rights and humanity came under the guise of the peace process because nobody wanted to hold Israel accountable.

Today Palestine is an unfree state in more ways than one. Of course, this is true in the sense of being an occupied territory, but within Palestinian institutions there's also a clear lack of popular representation. President Abbas's legal term expired in 2009, elections have been infrequent and when they have occurred candidates often run unopposed. Within the limits of your situation, what can be done to make Palestine's leadership more representative of the people's will?

Ashrawi: Everything we do is tainted by the occupation. Everything. There's a sense that the Palestinians are not free. We don't have freedom of movement, we don't have rights to our own land, to our property, to anything. Elections and commitment to a democratic process are a means of resistance as well as an affirmation of rights, and so we should have them. We did have two legislative elections in spite of the occupation, but they were extremely difficult. I have talked about a time when I was stuck at the checkpoint—I could not go and address my own constituency—and I was beaten up. They took away my materials, my leaflets, my posters, and they wouldn't let me campaign in Jerusalem, even though I was running for Jerusalem. You have no guarantees—you could get elected, and you could get arrested the next day,

which is what they did with 30 to 40 members. We have challenged ourselves to carry out not just elections, but an institutional building process on the basis of democracy, the rule of law, good governance, and respect for human rights. We are fighting for our rights within our system, but it is hard to expect that we can act normally in an abnormal situation. It's very hard to see us establishing a vibrant democracy given the fact that we don't have our freedoms, and that at every moment Israel subverts all of our efforts.

The internal situation evolved negatively because of the failure of the agenda of the national parties and movements. The PLO and its member factions staked the future on nonviolent resistance, and on the peaceful and political solution to the Palestinian question. They could not deliver peace, they could not deliver statehood, and they could not deliver freedom, because there was no cooperation. Israel would not deal with us on that basis; they did not want to let our people go and recognize our rights. At the same time, there was no political will on the part of the international community to hold Israel accountable and protect Palestine. We are very hard on ourselves. We are the first to ask for reform and to work to establish a system of good governance. We are the first to ask for a revitalization of the political system as a whole because our leadership has gotten old, and has not made space for the younger generations. We need new spirit, innovation, imagination, a willingness to take risks. That's why we keep pushing for elections, just as we're looking to heal the rift and end the division within the Palestine body politic. Again, it's not entirely under



Ashrawi meeting with then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at the State Department. Wikimedia Commons 2010.

our control. There are other factors and parties that are invested in this division and they want to make sure that it remains and weakens us.

We have to reconsider the whole paradigm, the whole system of PLO, PNA, PNC, PLC, departments of the PLO and ministries of the government. We have a dual system which has to be changed. We have to empower the PLO, we have to reactivate its departments, and it has to regain its representative ability for all Palestinians, because we're not just in the West Bank and Gaza. It has to maintain its capacity for political representation, because that's our process for self-determination, for freedom. We want to develop it into the instruments and institutions of state rather than the Palestinian Authority that donor countries like, because the PA has no political power. The PA only works to deliver services and build institutions. Donor countries are very happy to deal with the PA, and not the PLO, because the PLO brings something much greater than just the functional approach which the peace process adopted. It deals with the land, with sovereignty, with rights, with the unity of the Palestinian people—especially those who are living in exile and in refugee camps.

Even if we have elections in the West Bank and Gaza, that's not the whole story. We need a system that involves all Palestinians because they all feel they are part of the cause and they have the right to be part of decision-making. I've been fighting to bring in new people and I think they will make a difference. Hopefully this will be a launching pad for them to take over, to change attitudes. I don't know how much they can change the political agenda, because they will inherit a very difficult situation. They cannot change the occupation, they cannot change the American bias, they cannot change the nature of the extremist coalition in Israel, but maybe they can devise new and creative ways of leadership, of representation, of dealing with the challenges we face.

You've been critical of the United States' role as effectively the only international mediator in the conflict thus far, and you specifically criticized the US for using positive incentives with Israel, as opposed to threats and pressure towards Palestine. We would like to hear your opinion on what the U.S. can do to be a more effective mediator in

"Elections and commitment to a democratic process are a means of resistance as well as an affirmation of rights."

the conflict and also on the potential for greater European involvement in the future.

Ashrawi: Greater European involvement is something we have been seeking for a long time. The U.S. maintains a monopoly over the political components of peacemaking, and they task the Europeans with signing the checks and supporting nation building. They have a unique and special relationship with Israel to the point that they act as Israel's lawyers. I was in charge of negotiating with the American delegation in Washington and they constantly gave us the Israeli positions as American. They coordinated with the Israelis and they made sure the Israelis accepted it before they presented anything. They constantly echo Israeli preferences and never criticize Israel. They always say Israel will not have any accountability. They incorporated an imbalance: the Palestinians have to prove themselves all the time, and Israel has the right to self-defense and security.

The problem was, and still is, that Israel is a domestic issue in the U.S. because political careers are made and destroyed on the basis of positions vis-à-vis Israel. You have a critical mass of the "extreme Evangelical literalists," as I call them: the fundamentalist Christian right and Zionist right, along with the powerful Pro-Israel lobby and rich donors. Israel interferes in American domestic politics and political careers, while the Palestinians remain the alien, the threat, the other. Although, we are gradually having more support, especially among youth, women, minority groups, and other oppressed people because they have an affinity towards the Palestinians and are now speaking out.

The American role has been detrimental to the objective of peace. They have given Israel time and space to wreak havoc while keeping the prolonged process as a cover to get more recognition, rewards, exemptions, and act with full impunity. We started negotiating in 1991 and look at where we are now: we have lost more life, the settler community has grown from 120,000 to 700,000, they have stolen most of the West Bank, they built walls

on our land, they superimposed a grid of infrastructure on the West Bank, and they have illegally annexed Jerusalem—all with America's support. They threaten us not to go the UN or the ICC. They told us the ICC is tantamount to a nuclear bomb. Why? The ICC is there to hold countries accountable. Settlements, according to the Rome Statute, are a war crime. The attacks on Gaza are a war crime. They told us, "if you go to the ICC, the Americans will cut off all ties." I personally think we should let them cut off all ties. American funding is used primarily to maintain the security of Israel, it goes to security forces in Palestine in order to maintain the safety of the settlers and the Israeli army, while our security forces cannot protect the Palestinian people.

The Europeans feel helpless, they don't want to upset this delicate balance within the transatlantic alliance. They choose when to stand up to the US based on their own interest. They don't implement their own legislation when it comes to Israel. They are the greatest state partnered with Israel, but they are not willing to play a political role. So what do we do? Do we ask for multilateral engagement? Do we ask for the UN to host a meeting? Do we ask the EU? The French hosted a meeting, and Israel refused to go. We were promised that should Israel subvert their attempts that they would hold Israel accountable, that they would recognize Palestine. Israel refused to attend, it attacked the French initiative, and the French disinvited us because Israel wasn't coming. Israel manages to destroy any alternative effort and it says the only peace broker is the US. And with this current administration, you have a settler as ambassador of the US, you have James Greenblatt, who supports settlers, as an envoy of the US. They are even more extreme than the Israelis when it comes to Palestinian rights. There is no chance of having a real peace agreement given this configuration, and given the dysfunctional nature of regional realities. You have four Arab countries that are engaged in proxy wars. You have a new sense of polarization in the region. You have Israel being re-positioned in the region again. All these are detrimental to Palestinian rights and to the chances of peace.

"I didn't choose to be in politics, politics found me. I would like to be with my grandchildren now, and I don't intend to run for the PLO executive committee again."

We're trying to get support from UN organizations to protect ourselves and to hold Israel accountable. We're trying to maintain our non-violent struggle. But to hold your breath and say that somehow without activism there will be a new political process based on international law and the recognition of the parity of rights? No, we don't expect that now. There has to be a serious change in the global, not just regional, realities to do justice to the Palestinians and to detach decision making in the US from this "passionate alliance." This has to happen in the US following a change in public opinion and following real accountability for elected officials, because they are making decisions on the basis of what's good for Israel at the expense of the national interest, and even safety, of the American people.

In addition to being a political activist, you've been an artist, a writer, and a poet. One theme in your writing has been authenticity in language. Two lines in your poem "Hadeel's Song" that stood out to us: you wrote, "a word must have meaning, a name must have meaning." In your lecture yesterday, you rejected the label "terrorist" as applied to the Palestinian people collectively, as well as the jargon of international diplomacy that loses its significance with repetition. Could you speak about the connection between your politics and your art and about that particular theme of linguistic authenticity?

Ashrawi: We have been suffering as a result of the abuse of language and meaning. Once, an Israeli woman and I were giving a joint lecture and I started by reading a poem and she said, "we're not here to talk about poetry, we're here to talk politics." And I said, "if you don't have poetry in your soul, you can't deal with politics. If you don't have the creative impulse and the awareness of the human condition, how can you be political? You may be a politician based on self-interest, but it doesn't mean you have the ability to deal with the core issues that give life meaning and value." I believe the ability to look at things with a sense of originality, to find connections, and to explore beyond the here and now give meaning to

your endeavor. They help you avoid becoming a politician out there for your own self-interest.

I link that to women, because women look at the real issues that give life meaning, and not the "what's in it for me?" approach. Women in our part of the world have struggled very hard to get where they're at. They bring to their position this determination, this awareness and difference in priorities. When we were negotiating we were quite different from the politicians and we told them, "we are not officials; we are Palestinians carrying the weight of our nation, of our people. Our people gave us a trust, and with this trust we're bringing an order to end the suffering of the Palestinian people." It's a different approach that emanates from a sense of responsibility and a cohesive system of looking at reality. I believe women do that. When you rejuvenate the political system and you bring in young people, you bring in a fresh attitude. You bring in the ability for people not just to look at things differently but to take risks. You need to take risks, you cannot do only what is comfortable or convenient. In many ways you have to challenge the prevailing wisdom because quite often it atrophies and it becomes a tool of suppression and containment rather than revelation.

I didn't choose to be in politics, politics found me. I would like to be with my grandchildren now, and I don't intend to run for the PLO executive committee again. Being in a political position is quite restrictive in many ways. It gives you a sense of power and responsibility, but I feel more connection with the people when I'm in civil society. I have more power to change things and build meaningful institutions, that are not just systems of power. I think each one of us is a combination of many roles; you cannot exclude one of your roles for the sake of others. I still want to be an academic. I still want to be a writer. I still want to think creatively. I still want to maintain a system of values. I still want to be a mother and a grandmother and I still want to be a wife. I still want to work on good governance in Palestine and I still want to get rid of the occupation. You cannot compartmentalize

yourself or define yourself only in one role, because the fullness of your humanity takes all of these different aspects of your life and molds them together to come up with a cohesive vision.

In 2009, you became the first woman on the PLO executive committee. Could you speak about the challenges you faced as a pioneering woman in Palestinian leadership and the challenges that women currently face in their struggle to become more involved in Palestinian leadership?

Ashrawi: Being a woman is an added challenge. You cannot allow others to use you as an excuse to exclude other women by saying we have our token woman, or to subscribe to the superwoman syndrome—that women have to be perfect to get to a position where a man doesn't have to be. You have to work by changing social norms, especially when they define honor and shame on the basis of a woman's behavior. I had lots of support because I was raised in a family that was very conscious of women's rights. My father was a defender of women's right, he wrote about women and women's rights, and he told us, "we never put limits or restrictions on your behaviors and abilities, you must never accept any imposed limits or restrictions from society. We raised you to be confident and you have to pursue this."

I was elected to the PLO executive committee as a result of a mutiny of women who refused the agreement among men to put together an executive committee made up of men, and demanded elections. They asked me to run on their behalf, and that's the only reason I agreed to. They voted for me, and the young and the reformers and some unions and professional organizations also voted for me, so I won the elections. I won all the elections in the PLC as well. Every election I ran for I won, which is important because it gave me the confidence of having support, of having the legitimacy from the people who put their confidence in me; but then you have to do them justice. It's not easy at all being a woman in a traditional, male dominated, patriarchal society like Palestine—although we have the whole spectrum from the most oppressed and excluded women to the most independent women. There are lots of built in problems and obstacles, because the automatic response to women has always been based on a bias that women are weaker, women are emotional.

I maintain my work with women's groups because I feel that we move together. If you move alone, you get to a decision making position, but you are used to close doors for others. You have to be able to open doors, you have to be able to bring a gender awareness with you. The challenge is not to accept the imposed norms and means of evaluating power and values, but to be true to your own gender, true to your own people. It's not easy, but we are making a difference. We have women ministers, women judges, women in charge of major state organizations, but not as many as we would like it to be.

Usually, when you have a dangerous situation, it's easy to be a leader. Men tell you fine, women can take risks, and women can be at the forefront of the struggle. You can demonstrate, you can face the army, you can get beaten up, you are allowed to stand up in the struggle. But once there are rewards and recognition, the men push you aside, and say, "go back to the kitchen, and it's time for us to face the serious business." It happened to women in the Second World War in the West, and it happens to women everywhere. And then they tell you issues of social justice distract from the national issue that cannot be postponed. We say there are no primary and secondary issues. They are all connected. How can you fight for the right of self-determination and equality as a nation among other nations when you deprive your women of the right to self-determination and equality within your own society? We've shown that when we decide not to accept the given we can make a difference. ♦



Ashrawi speaking at an IMF conference on the empowerment of Arab women. Flickr 2018.

Amazigh Curators

WOMEN'S ROLE IN MAINTAINING MOROCCO'S BERBER CULTURE

Jenna Williams

Jenna Williams graduated from the Frederik Meijer Honors College at Grand Valley State University with degree in International Relations and a minor in Middle Eastern Studies, with an emphasis on North Africa. While an undergraduate, she studied abroad in Morocco for nine months, where she focused on Arabic, gender studies, youth culture and nationalism. She has plans to obtain a PhD in Cultural Anthropology.

"Language is the key to the heart of a people. If we lose the key, we lose the people. A lost language is a lost tribe, a lost tribe is a lost culture, a lost culture is a lost civilization. A lost civilization is invaluable knowledge lost... the whole vast archives of knowledge and experience in them will be consigned to oblivion." ¹

Language is a means of communication, a marker of identity, a larger heritage, and an invaluable aspect of culture. UNESCO lists a total of 577 languages as critically endangered, the final stage before extinction.² Three of these are currently spoken within the state of Morocco: Tamazight (Ait Rouadi), Sanhaya of Srair, and Ghomra (which has less than 100 speakers).³ This loss of linguistic diversity weakens the unique ethno-scientific knowledge hidden in such languages, such as the history and culture of the people who speak them.⁴ In light of this ongoing loss, it is vital to highlight the steps that have been made to preserve endangered lifestyles, languages and heritages in an era of globalization. As Berber culture's longest curators, women have made vital contributions to the care and maintenance of their culture, to Moroccan society, and to the Berber movement.⁵ This essay argues that Amazigh women's gendered seclusion from

Moroccan society created an environment that facilitated the preservation of Amazigh culture, but at the expense of women's rights. Second, this essay contends that modern efforts to preserve Amazigh culture, such as language standardization and instituting Tamazight script, have ultimately sidelined the very women who protected it for decades.

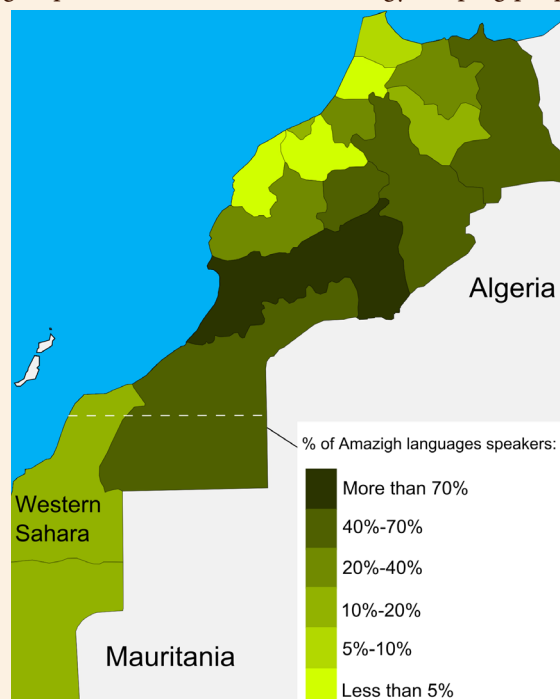
Before proceeding further, it is important to define a few of the key terms that will be used in this study, specifically "culture," "language," and "identity." Culture, encompassing language, history, geography, religion, political system, literature, architecture, and tradition, is what characterizes a society as an identifiable community. Social scientists' definitions for the term "culture" are predictably broad. In one formulation, "a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members."⁶ In other words, "culture is a way of life. It is the content within which we exist, think, feel and relate to others. It is the glue that binds a group of people together."⁷ The strength of a culture resides in its power to assimilate others; a strong culture is less likely to be invaded by a foreign culture and a weak culture tends to be less flexible and tolerant.

