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The Brandeis Middle East Review

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The painting on the cover, titled “A View in Cairo” was done by the Scottish artist David Roberts (1796-1864) in 1840. It is a part of the Royal Collection in Windsor.

The Brandeis Middle East Review is a student publication focused on the study of the politics, culture and society of the Middle East. This journal has no official ideological or political affiliation and welcomes all sound academic perspectives irregardless of background or political predilection.
“LAYING FOUNDATIONS”

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to the first edition of the Brandeis Middle East Review!

As a forum for dialogue and education on campus about the broader Middle East, we strive to deliver in our product a balanced and open discussion on topics ranging from religious movements to cultural trends to political developments in the area. Having taken courses on and traveled to the region, our writers and editors channel their zeal for Middle Eastern affairs by continuing their research and writing on it outside of the classroom to share their unique individual perspectives with the Brandeis community. In this vein, we accept contributions from all members of our vibrant community who would like to participate in this effort. However, this project’s true success lies in its perpetuation. We would like to remain on campus as a space for discussions and presentations under the leadership of future passionate editors and writers.

Titled “Laying Foundations,” our inaugural issue features pieces representative of the scope and variety of perspectives related to the Middle East of yesterday and today. Our Current Affairs section presents two issues prevalent in the news today- the first dealing with the Iranian nuclear effort and its relation to the country’s foreign affairs and the second grappling with the issue of Palestinian national identity and its development as seen through the Jordanian lens. The section also features a glimpse into the history of the Kurds in Iraq and the important role they are expected to play in the construction of a new Iraq. The Religion section showcases an exposé of the 14th century jurist Ibn Taymiyyah and attempts to relate his contribution to Islamic governance to the issues arising in Arab republics today. Finally, our Culture section brings to the spotlight an interesting television program in Lebanon akin to the “American Idol” series in America. In addition to these pieces, this issue features page titled “Some Lite Middle East” to entertain and educate.

As the title of this issue suggests, we hope that our publication will provide the groundwork for debate and constructive exchange on the addressed topics as well as the development of new issues on campus and, ultimately, increase our community’s understanding and awareness of this very unique part of the world.

On behalf of the editors of this board, I would like to extend a warm welcome to you and invite you to contribute to our coming issues.

Sincerely,

Jacob Olidort
Editor-in-Chief
Egypt

Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood says it won at least 13 seats in the second round of parliamentary elections on Sunday.

The opposition group’s gains have yet to be confirmed by official results after a day’s voting marred by clashes.

The Brotherhood more than doubled its number of seats in the first round of balloting, gaining 34 seats.

The group is banned in Egypt but fields candidates as independents. An Islamist supporter was killed by a gang of thugs in Alexandria on Sunday, monitors said.

It was the first death in an election that has been marred by minor violence and, civil society groups say, widespread intimidation and voting irregularities.

The group claims some of its followers were attacked by supporters of President Hosni Mubarak’s governing National Democratic Party on Sunday, while others were prevented from voting by police.

The NDP is expected to maintain its overwhelming majority in parliament. (from news.bbc.co.uk)

Israel, Gaza and the West Bank

Israeli PM Ariel Sharon has said he aims to “lay the foundations for a peace settlement” with the Palestinians via his new political party.

Mr Sharon’s comments came after he left the right-wing Likud party he helped found in 1973.

Mr Sharon said on Monday he was forming a “new national liberal” political party.

“Likud in its current format cannot lead Israel to its national goals,” Mr Sharon said in a televised address.

He staked out claims to political ground on both the right and the left, calling for the dismantling of terrorist groups on the one hand and poverty reduction on the other. (from news.bbc.co.uk)

Oman

The United States has signed an agreement with Oman designed to prevent smuggling of nuclear and other radioactive material as part of global nonproliferation and anti-terrorist efforts, U.S. agencies say.

In a November 19 news release, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) said that U.S. equipment installed under the arrangement will allow for detection of hidden shipments of such materials.

NNSA, a Department of Energy agency, said the United States has similar partnerships with the Netherlands and Greece and is working to involve additional countries.

The agreement with Oman is part of the NNSA Megaport Initiative and the Container Security Initiative (CSI) managed by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency. Under CSI, U.S. customs officers placed in foreign ports target U.S.-bound high-risk cargo for inspection by local customs officials. (from www.state.gov)

Saudi Arabia

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has approved Saudi Arabia’s application for membership after 12 years of talks.

The world’s largest oil exporter will become the 149th member of the WTO in 30 days’ time.

The country will need to adopt the entire body of WTO legislation, a process that involves liberalisation of currently restricted sectors.

Saudi Arabia must open its long protected economy to the outside world, including fellow WTO member Israel.

Saudi Arabia’s participation in the Arab League boycott of Israel will thus need to be reviewed.