Anthropologists concerned with the relationship between language and culture have designed their theories through the Whorf hypothesis, which stipulates that the various forms of meanings created in the patterns of language reflect and produce distinctive views of the world and condition the particularities of a culture.⁸ Culture is also a basis of identity, as it distinguishes between "us" and "others" and limits the borders of national solidarity. Thus, the distinctions between an Arab and a Berber are fundamentally a function of culture.⁹ Robert Linton adds further nuance to the idea of culture by distinguishing between social and biological heritage, arguing the culture in which an individual is brought up is his or her social heritage, and is distinct from biological heritage. Culture, therefore, involves the shared mentality of a given society, which may be learned.¹⁰ For the purpose of clarity, culture will be defined as "the configuration of learned behaviors and their results, whose elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a given society."¹¹

Language is how humans share their culture with others and it holds culturally specific idioms, gendered phrases,

deep historical and traditional context, and the basis for sharing identity. Therefore, the question of preserving Amazigh culture is inextricable from the protection of the many dialects falling under the umbrella language, Tamazight. Anthropologists hypothesize that language comprises three basic functions; expressing, embodying, and symbolizing cultural reality. It expresses facts, ideas or events that are communicable because they refer to a stock of knowledge about the world shared by other people. The way people use the spoken, written, or visual medium itself creates distinctive meanings that are understandable to the group they belong to. Among the ways these may be communicated are a speaker's tone of voice, accent, conversational style, gestures, and facial expressions. Additionally, language is a system of signs that is seen as having a cultural value. Speakers identify themselves and others through their use of language; they view their language as a symbol of their social identity.¹²

Languages, particularly mother tongues, are important for identity building. They have a symbolic role as they represent cultural elements that affect the identity of individuals.¹³ Mother tongues define people and groups in their culture, and ideology, shaping people's



A map displaying the prevalence of the Amazigh language in Morocco. Wikimedia Commons 2011.

personalities and ways of thinking.¹⁴ It is the mother tongue which is the vehicle of a rich oral literature in all its facets (songs, poems, anecdotes, proverbs, riddles, etc.) and which most clearly gives voice to a people's feelings, aspirations, and beliefs. Occasionally, a bilingual shift to a second language is so powerful that it provokes loss of the mother tongue and all the assets that the language provides, including its link to culture.¹⁵ This loss highlights a distinction proposed by Wallace Lambert, who divided bilingualism into two types: "subtractive" and "additive."¹⁶ Subtractive bilingualism refers to cases in which a second language is acquired to the detriment of the first language, and assimilation into the target culture threatens to replace the native culture. In cases of additive bilingualism, the first identity is maintained while the target identity is also acquired. The two idioms function in different communicative situations, and a second cultural identity is added to and coexists with the first. I argue the Moroccan state has encouraged subtractive bilingualism, attempting to eclipse Berber identity and culture through the enactment of Arabization policies. However, Amazigh women have largely retained their Berber identity due to a lack of education and exposure to the public space in which these policies operate.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This paper contends that the objective of the early Moroccan state and its Arabo-Islamic identity was to assimilate the largely rural Amazigh population into the desired urban, Arabophone populace. Theory states that when a society has a large majority of individuals from one culture, individuals from minority groups will be assimilated more quickly: a proposition confirmed by examining US census data.¹⁸ However, the Amazigh culture and language have remained fairly resilient. Despite a steady decline in Amazigh speakers, Berber identity is still alive within the aging female population and interest groups. The female identity, however, is still heavily stigmatized in Morocco and even more so within the Amazigh community, which is profoundly divided between groups including female communities which speak a feminized dialect of Tashelhit, rural communities which have adopted Arab practices, Amazigh cultural

purists, and scholars. To make sense of this contentious environment, it is necessary to explore the socio-political conditions which instigated the devaluation of the Berber culture and forced women to become key inheritors of a 2,000 year old culture.

The division of Berbers and Arabs began early in the period of French colonization and culminated with the Berber *Dahir* of 1930, a colonial decree incorporating traditional Berber customs—which diverged appreciably from sharia—into Algeria's legal order. The document was perceived by Arab nationalists as a Machiavellian divide-and-conquer strategy that separated the Muslim population along meritless ethnic lines.¹⁹ Berbers, they contended, were Muslims, whose judicial system should be under sharia law rather than French, as stipulated by Article 6 of the *Dahir*.²⁰ Arab derision toward the *Dahir* seeped into Morocco's independence movement. Any Berber retaining their language and culture was seen as advocating for colonial rule, and an Arabo-Islamic identity became a key pillar of state building efforts undertaken by Arab independence parties. Confrontation between the nationalists and Amazigh reached its climax between 1956 to 1958 when the popular right-wing *Istiqlal* party claimed political dominance and institutionalized anti-Amazigh sentiment. Leadership posts in majority-Amazigh areas were filled with *Istiqlal* loyalists, rather than members of the community, leading to Amazigh school closures and the removal of Amazigh language media broadcasts in the name of unification.²¹ Reflecting this sentiment, *Istiqlal* party founder Muhammad Allal al Fassi stated:

"[W]here Arabic constitutes the official language of the Moroccan state, a large number of tribes have preserved their local dialect; this constitutes a grave political and social danger because language has great influence on the mentality of the people since it is the main carrier of ideas. This is why the program of the *Istiqlal* party requires Arabization has to be total and complete from the first grade of school."

A predominantly Berber political party, the *Mouvement Populaire* (MP), representing the rural sector emerged

"The objective of the early Moroccan state was to assimilate the Amazigh into the desired urban, Arabophone populace."

"Efforts on the part of male Amazigh activists are largely disconnected from the experience and expertise of rural women"

in 1959. The MP constituted an important component of the pro-monarchy coalition that prevented the *Istiqlal* party from maintaining control over the political system.²² Another crucial pillar of the monarchy's rule was the newly formed *Forces Armées Royales* (FAR), which was commanded by Berbers who had achieved officer rank in the French military.²³ This political victory, however, hardly constituted an endorsement of the Berber aspect of Moroccan identity. In the years after 1959, Mohammed V undertook a policy of Arabization which was continued by his son, Hassan II. As part of its permanent strategy of balancing the various forces in Morocco, the monarchy took both symbolic and concrete steps to accord with the Arab nationalist vision. In 1961, it passed a law defining Morocco as an Arab and Muslim state, in which the official language was Arabic. The same year, an Arab League-backed institution to promote the Arabization of the educational system opened in Rabat.²⁴ This formed the precursor to the massive Arabization movement of the 70s and 80s.

Arabization was deemed crucial for forging a modern national identity and cohesive society by Arab urban elites.²⁵ School textbooks stressed that Moroccan history began with the arrival of Islam and the Idrissi Sharifian dynasty, denying the ancestry of the indigenous people.²⁶ Berbers were ethnicized into Arabs: the Berber language was a sister to Arabic, the Berbers' origins were said to be in Yemen, where they lived primitively until Islam showed them the light. These themes were convenient for Moroccan elites engaged in state-building, as many relied on preexisting stereotypes and were easily promoted in efforts to create a stable Arabo-Islamic identity. Similarly, Mohamed Abd al-Jabri, one of the leading scholars of Arab-Islamic thought, who, ironically, came from an Amazigh family, was of the opinion that Berber dialects in particular should be destroyed because they were incapable of serving as a national unifier, advocating that they be banned from schools, radio, and television.²⁷ Bruce Maddy-Weitzman sums up the extent of the new government's Arabist tendencies: "regarding Berber identity and the Berber language, there was hardly any difference, at least on the declarative level, between the monarchy's orientation and that of the *Istiqlal*."²⁸

In response to these and other betrayals from the monarchy they had supported, Berber relations with the government became increasingly frayed. Successive attempted military coups against King Hassan II, in 1971 and 1972, while not direct initiatives of the Amazigh community, had a certain "Berber coloring" as many of the military officers involved were of Berber origin.²⁹ The mostly Arabophone urban elite were quick to conclude that the coup constituted a Berber challenge to their position in society. *Istiqlal* condemned the coup attempt as a "manifestation of retrograde Berber nationalism." Large numbers of Berbers were purged from the security services, and Berbers were excluded from sensitive positions in the government and palace.³⁰ Amid the chaos, racial mistrust of the Berber community spread through the state, making it difficult for ethnic Berbers to have stable jobs and leading to a rejection of the Amazigh community. At the same time, Morocco experienced an economic collapse, forcing large rural migrations to urban centers in an effort to find greater opportunity and escape the failing agricultural reforms instituted by King Hassan II. While entire families moved in some cases, more often than not the male members of the family would relocate to cities for a majority of the year and return for the harvest. In their absence, rural Amazigh women became stewards of their culture and language as men became bilingual and rejected their tribal identity in the face of Arab hostility.

CURRENT CONTEXT AND EFFORTS

Fundamental to the comprehension of women's preservation of Amazigh culture is an understanding of their role in language maintenance. Much of the current literature surrounding the topic involves dialectal studies in the formation and understanding of these remote groups. According to Katherine Hoffman, the language of Tashelhit (under the umbrella language of Tamazight) is an exclusively rural language, defined topographically between "plains" and "mountain" speakers. While plains residents are more closely associated with Arab speakers from nearby towns, mountain residents are located more remotely and therefore have had less exposure to Arabic. Men who move their families to cities likely become bilingual in Arabic and may go as far

as to reject the widely stigmatized Berber identity and language. These urban centers encourage the linguistic and social acculturation of non-Arab Moroccans into an Arabo-Islamic state.³¹ Yet Hoffman argues that it is in the interest of migrant men that their female family members remain monolingual Tashelhit speakers as it assures that wives will remain on the husband's homelands, tend land, and preserve his patrimony and reputation while he is gone.³² Among Tashelhit speakers, men do not value the speech of women whose vernacular does not exemplify the purist norm. This normative dialect, advocated by Amazigh militants, is not the Tashelhit of the monolingual woman, which has evolved over the decades to suit her lifestyle, but a purified Tashelhit which erases feminine linguistic modifications. While women's maintenance of the Tamazight language is encouraged, their contributions and modifications to it are not.

In these rural communities where labor is gendered and women keep company with women, their ways of speaking are key markers of solidarity, comprising a code of intimacy that marks and validates shared experience, regardless of the dominant society's evaluation of their cultural and symbolic capital. Since women are considered the agriculturalists, women's relationship to



A portrait of an Amazigh woman. David Rosen, Flickr 2006.

the land through labor brings them closer to the language than men as their social networks revolve around Tashelhit-speaking places, where discourse markers of femininity develop outside the sphere of Arab influence. Hoffman argues that, because they indirectly index gender rather than directly marking it, the discourse markers of femininity represent Ochs' theory of a 'move toward defining men's and women's communicative styles, their access to different conversational acts, activities, and genres, and their strategies for performing similar acts, activities and genres.'³³

Hoffman highlights three specific and prevalent examples of Tashelhit-speaking mountain women's use of vocables to emphasize her argument:

1. *aql*, a linguistic feature with no referential content, which signifies surprise at an interlocutor's utterance, indignation, or simply functions to 'hold the floor' in preparation for a more extensive utterance. The speaker briefly pauses after this feature and before resuming the utterance.

2. *niġ-am/niġ-ak* (lit. 'I said to you' f. or m.), a vocative that precedes a new, not a repeated, segment of discourse; and

3. / /, a lateral click resembling the sound Anglo Americans use to urge on a horse that operates pragmatically to indicate agreement or close listening to an interlocutor, similar to an English-speaking American women's use of the back channeling 'uh huh' or head nod.³⁴

Hoffman states that none of the three discourse markers noted above are found in Arabic discourse, or even in the rural plains dialect: each indexes a mountain dweller, and none is used by men. Another example is the practice of mountain women to repeat a greeting sequence with each individual twice each day, despite the fact that these women spend the entire day together. She argues that this communicative practice marks space and time in which labor and leisure are distinct and that this greeting practice is not found among Tashelhit speakers in the plains and towns, and instead is an indexical practice of mountain rurality, and hence of female gender.³⁵ Discourse markers such as these suggest that women recognize their reliance on solid female relationships and reinforce the collective linguistic and cultural refuge from outside criticism, echoing national discourses favoring Arabocentric practices. This solidarity has been recognized by

An Amazigh family enjoying a meal near Marrakesh. Wikimedia Commons 2007.



multiple scholars who argue that Tashelhit is the female language of solidarity and that rural women attributed meanings to speaking Tashelhit different from those of the Amazigh activists who demonstrated a preference for linguistic and cultural purity.³⁶

However, this solidarity comes at a price. The spatial arrangement of the Anti-Atlas Mountains, with the men in cities and women in the rural homelands, is crucial to identity construction as a whole, which occurs as these gender dynamics are incorporated into their senses of personhood and community.³⁷ The resulting divide is beneficial for language maintenance but detrimental to human rights, as the gendered practices allow men to delimit the spatial boundaries of women. Therefore, it is not greatly surprising that the main activists behind the ethnic reawakening of the Berber identity in Morocco are largely male. Male and monarchical capitalization of the Berber issue, created the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (ICRAM) in June of 2001. Similarly, an unrecognized Amazigh political party, *Parti Democratique Amazigh Marocain* (PDAM) was a male-dominated movement for its three years of existence, before it fell afoul of a legal ruling denying the establishment of political parties based on purely ethno-linguistic grounds.³⁸

The establishment of Amazigh schooling and the law defining the Tifnagh script as the official writing system for Tamazight largely ignores the issue that Tamazight and its dialects have existed for four thousand years mainly as an oral medium. When writing was instituted, the Latin script was preferred by early pioneers like

Basset, Amar Said Boulif, the *Pères Blancs* of Kabylia and writer and anthropologist Mouloud Mammeri, while some current activists argue for Latin continuation in light of the Tifnagh introduction.³⁹ Again, this denies women's involvement as they themselves are uneducated in the new script and likely will not be encouraged to learn it. In many rural communities, it is increasingly difficult to educate both genders equally since physical access to public schools is hard to achieve. Many schools and community centers are not only too sparsely located in agrarian areas and therefore seen as unsafe destinations for girls to travel to alone, but are also Arabophone.⁴⁰ Young girls are therefore more likely to be raised at home and adopt their mothers' and grandmothers' role as oral stewards of the Amazigh language and culture while never learning to write the standardized Tifnagh script introduced by Amazigh purists.

Additionally, in urban centers, it is more likely for children to attend free Arabophone public schooling, denying their linguistic identity in school while speaking Moroccan *Darija* (Moroccan Arabic) with peers, and conversing in Tamazight at home with older relatives, than learn the Tifnagh script. The reality of the situation is that while 95% of school-age children are enrolled in school, less than 15% of first grade students are likely to graduate from high school due to low levels of attendance, teacher absenteeism and a multi-lingual environment which contributes to low literacy.⁴¹

To further stress the script's ineffectiveness, it is important to highlight the Moroccan school system in relation to language studies and its multi-lingual environment.⁴² Moroccan students who attend public school are taught in Standard Arabic but take a few compulsory years of French, and are encouraged to continue studying French, English or German in their free time. However, this does not account for students in Amazigh schools who are required to learn the newly standardized Tifnagh script, in addition to Arabic and French. In the pursuit of higher education at the university level, many sought-after programs at the university level, especially popular fields of study in economics and the sciences, are taught in French or English. Therefore, to be successful in their studies, students who study standardized Tamazight must also know Standard Arabic, dialectal Moroccan Arabic, French, and/or English (preferably both).

"Girls are more likely to be raised at home and adopt a role as oral stewards of the Amazigh language and culture "

Since the decision was capitalized by the monarchy and IRCAM (which is decidedly not an Amazigh institution as the king appoints all members rather than the Amazigh community), the historical change was not an Amazigh change but an urban male intellectual change. While the board includes many activists and experts, very few women are present and even fewer are rural women, thus marginalizing them further amongst these dialogues.⁴³ These policies and agendas periodically idealize women's purity and centrality in Amazigh culture and society, yet are not made in consultation with them. As Hoffman states: "the contemporary emphasis on text creation as a maintenance strategy is particularly perplexing given that the Moroccan Tamazight varieties have remained more widespread in speech in a large part due to Morocco's low rural female literacy rate and late development of a state educational system."⁴⁴

Feminist anthropologist and linguists state that this tendency of systematic exclusion of women from decision-making structures outside the home denies women's humanity and makes for bad social science.⁴⁵ The language shift towards Arabic has remained limited—although extensive—precisely because so many rural women have remained monolingual with a female illiteracy rate at 98% in 1997.⁴⁶ Current illiteracy statistics for rural women and girls vary from the official 54.4% encouraged by the Moroccan state, to as high as 90% in 2013.⁴⁷ Tamazight dialects have, perversely, been preserved by this status quo.

These maintenance efforts on the part of urban male Arab elite, monarchy figures, and urban male Amazigh activists are largely disconnected from the experience and expertise of rural women, who are most responsible for this preservation. If an integral part of valorizing culture through language is standardization, women's participation may be further marginalized and dismissed. Nancy Dorian argues that standardization can amplify latent insecurity and shame as speakers see their own way of speaking deficient relative to the standardized form.⁴⁸ Standardizing the Tamazight language may erase decades of use, integration, and change produced by

women, denying the female struggle, story, and efforts under their culture's gender divide. The standardization of Tamazight dialects by means of a script outside dominant use threatens to marginalize the female community historically tasked with their preservation.

CONCLUSION

Amazigh women have been able to preserve their culture and language due to their forced seclusion from society and have introduced gendered adaptations as their language became dominantly practiced by females. Much to the dissatisfaction of Amazigh activists, these women have not had idealized preservation efforts in mind; they have little use for the Tifnagh script nor do they practice the "true" Tamazight activists strive for.⁴⁹ Women often band together and, in certain communities, encourage their children to be bilingual in their dialect and Arabic. Plains residents tend more towards the use of Arabic and have introduced Arabic dialectal marks into their Tashelhit dialect as Arabic is more valuable due to their more frequent interaction with Arabophone communities.⁵⁰ The infrequent exposure of mountain women, in contrast, has led them to largely ignore formalized maintenance efforts as, in their reality, they were unnecessary. These preservation efforts carry more momentum and meaning in the urban movement and its idealization of Berber women than amongst the women themselves. As scholars have noted, it may not be morally acceptable to encourage continued seclusion of these communities for ethnographic and linguistic studies at the expense of human rights.

Morocco has made progress on its human rights platform within the UN, but it has voiced reservations on articles within the Human Rights Charter concerning women's roles; the king withdrew reservations on Articles 9(2) and 16 in April 2011, but has yet to accept others.⁵¹ The king has also introduced efforts to enforce gendered rights, at least on paper, including the Family Code, *Moudawana*, in 2003 and the revision of the Constitution in 2011.⁵² Still, Morocco remains a heavily patriarchal society even in its urban strongholds, making it unlikely that change will reach rural areas in the near future.

Perhaps the first positive change in a long list of the ways Amazigh women are negatively treated and perceived may be the acknowledgement of their contributions to their culture, a culture systematically rejected by the Arabophone elite and Berber men who idealized their women but did not participate in the process of maintenance. This acceptance of the 'real' Amazigh woman rather than the purist vision could contribute to language maintenance efforts and greater understanding of why gendered adaptations to dialects occurred. These adaptations point toward a history that should be learned from and studied rather than ignored. A critical part of this heritage is the decades-long period in which women were excluded from outside life and banded together in solidarity against the Arab "otherness" or took refuge in their own "other" identity. By adopting the Tifnagh script, creating ICRAM without female inclusion, and resisting female linguistic influences, the urban elite men are further marginalizing these women and undermining the survival of Tamazight dialects.

The forces behind Berber reawakening face hard questions in their search to save their culture as the looming threat of urbanization and globalization reduces the self-sufficiency of small, traditional communities. As Arabness begins to infringe upon female communities, male elites should encourage Amazigh women to join the conversation, and share the valuable lessons which have allowed their community to survive thus far, rather than advocating for increased seclusion in their attempts to standardize the script and culture through the male lens. ♦

Endnotes:

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23. Ibid., 88-89.
24. Ibid.
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28. Ibid., 89
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50. Research states that language shifts are more related to the feeling than to the needs of communities. Members of communities may opt to give up their language and move closer to the lingua franca, as they can no longer see the value in their retention of the mother tongue (*Undescribed and Endangered Languages*).
51. Specifically, Morocco has reservations in reference to Articles 2 and 15(4). The former requires signatory states to institute gender equality in their legal orders, including national constitutions; the later regulates the individual's right to freedom of movement and the freedom to choose her residence and domicile (Elliott, Katja Zvan. 2014. "Morocco and Its Women's Rights Struggle: A Failure to Live Up to Its Progressive Image." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* (Duke University press). 18).
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New Askar

A PHOTO ESSAY

Cristina Taulet

Cristina Taulet is a political science student at Davidson College, graduating in 2020. Her research at Davidson focuses on identity politics in the Arab World and its impact on diffusion dynamics in the Middle East and North Africa. This photo essay is the result of Taulet's works in Nablus, Palestine.



As another day rises in the New Askar refugee camp, thousands of Palestinians strive to create a normal life under the ongoing Israeli occupation of the West Bank. For some, waking up every day not knowing the whereabouts of their possessions, their legal status, or the next time they will have access to running water has become a crude, normalized reality that the world seems to have forgotten. Three generations of refugees living in their own land have built communities that are trying to move forward and reconcile their living conditions with their desire for freedom.

Askar camp was first established in 1950, on the outskirts of the Nablus municipality in the northern West Bank. Significant Jewish immigration to Israel between 1950 and 1960 forced many Palestinians to leave their land and move to camps in the West Bank and Gaza. Askar experienced a rapid population increase,

which led to a region-wide shortage of space, resources, and aid that was especially severe in the camp. As a result, thousands of Palestinian refugees started settling down in an area one kilometer away from Askar, which soon became known as “New Askar.” As New Askar expanded independently from “Old” Askar, the UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) began providing it with basic services such as education and healthcare, although it was not officially recognized as an independent refugee camp until 1995. For this reason, international aid was rarely equally distributed, and there were never enough resources to sustain basic standards of living while allowing for any type of development. It was not until the Oslo Accords (1993-1995) that the legal separation was recognized, and it was agreed that Askar camp would be under Palestinian control (Area A). However, New Askar fell under joint Palestinian-Israeli control (Area B), which meant that the Israeli Defense Forces would have a powerful impact on the management and life of the camp.

Despite the official status of Area B, Palestinian autonomy over New Askar is no more than an illusion. In practice, the IDF controls almost every aspect of Palestinians’ lives at the camp, and limits the entry of supplies. Water and energy scarcities are a daily occurrence, and many problems the refugees experience cannot be easily solved given the numerous existing mobility challenges. Due to the uncertain legal status of Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, families living at New Askar do not have the national documents certifying official citizenship that would allow them to move freely. The majority of residents never leave the camp or the Nablus region, and those that do must pass through strict checkpoints to travel even a few miles away.

The three greatest challenges that the community at New Askar faces on a daily basis are overcrowding, unemployment, and drug addiction. The boundaries agreed upon in the Oslo Accords prohibit the construction of buildings outside of the camp’s compound, but the population still grows rapidly, resulting in overcrowded shelters and cramped living conditions for the majority of families. “In New Askar

people don’t really have privacy. We’re too many in too little space. However, this makes us a community. Here, solidarity is as strong as it can get,” asserted a father-of-five who was born and raised in the camp. In addition, many of the refugees do not have legal permission to work outside the camp, leaving them with extremely limited job opportunities. The resulting conditions cause many physical and psychological challenges, especially among the youth. “Many teenagers have lost hope for a better future. They are bored. They are almost certain they won’t get a job after studying, so they drop out of school and rarely go to university. A lot of them turn to drugs as a way of escaping their boredom and crude situation,” said Amjad Rfaie, the current director of New Askar camp.

“We are young. We were born here, raised here. Most of us have never left the Nablus region. We feel there is something wrong, even this is the only reality we know. We start asking questions about the occupation: Who is responsible? Why are we refugees in our own country? Why can’t I go see my grandma in Gaza?,” asks Mohammed, a twenty three-year-old born in New Askar who dropped out of his engineering studies to become a volunteer serving the children of New Askar. “I want to dedicate myself to these kids. I want them to have a better life than the one I and my parents have. They deserve opportunities just like any other human being.”

Efforts to improve living conditions in New Askar are manifold, though limited by larger political realities. Many inhabitants of the camp have come to accept the occupation as a fact of life and now seek a way to move forward with the current circumstances rather than placing their hopes in the next peace treaty. Many local and international organizations attempt to promote alternative forms of education and entertainment, including arts and sports. In the last two years, a soccer field and an outdoor theater have been built for programs designed for the younger generations. Other activities such as painting, photography, boxing, basketball, and gymnastics are included on the camp’s programs.

Even though New Askar’s residents support various parties and differ on numerous political grounds, they

are unified by the Palestinian struggle and the desire for freedom. "Of course everyone's life in Palestine is political. It has to. All of us have different opinions on how things should be done to reach our freedom," said Abdul, born in Askar as a second generation refugee.

"However, we have that in common. Our same goal of liberating Palestine makes us brothers and sisters. In the end, superficial differences don't matter when we're all together in this struggle." ♦



Above: Ahmed, seven years old, rides his bike through the narrow streets of New Askar. Children at the camp have very limited access to healthcare and water, but still manage to find entertainment.



Top Left: Above: Children in New Askar play in the camp's narrow streets. Unable to leave due to their refugee status, their life is confined to cramped, often unhygienic spaces.

Top Right: A co-ed school managed by the UNRWA. Located in New Askar Camp, it is designated as aid for the entire Askar region. Co-ed education is increasingly welcomed in Palestine as a method to achieve gender equality and provide equal opportunities after graduation.

Bottom Right: Infrastructure at New Askar is fragile and incomplete. There is no functioning trash recollection system, causing widespread hygiene and health issues.





Top Left: Two children perform a skit on the top floor of the theater, while it was still under construction.

Bottom Left: The population at New Askar is very engaged with Palestinian politics and holds on to voices of the past that gave hope to the Palestinian liberation movement. Characters such as Yasser Arafat are considered icons of resistance and freedom, and their images are prominently displayed even today.

Bottom Right: Amjad Rfaie, current mayor and director of New Askar, was born and raised in the camp. He became part of the resistance movement and was imprisoned at age fifteen. Six years later, he was freed and now works to build organizations and networks to peacefully fight against the situation. “I believe in fighting through education. We have seen that violence does not work to create peace. If we want peace, we need an educated generation that can maintain dialogue and can live together accepting other belief systems and cultures. When I returned from jail, I wanted to build a library. Ten years later, here it is. I am proud of our achievements but there is still so much we have to do. Little by little, but there is still some hope.”





Top Left: A Palestinian child watches the life of the camp through his window. Some families prefer to keep children in their homes to prevent them from exposure to infections, criminal environments, and illegal substances.

Bottom Left: The Palestinian flag is present in almost every corner of New Askar, reproduced in different forms and sizes.

Bottom Right: Graffiti art, used to communicate ideas about freedom, occupation, beauty, religion, and Palestinian identity, is one of the most popular forms of resistance among Palestinian refugees.



Foundations of Freedom:

DEMOCRATIC ENDURANCE AND FAILURE IN ISRAEL AND TURKEY

Steven Varshavsky

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hile many other regions in the world have experienced significant advances in social and political reform, the Middle East and North Africa remain anomalies in both categories. Over the last 30 years the Middle East and North Africa were rife with conflict, power struggles, and transitions from secular autocracy to Islamist government. However, despite the turmoil in the broader Middle East, Israel has remained a stable democracy. In contrast, Freedom House has recognized Turkey as a partly free democratic government since the late 1990's, but over the last ten years Turkey has experienced the second highest decline in political and social freedoms in the entire world.¹ Which factors caused the democratic institutions in Israel to endure and which factors caused the same institutions in Turkey to deteriorate over the last fifteen years?



Electoral democracies in the Middle East. Darkest signifies unfree countries, lightest, partly free, middle shades, free. Freedom House, 2018.

This paper will first review the scholarship concerning the general causes of democratic endurance and collapse. Next, this paper will rely on a comparative case study of democratic institutions, as a cross-sectional time-series analysis, of Turkey and Israel between 2002 and 2017, to uncover any differences in civil and political liberties. It is hypothesized that the factors that will most directly support democratic endurance are stable government coalitions and the absence of deep societal cleavages. This paper will conclude by analyzing the effects of democratic endurance and foreign policy on the emergence and proliferation of a global civil society.

Neither institutional nor societal democracy appears in countries overnight. It would be premature to judge a country's success in democratization after a single popular uprising or election. "Democratic institutions" are structures existing in codified law that protect the democratic nature of a government. "Democratic society," meanwhile, refers to interpersonal relationships and associations—including religious institutions—that either support or detract from democracy. True "democratization" stems from the endurance of both democratic institutions and society. This section will attempt to operationalize this dependent variable, as well as key institutional and societal independent variables through the parameters of the ordinal classification system utilized by Freedom House. It will then

analyze scholarly debate surrounding the impact of societal variables on democratic stability versus the effect of institutional variables on democratic endurance.²

There is comparatively little research surrounding the endurance of democracy, as opposed to its consolidation and emergence. The literature is further limited by its predominant focus on *either* societal *or* institutional causes. Very little research has examined the two causes together, or compared their relative power in explaining democratic stability. In one study that does consider both these dimensions of democratization, Diskin et al. present two categories of independent variables to assess why democratic regimes collapse or endure: "The first group is made up of institutional variables, and addresses

elements ranging from the type of regime to the concentration of powers within it. The second group includes societal variables, and focuses on factors ranging from the democratic historical background through to social cleavages."³ This grouping offers a framework for defining, operationalizing, and enumerating the independent variables used to measure relative democratic endurance in this study. In this paper, a country will be defined as democratically stable if it has experienced two or more successive elections and multiparty electoral systems.

The first politico-institutional variables that will be discussed is federalism, "which distinguishes between unitary governments and governments with federal or semi-federal features."⁴ A unitary government is characterized by, "a system of political organization with a central supreme government, which holds the authority over and makes the decisions for subordinate local governments. An example of a unitary government is the United Kingdom overseeing Scotland."⁵ On the other hand, a federal system is one in which a higher government shares authority with subordinate governments and allows the subordinate governments to have certain powers of their own, such as the governments of Germany and the United States. Scholarship relating to federalism generally holds that federal states are more prone to democratic collapse than unitary ones, as federalism can lead to center periphery struggles, as evidenced by the American Civil War.⁶

The second institutional variable is presidentialism, which distinguishes between presidential systems—such as those in United States or France, where government branches hold authority independent of one another—and parliamentary systems, where the executive branch derives its authority from the support of the legislative branch. The scholarship in this case suggests that “presidential or semi-presidential regimes are more prone to democratic collapse than parliamentary ones due to the conflicts that can arise between the legislative and executive branches.”⁷

The last institutional variable, proportionality, is defined in one major sense as an electoral system that represents each political party in proportion to its actual voting strength. Proportionality coincides with another binary variable: stability of government coalitions, which measures the amount of infighting that occurs within the various factions comprising a coalition. These variables are often addressed together as governments with high proportionality are prone to have low stability of government coalitions as a result of popular tension. In certain cases, such as postwar Germany, stable government coalitions coupled with high proportionality have not fallen victim to democratic collapse. A government that boasts high levels of proportionality coupled with low coalition stability will generally be more likely to experience collapse than the same government with high coalition stability. However, both of these will be more prone to government failure than a system that has low levels of proportionality, which decreases fragmentation within the government.⁸

Just as there are several politico-institutional variables that affect democratic stability, so too are there multiple socioeconomic variables that contribute to this phenomenon. The first of these variables is the democratic background of a country—its historical

experience, political culture, and the degree of development of its civil society.⁹ It is hypothesized that countries with undemocratic or mixed backgrounds will be more prone to democratic collapse than those with a strong history of democracy.¹⁰

An additional societal characteristic is the degree of a economic inequality, which many studies have concluded is strongly correlated to violence.¹¹ It is therefore hypothesized that a country with a malfunctioning or weak economy will be at a greater risk of democratic collapse than a country with a stable economy.