Some elements of the country’s Islamic religious establishment have expressed concern about the WTO membership.

But Saudi Arabia’s commerce and industry minister Hashim Yamani said: “This is a high point in the programme of economic and structural reform that Saudi Arabia undertook.” (from news.bbc.co.uk)

Yemen

Two Swiss tourists who were kidnapped in Yemen have been handed over unharmed to government officials.

The release of the couple, in the northern province of Marib, came a day after their kidnappers threatened to kill them.

The Yemeni state news agency said the tourists plan to continue their tour of the country.

Bruno and Katrina Bayer were seized on Monday by tribesmen demanding the release of a relative who is in prison.

Foreigners have often been kidnapped by armed tribal groups trying to force some kind of concession out of the Yemeni government but are usually released unharmed.

The Swiss tourists were kidnapped by members of the al-Jizah tribe in an attempt to force the Yemeni authorities to release a 15-year-old family member charged with car theft. (from news.bbc.co.uk)

Tunisia

Human rights groups both inside and outside the country intensified their criticism of the Tunisian government’s record regarding internet freedom.

Some Tunisian dissidents, including blogger Mokhtar Yahyaoui, even staged a hunger strike in protest.

“I’m on a hunger strike because we don’t get to express ourselves freely,” he said. “I’m on a hunger strike because, in Tunisia, we’ve been waiting for a political opening.

Mr Yahyaoui, a former top-level judge, originally believed he could change the Tunisian system from the inside.

When that did not work, he turned to the internet. He posted a letter on his nephew’s website, Tunezine, accusing the Tunisian government of abusing the country’s judicial system. (from news.bbc.co.uk)

Middle East News-in-Brief
This article attempts to provide a realistic assessment of the dangers posed by Iran’s nuclear program. It presents three main arguments. First, it explains that Iran possesses the scientific base and technological infrastructure necessary to produce nuclear weapons. Second, I argue that while there are indications that the Iranian government is indeed following the path to the bomb, there is also reason to believe that it will refrain from building a nuclear weapon. Finally, I challenge the conventional wisdom that a nuclear Iran would give nukes to terrorists or spark a nuclear arms race in the Middle East.

**Capabilities**

Iran claims that it is developing the ability to fuel the Russian-supplied nuclear reactor at Bushehr. The United States charges that Iran is developing the ability to fuel nuclear bombs. This dispute over Iran’s true purpose stems from the overlapping nature of the technology. Iran’s program can fuel nuclear reactors, nuclear weapons, or both. At the center of the disagreement between Iran and the U.S. is Iran’s ability to enrich uranium. Enrichment is the process of centrifuging uranium, which occurs naturally in Iran, to increase the concentration of the highly fissionable isotope U-235. [1] Uranium that is enriched to 20% U-235, or low enriched uranium (LEU), is suitable for fueling nuclear reactors. Uranium that is enriched to 90% U-235 is useful for no other purpose than to construct nuclear weapons. [2] A program that can produce one can produce the other. While the time required to change LEU to weapons-grade uranium is considerable, few other technological obstacles stand in the way. [3]

Iran’s present capabilities are the result of a half-century of cultivating the technological and scientific capital necessary to sustain a nuclear industry. Reza Shah Pahlavi initiated Iran’s nuclear program in a 1957 cooperation agreement with the United States that allowed Iranian students to study in Europe and the U.S. The program stalled in the aftermath of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the rise of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini. The Ayatollah’s staunch opposition to Western influence and his low confidence in the utility of nuclear energy led him to dramatically suspend the nuclear program. The Iraqi bombing of Iran’s reactor near the city of Bushehr in 1980 further curtailed Iran’s progress. [4] Iran restarted its nuclear program during the Iran-Iraq War with a new vigor as a reaction to Iraq’s use of chemical weapons against Iranian soldiers and ballistic missiles against Iranian cities. China and Pakistan agreed to supply Khomeini with nuclear hardware and train Iranian personnel. During the mid-1980s, 15,000 to 17,000 Iranian students studied abroad for nuclear training. Between 1987 and 1991, Iranian scientists enrolled in Chinese and Pakistani institutions, including the Khan Research Laboratories of notorious nuclear smuggler A. Q. Khan, who personally met several Iranian scientists. The Iranian government also established nuclear training programs in its state universities and used incentives to bring back expatriate Iranian nuclear scientists and engi-
neers. These efforts have rewarded Iran with a community of scientists and engineers qualified to operate Iran’s nuclear facilities without external assistance. [5]

In addition to establishing a scientific base, the Iranian government also procured the equipment necessary to enrich uranium, the process that can fuel reactors or bombs. Iran’s secret use of black market suppliers to obtain this equipment has generated a political firestorm and raised serious doubts about Iran’s intentions. In August 2002, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCR), an opposition group that also holds a place on the State Department’s list of terrorist organizations, revealed the existence of uranium enrichment facilities at the Iranian city of Natanz. [6] This discovery forced Iran to make a series of admissions to officials from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) about these previously undisclosed activities. [7] These discussions revealed the extent of the Iranian government’s undertaking to procure nuclear technology over the past two decades.