The last societal variable, cleavage, is a compound variable, just as proportionality was in the institutional group. Deep societal cleavages marks polities that are divided by rigid ideological boundaries, such as might exist between secular and religious groups. Low societal cleavage describes polities that operate harmoniously with minor policy disagreements. This variable is linked to polarization, which denotes the existence and size of anti-system parties. Research suggests that high polarization leads to the proliferation of extreme ideologies, deepening societal cleavages.¹² Although these two variables are closely intertwined, it is possible that even if a society has deep cleavages, such as those between Sunni and Shia Muslim populations, it will not experience democratic collapse without high levels of political polarization to instigate conflict.

Eva Bellin asserts that the causes of democratic collapse are inherently societal, and stem from a weak civil society, which can include a low rate of civil participation, state run economic models, and poor democratic culture. She concludes that weak civil society often occurs if, “Labor unions and businessmen's associations [lack] credible autonomy [and] nongovernmental organizations

“Despite the turmoil in the broader Middle East, Israel has remained a stable democracy. In contrast, ... Turkey has experienced the second highest decline in political and social freedoms in the entire world.”

[lack] indigenous grounding.¹³ The weakness of associational life undermines the development of countervailing power in society that can force the state to be accountable to popular preferences. It also contracts the opportunities for citizens to participate in collective deliberation, stunting the development of a civic culture, that essential underpinning of vibrant democracy.”¹⁴ This argument supports the notion that even if a democracy emerges or consolidates, societies that have had nondemocratic backgrounds will be more likely to see democratic collapse as they lack the culture needed to support those ideals.

Furthermore, Bellin—in agreement with Diskin et al.—argues that in “state run economies, the public sector continues to account for a major share of employment and GNP generation, and this legacy of statist ideologies and rent-fueled opportunities undermines the capacity to build autonomous, countervailing power to the state.”¹⁵ Bellin suggests that if there are few opportunities for prosperity apart from the state, society will be more prone to accept an autocratic leader who will reinstate rent-fueled economies, and it will be easier for autocratic governments to emerge when people do not have the power to vote with their money. This is corroborated by Larry Diamond, who posits that such governments lack the organic expectation of accountability that emerges when states make citizens pay taxes, and therefore a country with a statist economy will be more prone to democratic collapse.¹⁶ Even if many robust institutions are in place to secure democratic stability, societal underpinnings are a crucial bulwark against collapse.

There are also compelling reasons to conclude the institutional variables take primacy over societal ones. Knutsen and Nygård argue that semi-democratic regimes are much less durable than either full democracies or full autocracies, as authority patterns need to be congruent with social institutions in order to achieve lasting stability. Drawing on this conclusion, they ask, “if introducing democratic institutions in otherwise authoritarian regimes harms regime survival, why would any incumbent create or tolerate them?”¹⁷ The same logic also applies to fully democratized countries: the stability of democratic institutions is in the best interest of the incumbent parties. This line of reasoning implies that the operative variable in the study of democratic stability is not societal, but institutional, as societal variables

can be controlled for if they are not favorable to the instituted government. In their study, Knutsen & Nygård examine regime type and strength of institutional coalitions as variables for stability, either democratic or autocratic.

Knutsen and Nygård first examine the type of authority in place and how that affects democratic stability. They argue that regime characteristics, especially those distinguishing between different semi-democratic types along lines of executive recruitment, participation, and executive constraints are statistically significant in predicting when regimes will endure and when they will collapse.¹⁸ This argument reflects the fact that political institutions perform better if their authority patterns are congruent with social institutions and, more importantly, if they are internally consistent.¹⁹ For instance, unitary governments, which Diskin et al. show are internally consonant, are inherently better at maintaining stability than federal governments, which are not internally congruent, and therefore present opportunities for political rivalry.

This paper will compare the cases of Israeli and Turkish democratic stability between 2002 and 2017, as the democratic institutions of these two countries underwent considerably different changes over this time period. In 2002, Turkey displayed strong democratic elections and appeared close to attaining EU membership, while Israeli politics saw a plurality of political thought and expression despite the Second Intifada. In 2017, the paths of these once-promising democracies have diverged considerably. Start and end-point analysis of these two countries could prove to be an effective marker for tracking and predicting the resurgence, decline, or stability of democratic institutions in the Greater Middle East.

This paper will use William Cleveland and Martin Bunton’s *A History of the Modern Middle East* to explore the origins of the governmental style in Turkey and Israel, and in conjunction with other scholarly sources, it will provide explanatory bases for the change in democratic institutions and society in both Turkey and the lack of such change in Israel. Furthermore, this paper will examine the politico-institutional and socioeconomic variables at play in each country at the given snapshot date (either 2002 or 2017) and at the latter juncture, it will analyze the

explanatory power of each argument across years and countries.

In order to understand the political and social movements within Turkey and Israel, it is first necessary to know the historical democratic background of each country. Turkey's modern political history began with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, "who designated six principles as the foundations of the doctrine known as Kemalism: reformism, republicanism, secularism, nationalism, populism, and statism."²⁰ Under Atatürk, Turkey experienced increased Westernization and sowed the seeds of a democratic culture and political participation that has fueled the hopes and expectations of its people until this day. Israel, meanwhile, "was established as a parliamentary democracy with a unicameral legislature...and Israel's election law further encouraged the existence of numerous political parties."²¹ Since Israel's independence, its society has developed a tradition of political participation sustained by steady coalitions constructed during the Ben-Gurion era—traditions of representative participation and stability that endure today, despite a contentious political climate.²² In short, both countries have a strong history of democratic culture, which makes the comparison intriguing, as the modern deviation from this original standard is clear in Turkey, but not apparent in Israel.

Country	Year	Political Rights	Civil Liberties	Status
Turkey	2002	4	5	Partly Free
Turkey	2017	5	6	Not Free
Israel	2002	1	3	Free
Israel	2017	1	3	Free

Table 1: Political and Civil Liberties in Turkey and Israel 2002 and 2017²³

In 2002 Turkey underwent an increase in the strength of democratic institutions, as Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit's coalition government managed to push through key economic measures. However, there was not an equal degree of progress regarding the political and legal reforms required to promote democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. The Turkish parliament did pass a series of 34 amendments to the constitution, which covered increases in freedom of expression, association, gender equality, and the role of the military in the political process.²⁴ The hesitance of Turkish leadership to undertake the political reform necessary to promote democratization, which resulted from a divide between those who saw EU membership as a pathway to prosperity and those who wanted to continue to adhere to the principles of Kemalism, dictated a much more nationalist foreign policy.



The Israeli Knesset celebrating its 61st anniversary. Wikimedia Commons 2010.

In 2002 Turkey operated as a primarily unitary government, meaning that "the general characteristic of the framework within which Turkish local government units were established and expected to function has been centralization, with the central government exercising its power and authority over their functioning."²⁵ Dirkin et al. argue that unitary governments are less likely to cause the collapse of democratic institutions due to the lack of center-periphery struggles, which in the case of Turkey are manifested in divisions between urban and rural areas.

Secondly, Turkey operated on a primarily parliamentary

system, and in the 2002 elections “the Justice and Development Party (AKP), headed by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, took 363 of the 550 seats in the national assembly.”²⁶ Again, Dirkin et al. conclude that parliamentary governments lead to a more stable democratic institution, as presidential governments allow for the possibility of conflict between the executive and legislative branches.²⁷ Lastly, Turkey exhibited relatively high instability among government coalitions in 2002, despite the election of Ahmet Necdet Sezer as president by the ruling coalition in parliament. This instability was partially expressed in the dissolution due to corruption charges of a ruling coalition formed by the center-right Motherland (ANAP), the social-democratic Democratic Left (DSP), and the conservative Democratic Turkey parties. Turkey’s instability was also reflected in the disintegration of the Virtue Party into the Happiness Party and the AKP.²⁸ The high levels of instability in government coalitions, when combined with the high proportionality observed, indicate an increased level of fragmentation in the political atmosphere that hints at the source of Turkey’s current struggles.

Socially, Turkey exhibited relatively minor cleavages in civil society in 2002, as it experienced significant interparty cooperation most likely resulting from its EU candidacy. During this period, “Major constitutional amendments expanded the formal freedoms of expression, association, press, and religion, while expanding minority rights and civilian

authority over the military which were legislated with cooperation across Islamist-secularist ideological fault lines.”²⁹ A popular army, a pro-secular president, and the possibility of EU membership, curbed skeptics’ fears of democratic instability. Despite a history of deep social cleavages, the societal landscape—heavily influenced by the EU—encouraged secular-religious cooperation that pointed to a greater chance for democratic stability, yet the fragility of the EU’s offer meant this minor cleavage had the potential to reemerge. This societal cleavage, however minor at the time, was exhibited in low levels of polarization in Turkey’s parliament, most likely stemming from the same causal factor: EU membership. In overall terms, however, the potential of EU membership depolarized the Turkish parliament as the sense of cooperation in pursuit of a greater cause smoothed over the ever present secular-religious cleavage.

The Turkish economy was also affected heavily by EU candidacy, which led the Turkish government to “[lift] obstacles to privatization, [attract] foreign direct investment, and [tackle] corruption.”³⁰ Just as Dirkin et al. would predict, Turkey’s flourishing economy provided a foundation for democratic stability. However, as was the case in the discussion of societal cleavages, it is important to note the causal importance of Turkey’s EU candidacy in 2002. Without the prospect of joining the EU, it is very likely that Turkey would have experienced less economic growth and deeper social cleavages.



Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, 1921. Wikimedia Commons.

The 2002 summary on Israel provided by Freedom House reflects not only the ongoing and intensifying conflict that was the Second Intifada, but also the landslide election of “the right-wing Likud Party leader and hawkish former general, Ariel Sharon.” The authors observe that “feeling the Palestinians were ultimately unwilling to compromise for peace, the Israeli populace, including those on the left, shifted dramatically to the right, with security issues and the specter of war looming large in the Israeli psyche.”³¹ In tandem, the election of Ariel Sharon and the intensification of the Second Intifada limited Israeli civil liberties as security interests were granted greater importance. Despite the relatively lower civil liberties standard reported by Freedom House, Israeli citizens still could change their government democratically and freedoms of assembly, association, and religion were respected.

“Since Israel's independence, its society has developed a tradition of political participation”

Since independence, Israel has successfully maintained a low likelihood of democratic collapse arising from inter-institutional conflict. Israel has a unitary government under the authority of the parliament, or Knesset, which, in conjunction with a popular vote, elects a coalition government every four years. Although Israel has an independent judiciary not under the control of the Knesset or Prime Minister's Office, the Knesset retains a higher elective authority. Due to the lack of competition between the central and peripheral authorities, Israel's unitary government suggests a lower risk for democratic collapse.³²

Although it lacks a unitary constitutional document, Israel has “developed a parliamentary democracy with a vibrant party system where Israelis have directly elected members of parliament and a prime minister, who is head of government, drawn directly from the parliament itself.”³³ In this category, Diskin et al. argue that the ability of a parliamentary system to prevent zero-sum elections and infighting between the executive and legislative branches, lowers the risk of democratic collapse.³⁴

Israel is marked by a distinctive tandem of stable coalitions and high electoral proportionality. As Israeli parliamentary elections are held according to a system of party-list proportional representation, it follows that proportionality in Israeli democratic life was and is relatively high. This conclusion is borne out in numbers: “a party receiving 25 percent of the vote would be awarded thirty seats in the 120-member Knesset.”³⁵ High proportionality, however, has not coincided with continuous turnover and reorientation of political coalitions, but rather with prolonged dominance of the Likud and Labor parties in the Knesset.³⁶ Accordingly, it is uncertain in Israel's case whether proportionality constitutes a factor enhancing risk of democratic collapse, as theorized by Diskin et al.³⁷

Societal variables raise more serious challenges to Israel's democratic stability. One central difficulty of the country's politics that has drawn notice from a broad range of observers is “tension between Israel as

a Jewish state and Israel as a democratic state, [which] sometimes impedes Israel's ability to implement reforms.”³⁸ This secular-religious divide, “so intense, pervasive and lasting that for the better part of two generations it all but sapped Israel's political energies,” constitutes a deep social cleavage that has the potential to severely destabilize Israeli democratic institutions.³⁹ This divide, so significant to Israeli society that it affected party deliberations for more than half a century, indicates a heightened risk for party polarization and democratic collapse.

Lastly, Israel's status as a leading economy in the Middle East is evidenced by its high rate of innovation as well as its ability to allow citizens to participate in their collective economic wellbeing.⁴⁰ 75% of Israel's employable population belongs to the Histadrut (General Federation of Labor), suggesting that Israel encourages its citizens to engage in collective bargaining, giving them a personal stake in the economic wellbeing of their country.

Institutionally speaking, Israel and Turkey exhibited a great deal in common in 2002, as they both had unitary, parliamentary democracies. There was, however, one marked difference that separated the two, and posed a potential threat to the future of Turkish democratic institutions: the relatively weaker stability of government coalitions in Turkey. Due to rampant corruption, many parliamentary coalitions in Turkey were disbanded, and subsequently restructured into entirely different entities. The resulting political gridlock and party infighting put Turkey at greater risk of encountering problems in its attempts to pass necessary legislation, further destabilizing its democratic institutions.

Socially speaking, Turkey's political climate in 2002 was greatly influenced by the prospect of EU membership, and as a result the deep secular-religious social cleavages were temporarily ignored, likely motivated by the massive boost to the Turkish economy that EU membership would provide. Conversely, Israel continued to show deep societal cleavages along religious-secular lines, despite the

temporarily unifying effect of the Second Intifada that rallied the country behind Ariel Sharon.⁴¹ This fleeting consensus indicates that security in Israel, like economic prospects in Turkey, has a unifying effect on a population that usually exhibits deep sectarian divides. With this history in mind, it is possible to analyze whether institutional or societal factors have a greater effect on democratic endurance as a strictly cross sectional analysis. The longevity of the deep societal cleavages in both Turkey and Israel suggests that this variable does not have significant influence on the endurance of democratic institutions, as they have survived despite these cleavages. Rather, it appears that the instability in Turkish government coalitions was a larger source of democratic instability, given Turkey's history of military coups when the secular order of the government is compromised.⁴²

The information provided by Freedom House suggests that by 2017 the Turkish government had restricted many of the civil and political liberties that its citizens once enjoyed, and saw a political restructuring of the parliamentary government as a result of the attempted military coup. Although Turkey still holds multiparty elections, Recep Tayyip Erdogan has dominated the government since moving from the premiership to the presidency in 2004. In addition, Turkey has suffered terrorist attacks by both ISIS forces and Kurdish militias, which it responded to by amending the Turkish constitution to allow for the removal of Kurdish parliamentary members from office.⁴³

The unitary status of the Turkish government has remained relatively unchanged since 2002 and the executive authority still holds power over subordinate governments, especially given Erdogan's recent consolidation of power following the military coup. The most important change in Turkey's institutional variables has been Erdogan's transition from prime minister to president. As stated by Diskin et al., a



Turkish journalists protesting the imprisonment of their colleagues. Wikimedia Commons, 2016.

presidential regime is less stable than a parliamentary regime because of the conflict that can arise between the executive and the legislative branches.⁴⁴ By moving from the office of prime minister to that of the president, Erdogan introduced the possibility of conflict with the legislature if it established a majority opposed to his rule. While this would not have a lasting effect in a country such as the United States due to the assurance of regular elections, Erdogan's move in Turkey suggests a shift toward a greater degree of autocracy.

The cancellation of the most recent elections due to the Turkish parliament's failure to form a coalition, supports the hypothesis that an inability to establish stable coalitions could be correlated with instability of democratic institutions.⁴⁵ It may be further postulated that Erdogan's made his transition to the office of presidency—which he won with an extremely small majority—in order to ensure his continued power, since the likelihood of forming a majority coalition would have been low.

As previously predicted, the end of any serious consideration for EU membership, has led to deepening societal cleavages in Turkey and the reemergence of the conflict between secular and religious groups. Since 2002 many analysts have predicted that the denial of EU membership would reopen the wound that existed just below the surface

in Turkish society. For instance, Kirsty Hughes writes that, “The lack of influence of either the US or the EU on the unfolding crisis is remarked on by many. The EU’s lacklustre approach on negotiating EU membership for Turkey—including the opposition to Turkey’s accession from French President Nikolas Sarkozy—has reduced European influence sharply... ‘The tragic thing is that the EU lost its leverage.’”⁴⁶ Hughes’s argument is convincing, as the secular-religious divide in Turkey has long been a source of contention among Turkey’s populace. Nikolas Sarkozy’s rejection of Turkey’s bid to join the EU isolated Turkey and left no reason for cooperation between secular and religious factions.

According to the Freedom House annual report, Israel saw a wave of stabbing attacks in 2017, despite the easing of tensions with Palestine earlier in the year. While Israel still hosts a diverse and competitive multiparty system, and independent institutions that guarantee political and civil liberties for most of the population, the Knesset continued to enforce a policy of intolerance for organizations and individuals who deny Israel’s Jewish character, oppose democracy, or incite racism.⁴⁷ Additionally, following the end of the Second Intifada, Israel has reduced the restrictions on civil liberties that it created to protect the security of its citizens.

Israel exhibited little institutional change between 2002 and 2017, perhaps an effect rather than a cause these institutions’ stably democratic character. A more noteworthy change occurred in regard to proportionality; an Israeli-Arab coalition party was introduced in the Knesset, which gave a voice to the previously unrepresented Arab minority in the country.⁴⁸ This increase in proportionality suggests Israel’s democratic institutions could become less stable as it increased political fragmentation. This change occurred alongside the destabilization of government coalitions, which also points to a decrease in democratic stability in a country already gridlocked along secular-religious lines.⁴⁹

The deep societal cleavages that were suppressed by the Second Intifada and the united support for security it caused have resurfaced, and renewed the debate of the true inheritors of Zionism: religious society or secular-democratic society. Steven Erlanger suggests that “those who hold to the secular and internationalist vision of the nation’s founders are once again at odds against the nationalist religious settlers who create communities beyond the 1967 boundaries and seek to annex more of the biblical land of Israel.”⁵⁰ Since Israel operates on a system of proportional representation, this sectarian societal cleavage will likely not be resolved on the political level until it first is resolved on the societal level.

On a cross sectional basis, the growing change in Turkey’s political system fuels the ongoing collapse of its democratic institutions, and Erdogan’s move from prime minister to president demonstrates his use of existing government institutions in order to enable a more authoritarian rule. Israel on the other hand exhibited no change in democratic institutions, aside from the emergence of increasingly unstable government coalitions. On a time series basis, Turkey, as hypothesized, saw increased instability in government coalitions primarily due to the end of any serious EU candidacy coupled with Erdogan’s attempt to increase his power. Although Israel has begun to see instability in government coalitions, likely due to the higher proportionality of the parliament, its institutions have remained relatively unchanged. These institutions have shown no signs of devolving, perhaps due to Israel’s uninterrupted history of vibrant democratic culture.

The societal variables demonstrate a clear similarity between Israel and Turkey, as political life largely operates along deep societal cleavages between secular and religious groups in both countries. In 2002, these cleavages were dampened by the economic prospects of EU membership and the security concerns of the Second Intifada respectively, but, as predicted, in the absence of these external variables, sectarianism

“Israel encourages its citizens to engage in collective bargaining, giving them a personal stake in the economic wellbeing of their country.”

has reemerged in both societies and will likely result in increased polarization. As the prospects of EU membership became increasingly improbable, Turkey's economic health worsened, culminating in the appropriation of many Turkish businesses and much personal property in the wake of the attempted coup.⁵² While economic factors had little significance to the stability of Turkish democracy in 2002, there is now a fear that the economic downturn resulting from political instability will encourage further destruction to Turkish democracy. While Turkey has seen significant economic fluctuation due to the changing likelihood of its EU candidacy, Israel has enjoyed economic stability and relatively steady GDP growth and economic civil participation.

While Israel has remained the only stable democracy in the Middle East, Turkey, a partly free democratic government since the late 1990's, experienced the second highest decline in political and social freedoms in the entire world. In order to accurately assess the social and institutional causes for this discrepancy, this paper conducted a comparative case study of the democratic institutions in Turkey and Israel, as a cross-sectional time-series analysis, between 2002 and 2017. The evidence suggests that the institutional variable that changed most is the stability of government coalitions, which has a strong effect on the stability of democratic endurance in Turkey, although it remains to be seen if this same instability will have an analogous effect in Israel. From a societal standpoint, social cleavages that lead to political polarization effectively predicted democratic collapse in Turkey, but the same societal cleavages existed in Israeli society which has not yet experienced the egregious polarization of Turkish society.

This study has implications for advocates of deep engagement policy in US and European foreign affairs, as many times governments have advocated for intervention in another country's affairs without knowledge of which variables to change in order to benefit their own foreign policy. In order to maintain the strategic geopolitical access and alliances in the Middle East enabled by a stable Turkish government, it would be in the best interest of European leaders to reinitiate efforts to reintegrate Turkey into the European sphere of influence through EU membership. As most of the literature points out, the economic growth that Turkish society

expected to attain through EU membership calmed sectarian tensions, and even led to the formation of a relatively stable coalition government. Similarly, deep engagement US policymakers should push for negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians, which would hopefully quell the sectarian debate in Israel over whether to follow the Greater Israel or Land-For-Peace school of foreign policy and help Israel remain a stable bastion of liberal democracy in the Middle East

However, this paper does not adequately discuss the implications of foreign intervention, or national identity as causal mechanisms of democratic stability, despite the expansive literature on how Zionism in Israel and Kemalism in Turkey shape democratic stability. This paper also ignored the differences in the respective religious identity of Israel and Turkey. Further scholarship should attempt to analyze the effects of both secular and religious national identity on democratic stability using these two countries as case examples. ♦

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Unfinished Identities

EXPRESSIONS OF COSMOPOLITANISM IN LEVANTINE LITERATURE

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he Middle East has historically been described as a region of discontinuity, diversity and pluralism. It is the cradle of civilization, the birthplace of the three Abrahamic religions, and home to a multitude of ethno-religious and linguistic groups. Centuries of intermingling have created an elastic and variable Middle Eastern and Levantine identity, embraced in different yet legitimate ways by those in the region. As Philip Mansel states in *Levant: Splendour and Catastrophe on the Mediterranean*, “a Western name for an Eastern area, the Levant was also, by implication, a dialogue between East and West: and therefore—after the Muslim conquests of much of the eastern Mediterranean in the seventh century—between Islam and Christianity.”¹

However, although the region is known and embraced for its variety, many have tried to enforce their specific idea of Middle Eastern identity onto others, creating great sources of tensions and warring factions. Lebanon is a perfect example of this, as it is a microcosm of the Middle East. This miniscule country nestled on the Mediterranean coast of the Levant is home to almost twenty distinct ethno-religious groups, and has been the meeting place of Maronite, Sunni, Shia, Greek Orthodox, Melkite, Druze, and Jewish traditions. It is extremely diverse geographically, politically and ideologically, and can truly illustrate the issues the modern Middle East faces in the 21st century.

With its unparalleled diversity, the Middle East has the potential to become, and in places already is, a haven of cosmopolitanism. This recently popularized ideology advocates that all human beings, regardless of their political, religious, or ethnic affiliations, should constitute one global community that respects all its members equally, rather than multiple exclusive communities that only look out for people of their own.² Middle Eastern intellectuals of all backgrounds have advocated for this kind of inclusive and fluid form of identification, one that avoids hostility and calls upon institutions to respect the natural human right of individuality. Despite its long tradition of pluralism, however, the Middle East is today ridden by sectarian conflict and political dysfunction, and inspires fear in foreigners who think of bloodshed before thinking of the beautiful and multi-faceted Middle Eastern history and culture.

Modern Arabic literature, from works of prose to poetry, mirrors the exceptionally complex political reality of the Middle East. Against the backdrop of Arab-Israeli conflict, the rise and subsequent fall of Arab Nationalism, and warring forms of identification in the region, there have arisen diverse works of literature remarkably poignant and illustrative of their times. Adonis and Amin Maalouf, two Levantine authors of the 20th century, are known as idealists and provocative writers who defend this concept of

cosmopolitanism in the very challenging and hostile Middle Eastern reality; they are strong critiques of the current sectarianism and violence and yearn for a cosmopolitan Middle East where all human beings with their differences are respected. Looking at the Middle East of the 21st century, is this cosmopolitan view realistic and possible? Or, is it a dream that only a privileged few can imagine and aspire to reach?

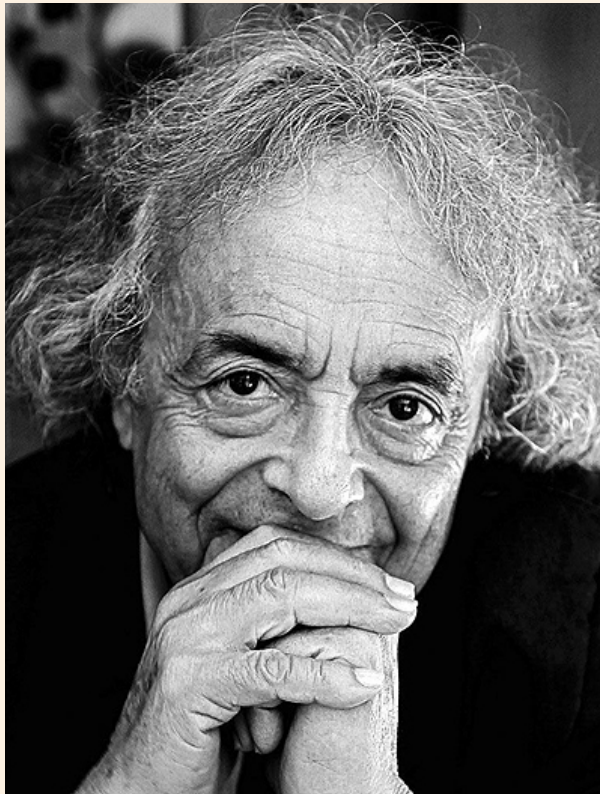
The term 'cosmopolitanism' can be traced back to Ancient Greek civilization; it derives from the Greek *kosmopolitês*, meaning "citizen of the world." This groundbreaking concept transcends the manmade boundaries of nationhood, looking towards the world's well-being rather than that of local communities based on ethnicity, religion, social status, or political consensus. It does not impose universal moral guidelines, and maintains that men and women of different backgrounds must respect and embrace one another's differences instead of feeling targeted by them. In other words, there is not one group, culture or civilization that is superior in any form, as they are all legitimate in distinct ways. It is a utopian vision of the world that would, in theory, eliminate any form of discrimination, mistrust or violence among people of different groups. In the documentary series *Examined Life*, self-proclaimed cosmopolitan and intellectual Kwame Anthony Appiah expresses his vision of cosmopolitanism and its importance in today's increasingly globalized society:

"We need a notion of global citizenship [...] The cosmopolitan says you have to begin by recognizing that we are responsible, collectively, for each other, as citizens are. But second, cosmopolitans think that it's okay for people to be different. They care about everybody, but not in a way that means they want everybody to be the same, or like them."³

This idealistic vision is challenging to implement in a world where political boundaries are synonymous with human identities. Manmade separations enforce a language, history, and culture on an individual, who consequently identifies him or herself as an

actor of the nation state. Ernest Renan grapples with these issues in his famous essay “What is a Nation?,” observing that the modern state is a relatively new Western invention. The modern state, he contends, promoted the perception of racial differences, as certain peoples implicitly or explicitly began to identify only with their own co-nationals. This exclusivity helped justify the quest to dominate other European countries. Renan uses the example of the formation of the French nation to illustrate this point:

“France very legitimately became the name of a country into which only a very imperceptible minority of Franks had entered. In the first chansons de geste of the tenth-century, so perfect a mirror of their time, all inhabitants of France are French. The idea of a difference of race within the population of France, so evident in the writing of Gregory of Tours, is to no degree to be found among French writers and poets



The Syrian poet known by the pen name Adonis. Wikimedia Commons.

following Hugh Capet. The difference between the nobleman and the villain is as accentuated as possible but the difference between the one and the other is not at all an ethnic difference.”⁴

The European continent, partitioned this way for centuries, has managed to spread this political system to the rest of the world through imperialism. Although artificial, the concepts of nations and races will continue to play a crucial role in society for as long as people continue to identify with a specific nation or race. In the Middle East, and particularly in Lebanon, people are classified along ethno-religious lines, further accentuating division and leading people away from cosmopolitanism. However, several 20th century Levantine intellectuals, most notably Adonis or Maalouf, echo Appiah’s call for global citizenship. They see their society as outdated and sectarian, and, through their works of poetry and prose, call for social reforms promoting tolerance and embracing diversity.

An influential proponent of cosmopolitanism in modern Arabic literature, the poet, essayist, and critic Adonis is one of the most celebrated literary figures of the Arabic language. Born Ali Ahmad Saïd Asbar near Latakia in 1930 and educated abroad, he is known for his provocative and contentious writing, which constantly questions the morality and legitimacy of modern Arab culture and argues that it is in urgent need of a full transformation. In his view, Middle Eastern norms enforce a monolithic and rigid identity, failing to give Arabs the liberty they deserve to develop their own identity. In *Identité Inachevée* (translated *Unfinished Identity*, 2004), Adonis promotes a fluid and forever-changing conception of identity, which, in his opinion, is the only path to true authenticity. This philosophy opposes the existing inflexible and outdated form of identification that currently exists in the Middle East, one that has led to the inevitable self-destruction of Arabness. Although he mostly addresses Middle Eastern and Arab issues, his message is meant to be universal and is relevant to people of all backgrounds.

As an Alawite, a then-repressed sect in majority-Sunni Syria, Adonis grew up removed from normative Islamic and Arab culture, in a land under foreign European mandate teeming with both religious and ethnic diversity. He is therefore a product of “a hybrid and a conflation of cultural legacies, ethnic accretions, and geological depositions seldom compatible with prevalent paradigms [...] unhindered by the barriers of his time’s ideological, conceptual, and spatial orthodoxies.”⁵ His non-traditional style certainly stood out among the waves of Pan-Arabism taking over the Middle East at the time, making him one of the most controversial and offensive Arab poets to have ever lived. Nevertheless, his ingenious and revolutionary works have had much success among forward-thinking Middle Eastern readers and intellectuals, and he is considered today as the “Arab world’s greatest living poet.”⁶ In order to achieve his full potential as an outspoken artist, Adonis moved to Lebanon in 1956 to take advantage of the greater level of freedom of speech and more progressive circles that cosmopolitan Beirut offered in comparison to neighboring Arab countries. He eventually became a Lebanese citizen, and after several decades in Beirut moved to Paris, where he still resides at the age of 87.

Adonis has adopted different political ideologies throughout his life, reflecting his willingness to embrace ideological fluidity, with his views evolving along with his personal development. His most important works, however, have always supported a pluralistic Middle Eastern identity. *Identité Inachevée* forcefully advocates for the concept of “unfinished identities”: the idea that one’s personal identity is forever changing and should not be fixed according to certain pre-conceived norms. Adonis’s vision resembles Ernest Renan’s liberal view of *identité électorale* (“elective identity”), a philosophy that calls for individuals to construct their own identities rather than accept them from above.

Identity, for Adonis, is not inherent. Contrarily to certain nationalist beliefs; it is fluid, composed of a plethora of elements, influenced by many factors,

and cannot be imposed on an individual. Throughout their lifetimes, men and women need to create their own identity based on their personal background, experiences, and opinions. Every identity is “open,” “a creation,” and differs from person to person.⁷ Following this logic, Adonis claims that he was “born three times: in Syria, in Lebanon and in France.”⁸ Although he has very deep links to every one of these places, he finds it impossible to tie himself to a single one of them. Refusing to solely identify as ‘Syrian’, ‘Lebanese’ or ‘French’, he rather decides to adopt all of these cultural backgrounds to define the most authentic image of himself. Adonis is a strong believer in creating bridges between different lifestyles and cultures, as he is convinced that an identity should not be confined by artificial territorial lines. In his works, he often calls for a hybridization of Middle Eastern and European culture, which could potentially heal the divide between the Orient and the West:

“I began realizing that “me”, “the self”, would be unable to understand or comprehend itself if it did not



The Lebanese author Amin Maalouf. Wikimedia Commons 2013.