Through its secret procurement network, Iran ultimately sought to develop self-sufficiency in producing centrifuges, the equipment necessary for enriching uranium. In its 2003 statements, Iran revealed that it initiated its centrifuge program in 1985, the same time that it restarted the scientific branch of its program. Iran erected numerous front companies to purchase the necessary equipment from suppliers in Europe, the Middle East, and China without generating unwanted attention. In 1987, Iran was able to purchase centrifuge components and blueprints, including a drawing of a centrifuge model produced by the Netherlands. Other schematics resembled Pakistani centrifuge equipment from the 1980s and ’90s. Experts from Pakistan’s gas centrifuge industry admitted to aiding Iran, but the Pakistani government denied direct involvement. [8] Iran also received assistance in centrifuge design from A. Q. Khan, who gained infamy for establishing an illicit network to traffic nuclear technology to the likes of Libya and North Korea. [9] By the mid-1990s, Iran had compiled enough components and information from foreign sources to become completely self-sufficient in centrifuge production. [10] It then tested this equipment using uranium under IAEA safeguards that it had claimed was lost. [11] As for when Iran’s present capabilities would allow it to produce a nuclear bomb, opinion falls within a narrow band of consensus, from the Israeli intelligence estimate of 2008 to the U.S. National Intelligence Estimate of 2015. [12]

Most disturbingly, Iran’s goal of developing an indigenous fuel cycle was perfectly legal, which should obviate the need to rely on black market suppliers. As a signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Iran has the international legal right to develop peaceful applications of nuclear energy. Moreover, the NPT obligates countries with nuclear technology to aid countries such as Iran to pursue peaceful nuclear technology. Even the development of a full nuclear fuel cycle through uranium enrichment is completely legal. Of course, U.S. export restrictions prevent Iran from purchasing nuclear equipment from the U.S., and U.S. diplomatic pressure limits the number of other suppliers willing to sell to Iran. But other suppliers do exist, notably Russia, which is building Iran’s first nuclear reactor at Bushehr. Though constrained by limited options, the fact that Iran would expend such great effort in concealing its attempts to acquire enrichment technology and the fact that it chose such dubious methods to pursue legal ends casts doubts on its claim of pursuing purely peaceful aims. [13]

Intentions

Given the damning evidence listed above, many argue that Iran is determined to acquire a nuclear arsenal. Ilan Berman, author of Tehran Rising, predicts “There will be a nuclear Iran.” [14] Several factors may motivate Iran’s quest for the bomb. First, Iranian leaders may perceive themselves as threatened by the United States. Relations between the U.S. and Iran have been strained since the 1979 Revolution and the student-led takeover of the U.S. embassy in Iran. Since then, Iran’s government has actively obstructed U.S. efforts to resolve the Israeli-Arab conflict by supporting Palestinian rejectionist organizations and harboring terrorist organizations that attacked U.S. soldiers in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. With over 160,000 U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq, Iranian leaders may correctly anticipate a sustained U.S. military presence on their borders. [15] Additionally, recent U.S. policies may have taught Iran’s leaders a perverse lesson about the benefits of nuclear weapons. When the Bush administration believed that Iraq was pursuing a nuclear weapon program, it overthrew the government and occupied the country. In the same year, when the Bush administration believed that North Korea had successfully manufactured a nuclear weapon, it showered North Korea with bilateral aid, diplomatic overtures, and security assurances. The lesson that a nuclear deterrent will prevent an American attack was probably not lost on Iran’s leaders.

Iran’s pursuit of nuclear weapons may also be an attempt to establish its hegemony in the Middle East. Iranian leaders may view the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Iraq, two traditional enemies, as an opportunite moment to expand their influence in the region. Of its neighbors, only Israel still rivals Iran in conventional power. Israel is also the only state in the Middle East that possesses nuclear weapons, with an arsenal estimated at 100 to 170 nukes. [16] As an aspiring regional superpower, Tehran may seek to break Israel’s nuclear monopoly and cement its status as a regional hegemon. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s statement that Israel should be “wiped off the map” is best understood in the context of Iran’s strategic rivalry with Israel, a state whose right to exist it officially denies. [17]

Though there are many reasons to believe that Iran intends
to build nuclear weapons, several indicators suggest that it may refrain from crossing the nuclear threshold. First, it is important to note that most of what we know about Iran’s nuclear program comes from the Iranian government’s admissions to the International Atomic Energy Agency. It was in a February 2004 meeting with the IAEA that Iranian officials revealed their purchases of nuclear technology were through the black market.

Second, Iran entered into negotiations on its nuclear program with the U.K., France, and Germany. Iran and the European trio held discussions beginning in the summer of 2004 until the negotiations ended in August 2005, when Iran refused to continue its voluntary suspension of uranium conversion, and the talks ended.[18] On 12 October 2005, Iran restated its commitment to resume negotiations with Europe while preserving its right to develop enrichment technology.[19] Third, Iran is not barreling ahead with its nuclear program. Responding to unified international pressure, Iran signed the Additional Protocol of the NPT, which mandates more intrusive inspections. Iran also voluntarily suspended all enrichment activities in November 2004 before the negotiations described above.

These indicators show that Iran is a rational actor. Iranian leaders recognize the enormous political and economic costs of defying world opinion by pursuing a nuclear weapon program. They seem wary of bringing the combined weight of the international community crashing upon their heads. Pragmatists in the government may not be willing to sacrifice the recent economic progress of their country to satisfy the ambitions of hard line elements. Under these circumstances, there is reason to believe that unified international pressure and the proper incentives may coax Iran into forgoing nuclear weapons.

Implications

If Iran does develop a nuclear weapon, the implications are serious, but it is necessary to explain the limits of the most commonly cited scenarios. One of the most frequently recycled arguments of the danger posed by an Iranian nuclear weapon is that Iran would give nuclear weapons to terrorists. Patrick Clawson of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy states “there is a grave risk it would be tempted to provide them to terrorists.”[20] To support this claim, Clawson notes that Iran sponsored Hezbollah’s bombings of the U.S. and French barracks in Beirut in 1983 and the Khobar Towers 1996. By extension, Clawson argues, Iran would use its nuclear capability to continue its past habit of mass murder through terrorist proxies.

While Iran is one of the most egregious state sponsors of terrorism, there is little reason to believe that Iran would transfer nuclear weapons to a terrorist organization in any but the direst circumstances. By giving control of even a single of the most destructive weapons in its arsenal to a group that is not directly controlled or accountable to it, the Iranian government would run immense risks. First, Iranian leaders would face the risk of being blackmailed by the very nuclear terrorists they had created. Second, the revelation that Iran had made such a transfer could serve as a casus belli for a U.S. administration. Finally, a terrorist organization’s detonation of a nuclear device supplied by Iran would be a ticket for the U.S. to prosecute forceful regime change in Tehran with broad international support.

A second theory posits that Iran’s acquisition of nuclear weapons would begin a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. Many analysts argue that the damage to the non-proliferation regime would be seen both at the regional and global level. Ilan Berman argues that an Iranian bomb would dramatically change the balance of power in the Middle East. More daunting yet, he argues, this could force Egypt and Saudi Arabia to develop their own nuclear deterrents to balance Iran’s, sparking a regional nuclear arms race. Mustafa Kibaroglu, Professor of International Relations at Bilkent University in Turkey, adds Turkey to the list of countries that may pursue nuclear weapons after Iran.[21] Patrick Clawson takes this argument to the extreme when he asserts that if Iran achieves nuclear weapons, “then it is unclear that there is much meaning to global nonproliferation norms.”[22]

Predictions of the unrelenting spread of nuclear arms have been voiced before but continue to hold little traction. In modern times, Iran has not engaged in large-scale conventional conflict with any of its neighbors except Iraq. Iran has not had open conflict with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, or Turkey. Furthermore, all three of these would-be proliferators enjoy good relations with the U.S., including military cooperation. Instead, it is more likely that these states would go nuclear only in the event of a dramatic change in the international system that leaves the U.S. unable to protect them from an aggressive Iran. Currently, the U.S. lacks neither will nor ability to protect its allies in the Middle East, and Iran shows no sign of aggressing against these states.

Instead, the greater danger from a nuclear Iran would come from issues surrounding command and control structures, the systems that insure the protection and govern the use of nuclear weapons. First, the question of whose finger is on the nuclear trigger is of paramount importance. In the 1999 India-Pakistan war, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif appeared surprised to learn that his army had taken unilateral steps to prepare a nuclear missile for launch. The prospect that lower level officials may control nuclear weapons without the authorization of the leader of the state illustrates one of the many dangers of unauthorized or accidental launch. Iranian nukes under military control would generate similar fears. In the event of a crisis, Israel or the U.S. could misperceive Iranian intentions and launch a strike, setting of a chain reaction of retaliation.

Second, a nuclear Iran would beg the question of the physical protection of Iran’s fissile material and other bomb com-
ponents. Rather than Iran directly transferring a nuclear weapon to a terrorist group, it is more likely that terrorists in Iran would attack nuclear facilities to steal the desired material. The fact that Hezbollah and Hamas both enjoy sanctuary in Iran would present unprecedented opportunities for terrorists. Finally, it is possible that officials in the Iranian government or military may transfer control of a nuclear weapon to a terrorist organization in the event of a calamity, such as a U.S. invasion that brings American soldiers to the gates of Tehran.