“Adonis grew up removed from normative Islamic and Arab culture, in a land under foreign European mandate teeming with both religious and ethnic diversity.”

attempt to understand ‘the other.’ By the same token, I could not understand the East without attempting to understand the West—just as the West itself remains untrue to itself without attempting to understand the East. Cultural identity is like love; it is a continuous dialogue, and alliance between the “self” and the “other”. For the “other” is not only an expression of a need for dialogue; rather, the “other” is a fundamental component of the “self.” A tongue that communicates in many tongues.”⁹

Maalouf is one of the most celebrated Lebanese francophone writers of the modern era, and is a very respected author both in Lebanon and abroad, especially in France, where he was elected to the prestigious *Académie Française* in 2012. Born in 1949 into a Melkite family, he received a French education in Jesuit missionary schools. When the Lebanese Civil War broke out in 1975, he fled to Paris where he continues to live and work. Straddling two distinct countries and traditions, his novels, poetry, essays, journalism, and works of history focus on multifaceted identities and the understanding between distinct cultures, especially between the East and the West. Although he mostly writes in French, most of his novels take place in the Levant and recount stories of people like him; Maalouf’s characters “range across the Mediterranean and the old world of the Levant that’s vanished since the first world war when Greek and Italian mingled with Arabic and Turkish, and Druze rubbed shoulders with Christians, Jews and Sunni Muslims.”¹⁰

Maalouf’s works are an ode to Levantinism, an ideology that advocates for multiplicity, diversity, movement, and mutual respect between the people of the Levant and beyond. Posed between Lebanon

and France, the East and the West, Maalouf routinely deals with this intercultural exchange not only within his own social circles, but also within himself. In his famous essay “*Identités Meutrières*” (translated “In the Name of Identity,” 1998), Maalouf speaks of the importance of embracing one’s individual identity instead of an identity enforced by a superior entity in order to achieve a tolerant society. A person’s given identity is composed of multiple facets, similar to a mosaic, and we must not ignore any of them if we want to be true to ourselves. The mosaic can include pieces adopted by choice as well as those inherited from the geopolitical environment. Maalouf therefore considers both his Lebanese and French backgrounds to be integral to his personal identity, and refuses to sacrifice any part of it in order to fit into a specific mold. In the opening pages of *Identités Meutrières*, he addresses his personal dilemma of being Franco-Lebanese and exposes his philosophy of identity:

“How many times, since I left Lebanon in 1976 to live in France, have people asked me, with the best intentions in the world, whether I felt “more French” or “more Lebanese”? And I always give the same answer: “Both!” I say that not in the interests of fairness or balance, but because any other answer would be a lie. What makes me myself rather than anyone else is the very fact that I am poised between two countries, two or three languages and several cultural traditions. It is precisely this that defines my identity. Would I exist more authentically if I cut off a part of myself? [...] So am I half French and half Lebanese? Of course not. Identity can’t be compartmentalised. You can’t divide it up into halves or thirds or any other separate segments. I haven’t got several identities: I’ve got just one, made up of many components in a mixture that is unique to me, just as other people’s identity is unique to them as individuals.”¹¹

For Maalouf, embracing multiple facets of his identity, whether religious, ethnic, or professional, creates multiple bridges that can be shared with people all around the world, not only with one specific limiting group. For example, he states that, as a Christian, he is able to connect with to the two billion Christians spanning all continents, while his ability to speak Arabic creates bonds with all in the Arab and Islamic worlds: “There are many things in which I differ from every Christian, every Arab, and every Muslim, but between me and each of them there is also an undeniable kinship, in one case religious and intellectual and in the other linguistic and cultural.”¹² This multiple identity, he concludes, makes him a unique individual whom no institutional or social group should chastise.¹³ Maalouf, and those who support his philosophy, pride themselves in building bridges with others, creating a world of tolerance rather than a world of sectarianism.

Like most of his novels, *Les Échelles du Levant* (translated *Ports of Call*, 1996) speaks to the importance and the challenges of adopting multifaceted identities. Although societal standards surrounding religion and ethnicity restrict relationships between individuals from different social backgrounds, the protagonists of *Les Échelles du Levant*, the Turkish-Armenian Muslim Ossyane and the Austro-Jewish Clara, find a way to break through those boundaries. The idea of a Muslim man and a Jewish woman together, especially since the start of the Arab-Israeli War, seems almost inconceivable to us, and Ossyane and Clara’s story expresses the possibility of reconciliation between the two antagonistic camps. Maalouf proves that understanding can be achieved once humans break through their pre-conceived notions of the other and embrace their personal and collective diversity. He also addresses the difficulties of their unusual

relationship. Society separated this couple from one another following the creation of Israel in 1948, an event that gave birth to a never ending conflict creating intense animosity between the Jewish and the Muslim-Arab worlds. Nonetheless, Clara and Ossyane’s daughter, a hybrid between Muslim and Jewish cultures, is an example of how cultural open-mindedness can bring many benefits to both individuals and society.

Adonis and Maalouf, among other Middle Eastern intellectuals, represent the essence of cosmopolitanism. Although both of these writers have very different backgrounds, one being a Syrian Alawite and the other a Lebanese Melkite Catholic, they are able to connect with one another and with others through open-mindedness and acceptance; they have very similar ideologies calling on people of their own group and other groups to look beyond artificial boundaries and to celebrate individual distinctiveness instead of a group’s constructed homogeneity. Their embrace of Levantinism, in different iterations, allows them to connect with various people across the Mediterranean and to be open to other forms of identification. By creating bonds with different social, religious and ethnic circles, these intellectuals are able to build connections with others who do not share the same identity, making them enlightened global citizens instead of chauvinistic nationalists. Cosmopolitanism therefore helps people connect with the other culturally, linguistically, ritually and religiously.

In contrast with the progressive ideologies espoused by Middle Eastern intellectuals, many Arabs do not agree with the tenets of cosmopolitanism. By adopting elitist ideologies, such as many strictly Arabist Muslim or Western-oriented Christians circles have done in Lebanon, the possibility to

“There are many things in which I differ from every Christian, every Arab, and every Muslim, but between me and each of them there is also an undeniable kinship.”

connect with other different people is lost; this was clearly demonstrated in the tragic Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) which caused great destruction and death on all sides. This antagonism, however, was not strictly theological. The strong sectarianism in Lebanon was due to the different image each group has of what Lebanon is and should be, and continues to rattle Lebanon today. One illustration of this disagreement is the presence of competing languages in the country, since “the coexistence in Lebanon of the Arabic and French languages presents itself as an immediate conflict that engages the personality of the Lebanese and divides their opinion.”¹⁴ The two dominant religions in Lebanon identify with two distinct conceptions of civilization and mankind, the Christian being Western-oriented and the Muslim being Arab-oriented, as reflected by the usage of different languages by different groups of people: Lebanese Christians are usually the defenders of the French language, whereas Lebanese Muslims tend to identify more with the Arabic language.¹⁵ Citizens of Lebanon are therefore faced with the challenge of incorporating “parallel but politically incompatible varieties of ethnolinguistic identification,” a phenomenon Tristan Mabry refers to as “dinationism.”¹⁶ Since incorporating both is somewhat difficult or unnatural, the Lebanese often ended up identifying strictly with one or the other.

Arab Nationalism, in particular, did not leave much room for multi-faceted identities. This ideology emulates the German romantic conception of identity: an individual is an Arab because he or she was born an Arab, and has absolutely no say in the matter. This ideology stands in perfect contrast with Adonis’ and Maalouf’s intersectional views of identity. Whereas Arab Nationalism prides itself in separating “us” from “them” by making a clear distinction between Eastern and Western values, cosmopolitan thinkers embrace the multiple cultures they are confronted with and integrate them into their



Adonis in Krakow, Poland for the Miłosz literary festival. Wikimedia Images 2011.

personal identity. As Hannah Arendt states in the *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arab Nationalism is a form of “tribal nationalism,” one that “always insists that its own people is surrounded by a ‘world of enemies,’ ‘one against all,’ that a fundamental difference exists between a people and all others. It claims its people to be unique, individual, incompatible with all others, and denies theoretically the very possibility of a common mankind long before it is used to destroy the humanity of man.”¹⁷ This very famous passage by Sati’ al Husri, one of the main intellectuals of Arab Nationalism, is a perfect illustration of the somewhat violent and imposing rhetoric employed by Arab nationalists in order to convey their chauvinistic and universalist agenda:

“Every Arab-speaking people is an Arab people. Every individual belonging to one of these Arabic-speaking peoples is an Arab. And if he does not recognize this, and if he is not proud of his Arabism, then we must look for the reasons that have made him take this stand. It may be an expression of ignorance; in that case we must teach him the truth. It may spring from an indifference or false consciousness; in that case we must enlighten him and lead him to the right path. It may result from extreme egoism; in that case we must limit his egoism. But under no circumstances,

should we say: 'As long as he does not wish to be an Arab, and as long as he is disdainful of his Arabness, then he is not an Arab.' He is an Arab regardless of his own wishes. Whether ignorant, indifferent, undutiful, or disloyal, he is an Arab, but an Arab without consciousness or feeling, and perhaps even without conscience.”¹⁸

In this context, Adonis, who feels very strongly about individual and self-created identities, was a very vocal critique of Pan-Arabism; he believed Arab Nationalism to be a “conceited, narcissistic self-love pathology, represented by the Baath Party, which elevated Arabness to the level of a metaphysical postulate bordering on an alternate theology second only to Islam; a theology whereby the non-Arab ‘other’ would amount to nothing more than depravity and evil.”¹⁹ As he argued in *Identité Inachevée*, Arab culture has become meaningless and obsolete as it refused to keep up with the tides of modernity and lacked the fluidity necessary to be truly genuine. The Middle Eastern individual is “diluted, watered-down and hidden in an overwhelming whole,”²⁰ a victim of the overarching face of Arabness that Pan-Arabism has adopted. As a result, Adonis mostly advocates for the spread of freedom and flexibility in order “to create a new Arab culture and a new Arab identity; one open to the concept of a free elective identity.”²¹ It is for this reason that he opposes all forms of blind nationalistic identification (not only Arab Nationalism but also other anti-Arab nationalist movements), arguing that they lead to blind patriotism, paternalism and authoritarianism.

In parallel, Maalouf has also always been very critical of such movements. He laments that “‘Lebanon is addicted to confessionalism. It is subversive, a poison destroying the state, a drug to which the whole country is addicted.’ He advocates for removing mention of religious identity from all records.”²² He blames the persisting “tribal” human instincts for the blind violence in the world, and believes that holding on to these meaningless forms of identification will lead to bloodshed in the future. According to

Maalouf, the reason why the Middle East fails to live up to its beauty today is that men and women continue to cling to blind forms of nationalism, such as Arabism, Zionism or Islamism, movements that do not let humans be their true, tolerant selves:

“If the men of all countries, of all conditions and faiths can so easily be transformed into butchers, if fanatics of all kinds manage so easily to pass themselves off as defenders of identity, it's because the 'tribal' concept of identity still prevalent all over the world facilitates such a distortion. It's a concept inherited from the conflicts of the past, and many of us would reject it if we examined it more closely. But we cling to it through habit, from lack of imagination or resignation, thus inadvertently contributing to the tragedies by which, tomorrow, we shall be genuinely shocked.”²³

Despite their frustrations with Middle Eastern society and politics, it would be wrong to suggest that Adonis and Maalouf are anti-Arab or anti-Muslim. Adonis's literary works are not attacks on Arab individuals, but rather attacks on Arab institutions and traditional structures that do not allow Arabs to achieve their potential and express their individuality through ‘cultural fluidity.’ According to Adonis, it is crucial for any culture, whether Oriental or Western, to be able to criticize itself in order to ensure that it continues to grow and stay relevant within the norms of the times as well as in relation to other cultures. In effect, he starts off his *Identité Inachevée* with a strong call for introspection: “Allow me to criticize the Arabs, to criticize myself! Criticism is warranted and legitimate, so long as it is fair and just.”²⁴ Maalouf, for his part, strongly criticizes current tides of Islamophobia taking over the West, insinuating that they only lead to a greater cycle of violence:

“What I am fighting against, and always will, is the idea that on the one hand there's a religion Christianity - destined for ever to act as a vector for modernism, freedom, tolerance and democracy, and on the other hand another religion - Islam - doomed

from the outset to despotism and obscurantism. Such a notion is both wrong and dangerous, and throws a cloud over the future of a large part of the human race.”²⁵

What was Arab Nationalism in the 20th century slowly turned into Islamism in today's context. With the symbolic fall of the Arab Nationalist movement the day of the Arab defeat against Israel in 1967, people who still felt strong antagonism towards the West used the religious factor, Islam, instead of the linguistic factor, Arabic, as a means of acquiring militant and fundamentalist political power.²⁶ This in turn has led to great suffering for Middle Eastern populations forced to live under undemocratic and abusive forms of government. This paternalistic and authoritarian ideology, similarly to Arab Nationalism, is dangerous according to Middle Eastern intellectuals such as Adonis and Maalouf, and is in complete opposition with the cosmopolitan ideology. “I am unmoved by the utterances of radical Islamists,” Maalouf states, “not only because as a Christian I feel excluded, but also because I cannot accept that any religious faction, even if it is in the majority, has the right to lay down the law for the population as a whole.”²⁷

Recent years have seen not only a rise in fundamentalism and violence in the Middle East, but also an increase of populism and chauvinism in Western institutions, leading to anti-establishment and extreme-right phenomena such as Brexit or the election of Donald Trump. This can be attributed to the fact that people's local identities feel threatened in the face of inter-cultural exchange, since, as Maalouf puts it, “the ever-increasing speed

of globalisation undoubtedly reinforces, by way of reaction, people's need for identity.”²⁸ In this grim context, is cosmopolitanism really achievable?

After decades of moving towards globalisation and cultural exchange, a large part of the world seems to be heading in the opposition direction, one that goes completely against the cosmopolitan ideology. In both the East and the West, this new trend gave birth to blind nationalism and paternalism, and a rising perception of ‘the other’ in a much more negative and dangerous light. Both these ideologies believe that the East and the West, the worlds of Islam and Christianity, are completely incompatible, and both perceive difference and diversity as a threat rather than a blessing.



Amin Maalouf at a booksigning in Barcelona for the Sant Jordi festival. Wikimedia Commons 2013

Several in the Middle East, however, actively continue to hold on to and to promote this cosmopolitan dream today. The documentary *Héritages* (translated *Heritages*, 2014) by director Philippe Aractingi is one of the only sources that addresses the issue of ‘wars of identity’ in modern-day Lebanon. It covers Aractingi’s family history of mobility as well as his personal story once he is forced to flee from Lebanon to France with his family during the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War. The director acknowledges that this lifestyle leads to an identity crisis due to the constant contact with multiple cultures; in the documentary, he struggles with the urge to leave a place that has no future in hopes of a better life, while always looking back to his native land with the desire to reconnect with his Middle Eastern roots. Nonetheless, Aractingi and his family celebrate a Franco-Lebanese identity and embrace the diversity and fluidity of Levantinism. They are depicted celebrating their multicultural and polyglot identity at the end of the film, refusing to let their rich cultural background bring them down.

Due to the strong sectarianism and lack of ethno-religious cohesion in Lebanon, there are no official educational history books covering Lebanese history after 1943, as there is no agreement between the various groups as to how the post-independence era should be covered. Instead, Aractingi’s documentary is used in some classrooms to relate modern Lebanese history. Although it was at first intended to be purely an autobiographical story, Aractingi eventually realized that many outside Lebanon identified with his documentary, especially those feeling uprooted or who have lived through violent conflicts. Through Aractingi’s work, many Lebanese have felt compelled to learn about their own family history and to also accept the history of those from other ethno-religious groups as legitimate. Aractingi sees Lebanon’s diversity as a blessing rather than as a flaw, and wishes others can adopt this philosophy of tolerance to stop the trend of extremism and fear in both the Christian and Muslim societies. In a Lebanon with rising fanaticism and division between Maronites, Sunnis

and Shia, and in a world dominated by leaders such as Trump and Le Pen, Aractingi believes in the need to educate children at a young age about the virtues of acceptance over hatred.²⁹ Aractingi, like many other activists, embodies Levantine cosmopolitanism, proving that it still has a relevant place in modern Lebanese and Middle Eastern society.