The Twilight of Proliferation?
This article has made several points. First, Iran possesses the capability to build a bomb in the not too distant future. Second, the Iranian government has shown signs that it is receptive to negotiation and may refrain from developing a nuclear weapon. Finally, it is extremely unlikely that a nuclear Iran will give nuclear weapons to terrorists or start a regional nuclear arms race. Instead, in the event that Iran does produce nuclear weapons, there should be grave concerns about the command and control of the weapons, the fears of accidental launch, the opportunities for weapons to be stolen, and the effect on Iran’s neighbors if the U.S. is perceived as unwilling or unable to protect them against an Iranian threat.

The most significant aspect of the Iranian case is that Iran may be the last in a long line of proliferators. At first glance, nuclear weapons seem to have spread rampant in the past decade. India and Pakistan detonated nuclear devices in 1998, North Korea publicly announced that it constructed a bomb in 2005, and now Iran may be exploring its nuclear options. A more historical perspective, however, warrants a cautiously optimistic view of the future of nuclear proliferation. With the U.S. occupation of Iraq and the negotiated dismantlement of Libya’s nuclear program, North Korea and Iran are the only unresolved cases of proliferation. Both of these states began their programs at least two decades ago. Every other country that has been a proliferation concern in recent years began its program at the same time or earlier. No country has started a nuclear weapon program since the end of the Cold War. Moreover, every state but Israel, India, and Pakistan has joined the NPT (though North Korea left the agreement). What does this mean? It means the world may be running out of rogues and pariahs that want to build nuclear weapons.

This understanding of the future of proliferation argues for a committed but flexible approach to Iran’s nuclear program. It should serve as a strong incentive for the U.S. and Europe to carefully manage the North Korean and Iranian cases, whether through negotiating an end to their nuclear programs or providing credible security guarantees to their neighbors. Above all, it should force U.S. policy makers to refrain from advocating the use of force to solve proliferation. Non-proliferation expert John Pike predicts that we will wake up one morning to find that the U.S. has executed a massive air strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities. “It will be a surprise attack,” he says. “And a lot of people will be surprised.”[23] If Iran’s leaders believe this, they will find little reason to refrain from building a bomb. This outcome is by no means predetermined. Iran’s government has not made an irreversible decision. Nor does the U.S. government appear poised to pursue violent regime change in Tehran. If Iran, Europe, and the U.S. are committed to resolving this crisis through negotiation, it is possible that the world will see that rarest of events: a step towards peace in the Middle East.

Notes
5. Ibid., 32-33.
10. Albright and Hinderstein, 62.
11. Squassoni, 3.
12. Squassoni, 4 and Pollack, 3.
13. For the text of the NPT, see http://www.state.gov
14. Remarks by Ilan Berman at Brandeis University, October 20, 2005.
Palestinian Identity and the Jordanian State: Old Dilemmas, New Manifestations

By Yonatan L. Morse

By most estimates, Palestinians compose 50% of the population of Jordan. They began arriving as refugees after the 1948 war and Jordan’s annexation of the West Bank. Jordan was the only Arab country to offer them citizenship. Since then, the Jordanian government has attempted to create a common identity, but these efforts have been only partially successful. Many Palestinians live in refugee camps, and to the immediate west of Jordan the Palestinians’ national movement continues to struggle for an independent state, both contributing to a strong sense of Palestinian separateness. Mistrust between the Jordanians and Palestinians has resulted in discrimination, armed conflict, and hesitancy on the part of the monarchy to liberalize. The situation begs the questions, is there an identity crisis in Jordan, or as Lawrence Tal wrote, “Is Jordan Doomed?”[1] In this article I will describe the various identity models attempted by the Jordanian monarchy, and evaluate what impact the regional environment has on current domestic relations in Jordan.

Formation of Transjordanian Identity

The Jordanian state, like other Middle Eastern countries, is not a natural phenomenon. Upon its formation, its borders did not coincide with a distinct ethnic identity or a national sentiment. Rather, they were drawn for strategic purposes by the British in order to ensure their interests and partially to recompense their Hashemite allies over the loss of Damascus. Concepts of citizenship, patriotism, and nationalism were alien to the residents, who previously based their identities upon religion, tribe, family, and their immediate locality. The north was more sedentary, with a “mental affiliation toward Syria,” while the south was basically nomadic.[2] The challenge for Hashemite rulers lay not only in legitimizing their own rule as outsiders but in creating a sense of commonality between the various segments of the territory.

The emirate of Transjordan was officially created and placed under the control of Hashemite Emir Abdullah in 1924. The territory given to Abdullah had a total population of around 200,000, half of whom were nomadic and half of whom lived in 12 small towns and 200 local villages.[3] The capital Amman was scarcely more than a village of between 2,500 and 5,000 people.[4] From Britain’s standpoint, allowing Abdullah to rule the territory and unite the tribes would provide a buffer from the Syrian nationalists to the north and the Wahhabi raiders to the south, who in 1925 ousted Abdullah’s brother Ali from the Hijaz, depriving the Hashemite of the holy sites. In 1928 a small and symbolic constitution was written, but power remained in the hands of the monarch. However, the British insisted on supervision and approval of all of his actions.

The creation of a Transjordanian identity was accomplished by integrating the nomadic and sedentary tribes into a state system.[5] First, the demarcation of borders and establishment of a central authority in Amman provided a framework for national identity. Second, the military acted as unifying instrument. The Desert Mobile Force (later the Arab Legion) under Frederick Peake originally utilized Syrian soldiers to repress Bedouin raids. Under the command of Glubb Pasha in 1930, the recruitment of Bedouin began, thus ending tribal raids and solidifying an identity.[6] As one Jordanian soldier put it, “I never knew Jordan existed before I joined the army.”[7] Third, tribal leaders and elites were provided positions within the state apparatus. Fourth, former tribal life was undermined through land-reform. The Department of Land and Surveys began to settle individual plots of land, resulting in a shift from pastoral lifestyles to agricultural. Furthermore, this also helped to loosen the tribal leaders’ hold over their tribesmen.[8] By independence in 1946, a sense of Jordanian commonality existed, revolving around the army, service in the state apparatus, and a new lifestyle for many.

Allegiance did not necessarily lie with Abdullah, nor was Transjordan perceived as distinctly Hashemite. Abdullah had an advantage as an outsider to the region, in that he did not owe allegiance to any particular group. Indeed, for the first 30 years none of the prime ministers were natives of Jordan, and therefore Abdullah for some was more an expedient leader for a new political entity than its symbolic figurehead.[9] Nonetheless, the themes of Jordanian identity, which are still used today, revolve around the Hashemite Sharifian heritage and their leadership of the Arab Revolt. A third theme of Jordanian identity is its unique tribal nature; tribalism, not as a deterrent to state formation, but as a cultural determinant of the state.[10]

Palestinian Identity in Jordan

Following the war of 1948 and the Jordanian annexation of the West Bank in 1950, the demographic composition of Jordan drastically changed. Forty thousand Palestinian refugees fled directly to the East Bank, while after the annexation Jordan

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received 440,000 more native West Bankers and 280,000 more refugees who fled to the West Bank following the war.[11] Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, considered better educated than Jordanians, crossed over to the East Bank to settle in Amman and became the backbone of the new urban middle class. By 1967 Palestinians were 40% of the East Bank.[12] Following the 1967 war, Jordan lost the West Bank, but a second influx of 300,000 refugees entered the East Bank.[13] A final influx of Palestinians occurred after the Gulf War, when the Kuwaiti community of 200,000 was expelled.[14] Palestinian identity has been written about extensively,[15] and for the Diaspora community, it revolved around a sense of attachment to a specific village or town in Palestine, loss of homeland, injustice at the hands of others, along with a desire to return.[16] But, it would be wrong to think of the Palestinian community in Jordan as monolithic, and it should be subdivided into important groups. First, there are the camp dwellers, currently 15% of the Palestinian population in Jordan, who carry the strongest sense of Palestinian nationalism.[17] Second, there is the Palestinian middle class of small merchants, whose sense of Palestinian identity is strong but who have increasingly integrated more into Jordan. Third, there is the large Palestinian urban middle class, consisting of people who migrated from the West to the East bank or left the refugee camps. They have willingly integrated into Jordanian society. Finally, the Kuwaiti refugees are similar to the urban middle class but with less trust of the regime.