Although a broad sense of negativity and pessimism is often associated with the Middle East, many important figures and intellectuals have made great strides through the arts to convey a message of tolerance and multi-faceted identities through their works. Their goal is to break the greatest divide that exists today and that will likely plague humanity for the rest of the 21st century: the ideological war between the East and the West that makes the two civilizations ‘incompatible,’ as one is seen as barbaric and the other as imperialist and hypocritical. In Maalouf’s acceptance speech to the prestigious *Académie Française*, he admits that “a wall is rising in the Mediterranean between the cultural universes I belong to.” He then leaves the *Académie* with these inspiring words: “I do not have the intention to step over this wall to go from one bank to the other. This wall of hate – between Europeans and Africans, between the West and Islam, between the Jews and the Arabs – my ambition is to destroy it, and to continue to demolish it. This was always my reason for living, my reason for writing.”³⁰

The cosmopolitan ideology is very difficult to realize within official local, national and international institutions. Although the Middle East has a great potential for cosmopolitanism, the example of Lebanon in recent years illustrates how challenging its implementation can be. However, cosmopolitanism can succeed if and when divorced from its most utopian pretensions. Through early education, and attention to artworks and narratives that emphasize the multiplicity of individual identities, Middle Easterners of all backgrounds can become accustomed to accepting and respecting one other. Because of this, the cosmopolitan

philosophies of Adonis and Maalouf forcefully argue that the Middle East and other regions around the world must leave behind their outdated chauvinism, embrace free-flowing forms of identification, and give individuals of all ethno-religious and socio-economic backgrounds the freedom and respect they deserve. ♦

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Black Gold Under the Black Flag

HOW OIL FUELED ISIS

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Sean F. O'Brien is a Military Intelligence officer who graduated from the United States Military Academy in May 2018. While at West Point, he majored in Chemical Engineering and minored in Terrorism Studies. Intensely interested in energy security, Sean has researched sustainable energy technologies and terrorist threats to America's energy infrastructure. When he was not training to be an officer, he spent his summers working for the House Committee on Armed Services and Renewable Energy Group Inc. Sean is a 2018 Anna Sobol Levy Fellow and is pursuing his M.A. in Counter-Terrorism and Homeland Security Studies at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya.

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arsh red brake lights blind the eyes. Horns blare. Traffic is not moving. It's hopeless. The scene is not rush hour in Manhattan, but the al-Omar oilfield within the Islamic State in 2014. The gridlock is the result of an oil enterprise larger than the GDP of several small nations.¹ At its height, ISIS was likely the richest terrorist group that the world has ever seen.² This extensive funding helped ISIS to continue to finance the bureaucracy behind their pseudostate, pay local fighters, and fund terrorist attacks abroad. ISIS was undoubtedly the most dangerous terrorist group in the modern world, creating a number of casualties sixteen times greater than the next leading terrorist group, the Taliban, in 2016.³ ISIS's ability to market its oil served to enhance the group's deadly capabilities. While ISIS territory growth was eventually reversed

in late 2014, oil revenue mitigated the consequences of those setbacks and prolonged some of the most intense fighting into late 2017.

The ISIS oil enterprise presents a unique case. While terrorist groups have funded their operations by extortion or smuggling illegal materials before, they have not managed natural resources in their territory. By understanding the actions and motivations of the all the participants in the ISIS oil enterprise, one gains a better understanding of how a paramilitary outcast group can organize the existing institutions around it for its benefit. Furthermore, by understanding the factors that allowed this system to continue, policy makers and strategists can work to prevent these situations from taking form in the future.

This report seeks to understand how ISIS was able to leverage the regional oil market to their advantage as well as understand factors that allowed them to continue to profit from their control of oil wells despite their status as a terrorist pseudostate. To frame this question, it summarizes applicable existing literature on how large-scale terrorist groups are funded, and why states permit terrorist factions to operate within their sphere of influence. It goes on to provide an in-depth description of the ISIS oil system at its peak, identifying factors contributing to its success and applying relevant theoretical insights. In a similar fashion, it discusses factors that sustained

the profitability of ISIS's oil operation. The report concludes with an examination on what this research suggests for counter-terrorism efforts in the future.

In her book *Funding Evil: How Terrorism is Financed*, terrorism expert Rachel Ehrenfeld explains how groups frequently employ their logistic networks and outlaw status to leverage regulated commodities markets to their advantage through smuggling. She explains that terrorist groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and Al-Qaeda have used stolen or illegally trafficked precious metals and gems to launder money and make profits. By undercutting the market rate and avoiding regulatory costs, these methods may produce outsized profits.⁴ The commodities-marked model for terrorist financing, however, does not completely describe the ISIS oil venture, because an ordinary terrorist group may only loot its controlled territory for commodities over a limited period of time. Drug trafficking, Ehrenfeld states, is a more sustainable source of funding because it provides high returns and the ability to create the product in-house in perpetuity.⁵

This paper's reasoning for how ISIS was able to leverage the oil market to its advantage lies at the intersection of Ehrenfeld's points on commodity smuggling and drug trafficking. The ISIS oil operation differed from traditional illicit commodity smuggling in that it controlled a means of production, but diverged from the drug trade because illegal oil could be introduced into a legitimate world market. This distinction made ISIS's oil enterprise more similar to Iraq's sanctioned oil business following the Gulf War than to a traditional terrorist group.

Another important factor in ISIS's profitability was its ability both to protect and market its oil supply, despite being surrounded by ostensibly hostile states and actors. Although ISIS's main source of funding was no secret to coalition forces, many oil wells continued to flow until early 2017. When looking to understand why a state may tolerate terrorism, one may reference Daniel Byman's report "Confronting Passive Sponsors of Terrorism." Byman states that there



Smoke rises from oil wells near Qayyarah, Iraq that ISIS set on fire during their retreat from the area. Wikimedia commons 2016.

"News outlets have often compared ISIS's oil venture to a state run oil company because of its size and efficiency."

are three main reasons a state may "passively support" a terror group operating within its borders.⁶

"Regimes may turn a blind eye for a variety of reasons, including strong popular support for the terrorist group cause, a lack of a direct threat and limited costs to the government that tolerates the terrorists' activities"⁷

Turkey and Syria both passively supported ISIS to some extent; Turkey's relatively porous border permitted illegal ISIS oil to be sold in its markets and the Assad regime purchased ISIS oil while simultaneously engaging in armed conflict against the group.⁸ Not all relevant countries (i.e. Jordan, Russia and the US) passively supported the ISIS oil enterprise. However, they could have done more to prevent ISIS from profiting at its peak with increased strikes against ISIS's operations.

While providing a helpful initial framework, Byman's assessment falls short in regard to ISIS, as his three factors only focus on internal and domestic elements rather than the challenges posed specifically by the transnational nature of ISIS's funding activities. A terrorist group's effects on the regional power balance may play a role in a nation's decision to not fully oppose it. For example, Turkey prefers a Syria in conflict and divided against itself; allowing ISIS to sustain itself through Turkey's borders is a small price to pay for this objective. This article explores both domestic reasons for a nation's toleration or passive support that fit into Byman's framework and foreign considerations that do not.

One may also look to the impact of the natural resource itself when assessing how the ISIS oil enterprise was able to endure. In her article "The Spoils of Nature: Armed Civil Conflict and Rebel Access to Natural Resources," Päivi Lujala describes two main mechanisms by which resource-rich areas

influence insurgent groups. The first is resource rich areas tend to breed weaker economic growth and political institutions. Such nations have higher income inequality and corruption. The second mechanism is the ability for insurgent groups to sustain themselves for prolonged times using resources in the area.⁹ These resources have high liquidity and allow insurgent access to hard currency.

Lujala's mechanisms apply directly to ISIS's area of operation. Oil revenues from Syria have long propped up a regime that has treated its own citizens brutally, creating a situation where there was no viable alternative power in the region. Resources in the area have prolonged the insurgent conflict because the nature and actions of the weak state have driven supporters to ISIS as well as creating conditions where no country wants to intervene because there is no viable faction to take over.

At its peak, the ISIS oil enterprise was a unique development that presents an opportunity to take Ehrenfeld and Byman's work a step further. When Ehrenfeld wrote *Funding Evil*, a terrorist group producing marketable natural resources was unheard of. This study of ISIS reveals that her work now underestimates the capability of terrorist groups to harness resources available to them and smuggle them into legitimate markets. Byman's reasons for state toleration and passive support for terrorist group are limited to domestic influences, likely because few terrorist groups at the time had such clear control of territory. Theories behind the reasoning for a state to not bring its full might against an external terrorist pseudo state such as ISIS must adapt to account for foreign policy factors.

Lujala's work on civil conflict is reinforced by the ISIS case study. Lujala claims that resource-rich nations are more likely to experience internal conflict and those conflicts are likely to last longer compared to resource

poor countries. Her work provides a framework to better understand how the oil enterprise sustained the conflict and propped up the Islamic State.¹⁰ As of now, ISIS is a shadow of its former self but it is still a destabilizing force in the region.

The goal of this paper is to synthesize government reports, academic papers and periodicals in order to gain a complete understanding of how ISIS took advantage of available crude oil resources, and how it was able to continue to do so for so long while regarded as a terrorist state. This paper will use reports and firsthand accounts from individuals within the ISIS production system, intermediaries participating in transport and refining, as well as the buyers. Integrating these with macro-data from congressional reports, this paper provides a big-picture result with an appreciation for the micro-drivers of the infrastructure.¹¹

The second portion of analysis is primarily coalition-focused. The data supporting this phase of the analysis mainly consists of congressional reports and accounts from individuals within the US military. The accounts and objectives from numerous sources are synthesized to present concise reasoning on why the coalition did not unleash a full scale attack on ISIS assets from 2014 onward. There are significant shortcomings when assessing the restraint on the part of Turkey, as the Turkish government's actions diverge considerably from the narrative it presents. Only conjecture can be made because it is unclear whether the corruption that permitted ISIS smuggling to prosper was present in the higher echelons of Turkey's leadership, its middle management, foot soldiers, or all of the above. As the Syrian Assad regime and Russia have been primarily concerned with the rebel factions within the Syrian civil war, as opposed to ISIS, they are not included in this second analysis.

News outlets have often compared ISIS's oil venture to a state run oil company because of its size and efficiency. ISIS did not earn this flattering comparison by its own merit: the oil fields which it operated were state assets seized from Syria and Iraq. ISIS reaped several benefits by having oil directly under their "state" control. Oil directly benefited their local

economies, funded their fighters cheaply, allowed access to hard currency through international smuggling and kept local rivals dependent on their production. They were able to leverage the oil market to their advantage by having both a captive market and undercutting foreign ones.

Oil has been Syria's lifeblood for almost a century. To many inhabitants, it matters little who is control of the well as long as the oil keeps flowing. Kilometers-long queues of trucks and makeshift towns spring up in the middle of the desert around these oases of commerce. The people that formed such communities under the ISIS caliphate were not necessarily supporters or sympathizers, but rather a vast network of middlemen that brought the oil from the wellhead to refineries, and then on to local and foreign markets. Then, as now, their primary interest was in making money and in maintaining their niche in the oil production process. Their entrepreneurship allowed ISIS oil to spread far beyond its native network.

A barrel of crude oil extracted from an ISIS-controlled oil field had several possible routes to use. First, the barrel was sold to traders directly at the oil well in trucks with up to a 75 barrel capacity. Next, the barrel may have been resold to a trader traveling to rebel-held Northern Syria or ISIS-controlled Eastern Iraq, then sold to a local refinery or immediately brought to a local oil market for a small profit. Most traders opted to offload immediately in order to minimize the risk of being targeted by the coalition or Russia.

The refinery system was also set up to minimize the risk of being targeted. Rather than construct massive tanks and reboilers for their operations, which would be vulnerable to airstrikes, locals set up small roadside "tea kettle" refining operations. Using mobile furnaces and supplies, the refiners were able to move to avoid clear and consistent association with ISIS. A select few large-scale refineries did continue to operate in ISIS held Iraq. Such refineries had previously operated under Sadaam Hussein and the Iraqi Coalitional Provisional Government, and their original managers continued to operate these plants in exchange for a cut of the production. Alternatively, the Islamic State taxed the sale of crude oil to the refinery.¹²

Once refined, the oil was diverted to support ISIS military forces, or moved for sale in ISIS-held Syrian and Iraqi fuel markets. From the oil markets in cities such as Raqqa, Mosul and Kafr Halab, the fuel could go to smugglers crossing into Jordan or Turkey, agents of the fuel-starved Assad regime, or civilian consumers. In this way, ISIS's oil network extended far beyond the terrorist nation's front lines.¹³

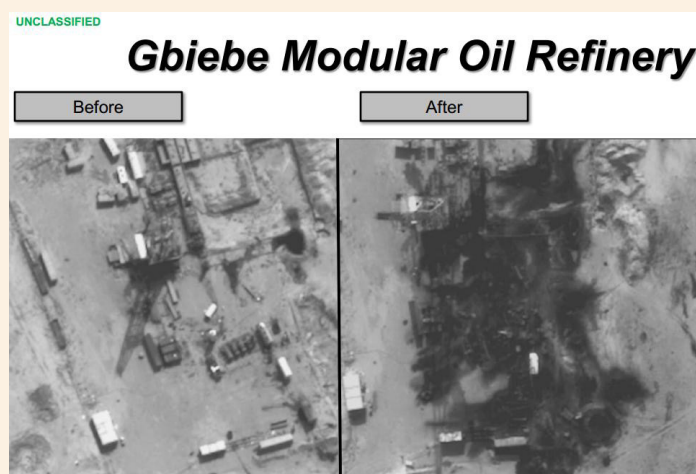
The ISIS oil enterprise was effective because it was able to operate on a large scale while remaining decentralized. Its few professionally run oil wells were able to produce crude oil at a substantial rate and were not often targeted directly by attacks, for reasons that will be discussed later. Meanwhile, its transportation and refining network was not directly controlled by the caliphate and was difficult to disrupt because of its decentralized nature. The organization and scale of the production and transport system allowed for a constant and relatively reliable supply of oil for ISIS to sell or use itself.¹⁴

ISIS profited directly from the sale of crude oil at the wellhead and then again during every transaction thereafter. Regardless of the route it took to market, the Islamic State charged a 2% sales tax referred to as *zakat*. Additionally, the caliphate charged a 10% income tax on its citizens.¹⁵ In 2015, ISIS earned just short of a million dollars a day just on their domestic Iraq oil operation alone.¹⁶ At its peak in 2014 before

coalition bombing campaigns, ISIS sold 80,000 barrels per day for roughly \$40 per barrel on the black market.¹⁷ While representatives of the Islamic State have been less than forthcoming with exact figures it is clear that they were by far the best funded terrorist group in history.

Such high revenues supported ISIS's civil as well as military foundations. Because the group held the role of a governing body, it claimed responsibility for public administration. ISIS produced media related to its governance and described its investment in public utilities, healthcare, emergency services, education and food for its people. A well-funded government which maintained these sectors of public service may have sustained the terrorist state indefinitely. By maintaining a well-functioning government and decent quality of life within its borders (religious persecution notwithstanding), ISIS succeeded in publicizing its brand and gaining legitimacy for its cause and governance.¹⁸ High revenue enabled almost every facet of ISIS operations, including propaganda and its internal bureaucracy. This proved dangerous to the coalition members, because as ISIS's brand was enhanced, the group could elicit heightened support both locally and internationally.

Oil supplies and the revenue they produced were instrumental in supporting the ISIS war machine. Oil revenue helped to pay the salaries of up to 100,000 fighters at the group's peak in 2014.¹⁹ While most of the ISIS military equipment in use was looted from Iraqi armories, often stocked with American equipment, ISIS was able to purchase specialized weapons such as surface to air missiles from overseas.²⁰ Coalition air support was often hesitant to commit itself to dangerous missions with the knowledge that ISIS had the capability to strike back.²¹ ISIS's funding and modern equipment did not only serve the group well on the battlefield, but also in its publicity efforts. No longer were jihadists crouching in a dark cave clutching Cold War era Soviet weapons; rather, they could show off the latest and greatest in military hardware to potential recruits and followers abroad.



An image released by the Pentagon shows an ISIS oil refinery before and after a US-led airstrike. Wikimedia Commons 2014.