From Jordanian to Jordanian-Palestinian to Jordanian and Palestinian Identities

Following the annexation of the West Bank, Jordan oscillated between policies that encouraged unification and those that encouraged separate identities. Abdullah did not attempt to forge a new identity but rather engaged in a form of “Jordanization.” Citizenship and equal rights were allotted to all Palestinians, but as a group they were deprived proportional representation in the parliament and access to sensitive military and political positions, in order to prevent them from taking advantage of their demographic size.[18] After Abdullah’s assassination, the large migration of Palestinians from the West Bank to the East Bank began, but noticeably there was no opposite trend. Therefore, there was never a strong Jordanian presence in the West Bank. King Hussein portrayed the kingdom as a Jordanian-Palestinian entity but would frequently mention that they were equal parts in a greater Jordanian family. This description, however, was in reality only applicable to the East Bank, where many Palestinians chose to integrate into Jordanian society for economic reasons. For those Palestinian in the West Bank and certain segments of the Palestinians on the East Bank (in particular refugee camp dwellers), Pan-Arabism provided an avenue to criticize the government and progress the Palestinian cause. Protests erupted in Palestinian areas to oppose Jordan’s joining of the anti-communist Baghdad Pact.[19] In 1957, Hussein suspended the constitution, banned political parties (except the Muslim Brotherhood), and declared martial law after further protests in the West Bank and in the Jordanian town of Zarqa.[20] The formation of the PLO in 1964, under Egyptian auspices, was a further catalyst of Palestinian identity in the West Bank and amongst camp dwellers. After the loss of the West Bank, the monarchy was faced with two challenges: 1) the growing Palestinian national movement under Yasser Arafat and 2) Native Jordanians’ fears regarding Palestinian national allegiance following 1970 and their economic dominance following the oil boom of the 1970s. The PLO’s fedayeen and the monarchy infamously came to clashes in September 1970, after the PLO took control of the town of Irbid and declared the north liberated. Ironically there was Native Jordanian support of the fedayeen, while many of the urban middle class Palestinians supported the government. The year 1970 though, clearly made evident the two distinguishably different identities in Jordan and their potential to come to clashes.[21]

These clashes elucidated the increasing tensions in the East Bank and the Native Jordanian fear of the rising numbers and influence of Palestinians. No doubt spurred by the Palestinians’ dominance of the private sector and claims of both the Palestinian National Council and politicians in Israel that “Jordan was Palestine,” a lobby emerged to reemphasize the influence of Palestinians in public administration and ousting the last militia groups, while creating a much more salient publicly declared Jordanian element. After Tall’s assassination in 1972, Hussein proposed the “United Arab Kingdom” plan of unification. The potential confederal state would have two distinct entities, Palestinian and Jordanian, with Amman as the capital. This was a departure from the common entity theme, in favor of clearly distinguishing between Palestinians and Jordanians. However, the 1974 Rabat summit, which proclaimed the PLO the sole representative of the Palestinians, ended that plan. Following Rabat, many Native Jordanians became more assertive in their demands that Palestinians choose a nationality and that the king relinquish any claims to the West Bank. Known also as the “Jordanian Likud” movement, they had to wait until 1988 before the King officially renounced his claims for the West Bank following the first intifadah.
The Current Jordanian State and Palestinian Identity
The Jordanian borders now seem to be set. Estimates to the amount of Palestinians in Jordan vary from 50%-75%, with no official governmental census to determine this in certainty.[23] In a survey conducted by the Center for Strategic Studies in Amman during 1995, the same feelings of mistrust discussed above were still evident. Native Jordanians felt that the obstacles to social cohesion were the concentration of the private business sector in Palestinian hands and a fear of the increasing number of citizens of Palestinian origin. Furthermore, many Jordanians felt that Palestinians were ungrateful for the benefits they receive from the state and were distrustful of Palestinian dual allegiance. Conversely, the Palestinians felt that they were discriminated against publicly and underrepresented in parliament and government postings.[24]
Following 1989, the government has gradually embarked upon political and economic liberalization, beginning with a renewal of parliamentary elections in November. This generated new fears among Jordanians that a shift toward privatization would only benefit the Palestinians and that political liberalization would undermine Native Jordanians’ influence. Economic fallout after the Gulf War hurt the Jordanian public sector in particular, whose wages were fixed by the government.[25] In 1991, Jordan’s National Charter was written and ratified, endorsing the concepts of national unity and identity and again opening the public debate over Jordanian identity. King Hussein also began to address the issue once again within the framework of his Arab and Islamic heritage. He compared both communities to those of Medina and Mecca during the 7th century, both of equal importance but different background.[26] But the public debate was stifled somewhat during the mid-1990s and the stagnation of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. A Press Law in 1997 limited discussion over certain issues, causing controversy. For instance, Mustafah Hamerneh was forced to resign as head of the Center of Strategic Studies due to a critical interview that he gave to Newsweek magazine.[27]
Hussein’s successor, King Abdullah II, continues to face new challenges relating to the changes in the region. Following the Al-Aqsa intifadah and the ensuing protests in Jordan, he dissolved parliament in June 2001 and postponed elections indefinitely. The events of September 11 further troubled the regime, as there was a strong Islamic opposition who considered the attacks a plot to discredit Islam.[28] The regime, while supportive of the Palestinian cause, was unable to translate this into public opinion. In 2003 elections were reinstated, and Abdullah pushed forward his “Jordan First” (Al-Urdun Awalan) program, designed to reinforce national identity, Jordan’s priorities, and its commitment to liberalization.[29]