"No longer were jihadists crouching in a dark cave clutching Cold War era Soviet weapons; rather, they could show off the latest and greatest in military hardware"

Easily attainable fuel put ISIS forces at a distinct advantage on their western front, as both the Assad regime and Syrian rebels were dependent on ISIS oil due to embargoes by other nations and the loss of their own oil infrastructure. A report by Erika Solomon for the *Financial Times* captures the dilemma faced by ISIS's local rivals:

"It's a situation that makes you laugh and cry," said one Syrian rebel commander in Aleppo, who buys diesel from ISIS areas even as his forces fight the group. "But we have no other choice, and we are a poor man's revolution. Is anyone else offering to give us fuel?"²²

While the oil passed through the hands of multiple middlemen before it reached government or rebel forces, its origin was unmistakable. ISIS's rivals were forced to fund the very enemy that they intended to destroy. ISIS's control of Syrian oil wells placed rival factions at a financial and military disadvantage, but they could not strike against the source for fear that the damage could cause them to run out of fuel altogether. Keith Crane of RAND reported to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in 2015 that the Assad regime was purchasing up to 20,000 barrels of ISIS oil a day.²³ While ISIS profited, its rivals restrained themselves.

Part of the reason ISIS was so successful at profiting from their oil enterprise was their ability to tap into foreign markets. The infrastructure that allowed illegal oil to cross the borders of neighboring nations has existed since the adoption of UN trade sanctions against Sadaam Hussein's Iraqi regime in 1995.²⁴ This infrastructure was made up of an informal network of enterprising individuals who covertly transported oil across the borders of Turkey and Jordan. Through the efforts of these individuals, ISIS oil was introduced into legitimate markets at a discount.

These smuggling networks had a connection to the formal ISIS oil business by serving as large volume customers for oil at ISIS held markets. Once the oil was purchased at market, it was moved to one of many towns along Syria's borders. The oil could then cross the border through several methods. The method that allowed the largest volume was to intercept and mix legitimate Kurdish oil entering Turkey with the ISIS-produced oil. This allowed the oil to cross the border freely and was exceedingly difficult for border officials to detect.²⁵ The methods of smuggling varied greatly. Large scale operations involved convoy trucks and mixed oil. However, individual smugglers had more diverse means at their disposal. Buried piping, small boats, and even donkeys allowed small groups of smugglers to transport their oil across the border undetected.²⁶ In some cases, secrecy was not required, as smugglers could pay the Turkish border guards a portion of their proceeds for their complacency.²⁷

Exact figures for the size of the smuggling operation are impossible to obtain. However George Kiourktsoglou, a researcher at the University of Greenwich who has studied the ISIS oil business estimates that "[ISIS] exported anywhere from 3,000 to 8,000 barrels a day, about 15 percent of its total production, for sale on the high seas in 2014."²⁸ Even this estimate may be low, as one smuggler interviewed in the Turkish border town of Besalan claimed that ISIS had 30,000 barrels of oil per day available for export after meeting its domestic demands in early 2014.²⁹ In any case, the potential for profit was high once the oil crossed the border. Smuggled oil sold for rock bottom prices between 25 and 60 dollars per barrel in 2014 while the global market price hovered between 80 and 100 dollars.³⁰ The difference in price incentivized both smugglers and buyers to traffic in illegal ISIS oil. Since 2014 oil prices have declined but illegal oil continued to undercut the global

market. While domestic ISIS oil revenue exceeded foreign sales, international smuggling contributed to ISIS oil profits. The smuggling networks were the intermediaries between ISIS and the global markets which allowed the flow of hard currency into the caliphate.

ISIS smuggling into Turkey provides an interesting supporting case study for Ehrenfeld's theories in *Funding Evil*. ISIS is a unique case for a terrorist group because it had full and direct control over a natural resource that it could smuggle and sell below market price, as well as a monopolized market that it controlled. It was both able to produce and sell its products on a large scale. ISIS's oil enterprise presents an opportunity to expand Ehrenfeld's theories to include self-produced goods sold at local markets and smuggled to larger foreign markets as a means to fund terrorist groups.

In "The Spoils of Nature" Lujala claims that the effect of the presence of natural resources in an insurgent conflict is twofold. First, the existing government is less stable and more prone to corruption. Second, the terrorist group is better able to sustain itself for a long conflict against the state. The ISIS oil venture provides a clear supporting case study for her work. The Assad regime's brutal actions and lack of political flexibility had weakened it to the point where it almost completely abandoned Eastern Syria, leaving the oil fields for ISIS. Without the income or oil, the regime was forced to attempt to consolidate its power around Aleppo and Damascus and purchase ISIS oil. The revenue from the oil enabled ISIS to not only fight the security forces of two organized governments on the ground, but to also win and expand.

The Islamic State had an extensive oil enterprise and a cornered market that allowed it to reap profit from production and through every transaction along the way to market. Entrepreneurial individuals refined, transported and

smuggled oil throughout the Middle East, which allowed illegal ISIS oil to be sold for a deep discount within domestic and foreign markets. Furthermore, ISIS's oil monopoly forced its enemies to buy oil from middlemen and perpetuate the conflict. ISIS effectively exploited regional oil markets to their advantage through the combination of these circumstances and individual efforts.

The locations of profitable ISIS oil assets were no secret. Satellite images showed lines of trucks waiting to refuel, as well as flares occurring when the methane in the wells was burned off. Additionally, the scale and profitability of the enterprise could be easily estimated based on publicly available pre-war figures. Despite this, both regional powers and coalition forces proved hesitant to directly attack ISIS-controlled oil infrastructure. A December 2015 *Time* article described coalition attacks on ISIS oil assets as easily repairable "pin pricks."³¹ Data from the Department of Defense's Operation Inherent Resolve in April 2017 showed attacks on only 260 oil related targets out of 16,075 total targets.³² Since then, coalition attacks have increased in intensity and reduced ISIS oil profits but as of late 2016, ISIS oil still flowed to domestic and foreign markets. The reasons for this degree of



Oil fields and a power plant in Baiji, Iraq, previously controlled by ISIS. Wikimedia Commons 2005.

restraint included concerns about collateral damage, impact on the local economy, infrastructure, the environment, as well as the political situation in Turkey.

The United States learned from its mistakes during the Iraq War. When former Baathist bureaucrats and soldiers were purged from their positions, they turned to hardline opposition groups for economic opportunity. Similarly, any show of force that killed civilians along with insurgents was portrayed extremely poorly in local media. Such media coverage can turn a population against coalition forces.³³ One possible reason for the lack of a large-scale initiative against ISIS oil fields is that American policymakers were hesitant to make the same mistakes again.

American hesitance to conduct a direct air campaign arose from both financial and humanitarian concerns.. Many thousand people are involved in the ISIS oil enterprise despite not having any formal ties to the group itself. Crude oil has been an integral part of Syria's economy for many years. The oil industry accounted for 25.1% of Syria's revenue in 2009.³⁴ The entire industry sector employed 34.1% of the work force in 2011.³⁵ While these are outdated statistics, it is clear that crude oil is essential for many Syrians' livelihoods. United States policy makers were aware of this fact. The Congressional Research Service's report on ISIS financing cautioned that strikes against the oil enterprise allowed ISIS to "[use sophisticated propaganda to] blame the international community for any economic distress that local populations may experience."³⁶ The result of this was an air campaign that targeted oil assets just 1.7% of the time.³⁷

The coalition air campaign was risk-averse in targeting civilians as well. The United States military sought to only strike ISIS assets with positive identification from reconnaissance drones or Iraqi security forces in order to avoid civilian casualties.³⁸ This had the added benefit of not pushing neutral members of the civilian populace towards supporting ISIS due to mistargeting. Air attacks were used conservatively



ISIS oil tankers in central Syria shortly before being destroyed in an airstrike. Defense Visual Information Distribution Service (DVIDS) 2016.

because there were no spotters on the ground to confirm the absence of civilians. ISIS was aware of this and purposely inserted their fighters among the civilian population to avoid being targeted.³⁹ A major hindrance on the coalition attempts to damage the ISIS oil enterprise was the status of the intermediaries who transported and refined the oil. These individuals were not necessarily affiliated with ISIS itself and would be considered civilian casualties if harmed in an attack. The coalition attempted to mitigate this risk by dropping leaflets on fuel convoys warning of an upcoming strike.⁴⁰ While a fair way to warn of an impending attack, this restraint prevented the decisive neutralization of the ISIS oil enterprise.

Omar al-Shimali, a resident of the Aleppo province, commented on the coalition bombing campaign after increased strikes on local oil fields, "This is considered our infrastructure, and destroying it like this...shows that the objective is to kill the Syrian people."⁴¹ This is precisely the sentiment that the coalition attempted to prevent by avoiding strikes against targets of high economic importance. The degradation of the local economy and risk of hurting civilians caused the coalition to be conservative in their air campaign. This restraint allowed ISIS to profit through the oil venture despite being targeted by several nations at once.

While ISIS certainly presented a substantial threat to stability in the Middle East, the coalition had to

account for the long-term situation in Syria, after the terrorist group had become a distant memory. Long term concerns about the viability of Syria's industrial infrastructure and environment constitute further reasons why the coalition did not completely destroy ISIS oil assets.

Damage to the oil fields would retard Syria's recovery. Oil infrastructure, such as well heads and pipelines, requires technical expertise, time, and money to repair when damaged. The coalition governments recognized these second-order effects when planning their operations. Colonel Steve Warren, a spokesperson for Operation Inherent Resolve, explained the coalition's strategy in a November 13th, 2015 press conference:

"Our intent is to shut those oil facilities down completely. What we've done here is we've done a very comprehensive analysis of these facilities to determine which pieces of the facility we can strike that will shut that facility down for a fairly extended period of time. Again, we have to be cognizant that there will be a time after the war—the war will end. So we don't want to completely and utterly destroy these facilities to where they're irreparable."⁴²

While the intent of Operation Inherent Resolve was to completely shut down the oil facilities, they failed to do so. The International Center for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence estimated that ISIS still made between 200 and 250 million dollars from oil in 2016.⁴³ The United States Air Force certainly had the capability to destroy these assets. However, continued ISIS oil profits indicated that they continued to allow oil well operation in the interest of keeping them operational for future use.

The air campaign was also limited by the risk of environmental damage caused by bombing of the

Syrian oil fields. Such environmental damage was seen in the 1991 Gulf War when retreating Iraqi forces set 700 Kuwaiti oil wells ablaze. The resulting oil spills and fires caused ground water contamination, air pollution and serious long term health problems for the local population.⁴⁴ An indication of a bombing's potential environmental effects was seen in August 2016, when retreating ISIS militants set fire to oil fields near Qayyara. The local population is still affected by their actions as one in six of the area's livestock has died and local hospitals have filled with patients with respiratory problems.⁴⁵ Air strikes directly targeting ISIS well heads likely would have resulted in a fire that locals would have been ill-equipped to respond to. Such a blaze could have burned indefinitely and caused long term effects on the population. The coalition command team was aware of this reality. Michael Morell, ex-CIA chief, was quoted in a 2015 *The Hill* article saying, "We didn't go after oil wells, actually hitting oil wells that ISIS controls, because we didn't want to do environmental damage, and we didn't want to destroy that infrastructure."⁴⁶

The coalition's hands were tied. Striking the oil wells themselves could have caused long term and expensive damage to infrastructure as well as the environment. Striking the transportation system could result in death of civilians trying to make a living. Neither option was ideal so the coalition adopted a conservative strategy and ISIS continued to profit.

Coalition nations were not the only powers concerned with the ISIS oil venture. Turkey was the primary avenue for ISIS oil to reach global markets, as the country's complacent policymakers and weak borders allowed ISIS oil to infiltrate its markets, lining the pockets of everyone involved. A primary reason for Turkey's reluctance to disable ISIS's oil ventures was widespread corruption throughout its government.

"Striking the oil wells could have caused long term damage to the infrastructure and environment. Striking the transportation system could have killed civilians."

It is impossible to know exactly how many Turkish border patrol agents turned a blind eye to ISIS oil crossing the border, but it is no secret among the smuggler community that working with Turkish authorities is essential to a successful operation.⁴⁷ Admittedly, this is a difficult problem to counter when the financial incentives for fraud are high. However, the volume of oil that entered Turkey—far greater than a few corrupt border agents could have allowed—suggests that corruption extended to higher levels of Turkey's government. In 2016, Wikileaks released correspondence between Turkish officials that implicated Berat Albayrak, Turkish Minister of Oil and son in law of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in the purchase of ISIS oil.⁴⁸ Russia has reiterated these allegations and provided satellite pictures of ISIS oil convoys at the Turkish border. In a 2016 letter to the UN Security Council, Russia detailed how ISIS oil was being transported by BMZ Group Sea Transportation and Construction Company, owned by Erdogan's son Bilal.⁴⁹

The extent to which Turkish exports benefited ISIS is difficult to gauge. However, researchers George Kiourktsoglou and Alec Coutroubis correlated changes in oil tanker charters from the Turkish port of Ceyhan and ISIS seizures of key oil fields. While not conclusive, their regression analysis pairs ISIS asset seizures with increases in shipments from the port as well as decreases in shipments due to coalition bombing campaign events.⁵⁰ For ISIS oil to reach Ceyhan, it must have flowed through Turkey and through legitimate companies.

Stifling the ISIS oil trade through Turkey was not a priority for the Erdogan administration. Both the Turkish economy and Erdogan's close family members stood to gain by permitting smuggling. ISIS was also engaged with a protracted ground war against the Kurds, whose aspirations to nationhood are considered a threat by the Turkish regime. While Turkey outwardly supported the coalition mission of destroying ISIS, it did not commit itself to stopping the flow of black gold through its borders and into its ports.

Byman's reasons for a state tolerating terrorist organizations include popular support, little direct threat and limited costs for the government.⁵¹ Byman presumes that the terrorist group is domestic and has far less power than the state. His explanation holds up well in regard to Turkey's complacency toward ISIS's oil trade through its borders. It appeared, at least initially, that Turkey faced limited costs and a small direct threat from ISIS. Meanwhile, the growth of the radical Syrian opposition, whose membership and objectives overlapped with ISIS, benefited Turkey's interests by weakening the Assad regime and the Kurds of northern Syria. Numerous powerful government officials likely profited from this trade as well.

However, Byman's reasons fall short when considering the coalition's actions. ISIS is a foreign pseudo-state and demonstrated enough power to dissuade policy makers from deploying United States ground forces. The coalition governments would have surely liked to cut off the ISIS oil income stream but were restricted by long term foreign policy and human rights concerns. The restrictions on attacking the ISIS oil enterprise presents a case where a state would like to further intervene but cannot due to situational and environmental second-order consequences.



The Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline, which was used by ISIS to smuggle oil into Turkey. Wikimedia Commons 2012.

"ISIS continues to be a threat to regional stability and international security through its militant actions and terrorist activities"

ISIS's oil enterprise continued to profit for years despite the caliphate's status as a terrorist state. The revenue stream it provided supported ISIS governance capabilities and military operations. This revenue stream, while degraded, was largely operational until early 2017 due to the long term concerns of the coalition. ISIS oil assets were not a priority target for the air campaign and thus remained operational. The primary ISIS export route through Turkey was viable due to lackluster efforts by the Turkish government at closing it. Corruption at all levels of the Turkish government and the profitability of marketing ISIS oil discouraged a crackdown on the terrorist group's revenue stream. ISIS continued to profit in the face of regional and world powers via its oil wells.

ISIS effectively leveraged the oil market in its favor. It is unique among terror groups in that it has state-like qualities such as natural resource and control over its population. This capacity allowed the caliphate to marry the benefits of being a state entity and an international outlaw. ISIS profited by producing cheap crude oil on a large scale and maintaining a decentralized network of middlemen to transport, refine, sell and smuggle it. By profitably undercutting the regional market and holding a monopoly of its domestic oil markets, ISIS made its captured oil fields into a consistent and abundant source of revenue.

The international community did not immediately move to destroy the Islamic State's ability to produce oil, resulting in ISIS's ability to fund their operations. Each nation involved had differing concerns and goals for the region, none of which involved the complete destruction of Syria's oil infrastructure. From the perspective of the coalition nations, there was concern for what comes after ISIS. Oil will continue to be a staple of the local economy and its destruction could further destabilize the region. For Turkey, the potential for profit was high and the costs are comparatively low thus they largely ignored ISIS's oil enterprise. While depleted in early 2018, ISIS continues to be a

threat to regional stability and international security through its militant actions and terrorist activities despite several setbacks. As both a terrorist group and a governing body, it benefited by controlling and marketing the oil under its control. Ensuring this source of income cannot be regained is key to undermining the caliphate forever. ♦

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