The Regional Context and the Current Dilemma
There are four key elements that influence the level of integration in Jordan. First, Palestinians who reside in refugee camps still carry with them a strong sense of Palestinian separatism. Second, the sense of public discrimination that many Palestinians attempting to integrate into Jordanian society feel hinders integration. Third, the segment of Native Jordanians who are apprehensive regarding Palestinian loyalties vis-à-vis their economic influences are reluctant to support liberalization. Fourth, the regional environment’s ability to polarize Jordanian society or give the monarchy caution. Ideological movements (Pan-Arabism, Islam, Marxism), the state of the Israeli-Palestinian relationship, and the prevalent attitude toward the West all provide different frameworks for Palestinians, and often put them (as well as Native Jordanians) at odds with the monarchy. It is to the current regional setting that I would like to turn.
External movements have allowed Palestinians in Jordan a channel through which to express their frustrations and reframe their identity. For instance, Pan-Arabism during the 1950s and 1960s was used by Palestinians as grounds to criticize the Jordanian government when it appeared to waver with regard to the Palestinian question. During the late 1960s and the early 1970s the vigor of the PLO drew many to support its activities in Jordan. Some have argued that it was the appeal of the Revolutionary Left, with its shades of Marxism, which drew the refugees and young student to the movement, and was thus more vogue than anything else.[30] Since the 1980s Islam has provided an outlet to Palestinians. The Muslim Brotherhood provides relief and assistance to the refugee camps and was also the only political party not outlawed after 1955.[31] Thus, whether it is Pan-Arabism, Third World Revolutionaries, or Islam, portions of the Palestinian community in Jordan have shifted their allegiances and identities accordingly.
Currently, the regional environment is dominated by three main elements: 1) the war in Iraq, 2) the status of Israeli-Palestinian relations, which is currently tense, and 3) a new form of Islamic fundamentalism that transcends regionalism in favor of a global campaign: the Al-Qaeda threat.
The first two have created across the Middle East an anti-Western sentiment that has mobilized large segments of the Jordanian population to criticize the regime over its ties with the US and Israel. Only 28% of Jordanians associate the US with positive attributes, which is consistent with attitudes in most Arab countries except Lebanon. Similarly, Arab countries with the exception of Lebanon view the invasion of Iraq as a terrorist act (86%-95% of the populations). Jordan and Palestine depart, however with regard to Al-Qaeda. Thirty-five percent of Jordanians and 22% of Palestinians consider 9/11 a terror-
ist act. In contrast, between 62% and 73% of Egyptians, Syrians, and Lebanese consider 9/11 a terrorist act.[32] Why the discrepancy? While this does not imply support of Al-Qaeda, it does suggest that the Al-Qaeda movement speaks to the sentiments of many Palestinians (and Native Jordanians as well).

In addition, following the end of the war in Afghanistan, Jordan was faced with a serious problem. Some 1,000 Jordanian jihadists who fought in Afghanistan returned with this new form of fundamentalism. The Jordanian intelligence services, the GID, began arresting activist linked to organizations like the “Prophet Muhammad’s Army” and Beit Al-Imam. Many of these activists (including the infamous Abu Musab al-Zarqawi) were released following the death of King Hussein when Abdullah was forced to grant a general amnesty to prisoners. In 1999 a plot to destroy a hotel in Amman (termed the “millennium plot”) was thwarted. In 2002, US diplomat Lawrence Foley was assassinated in Amman.[33] In 2005, missiles were fired in Aqaba Port.[34] These organizations and actions are not exclusively Palestinian. Indeed, Zarqawi himself is Native Jordanian, and the Aqaba attack was executed by a Syrian. But Palestinians, and especially those from refugee camps, compose significant portions of Zarqawi’s group and other Jordanian terrorist organizations.

Hence, there is a situation that in many senses is similar to the 1970s. Revolutionary Marxism is replaced with anti-Western sentiments. Membership in the fedayeen is replaced by membership in a jihadist group. How will these two developments influence each other? Will violence emerge in Jordan once again if these groups become more violent and the monarchy is forced to crack down on them? This is the current challenge of Jordanian identity.

**Conclusion – Potential for Civil-Society**

Within Western definitions of nationalism, two factors are determined: 1) the presence of a common legacy and 2) the current consent. Writers have often considered the first to be ethno-nationalism, or pre-political nationalism, while the second has been associated with civil-society, or what Ernest Renan termed “the daily plebiscite.”[35] One can debate which aspect is more important, but it seems clear that neither can secure nationalism on its own. In Jordan, the prospects for a civil-society exist. A large portion of Palestinians are well integrated into the economic and social fabric of the country. They are second and third generation and have intermarried with Palestinians (like the King himself). On the other hand, some in Jordan’s academia support a future confederal state, united by a common Arab heritage. This, they believe, will allow both Palestinian and Jordanian to coexist within Jordan.[36]

Native Jordanians fear further Palestinian integration due to the disparity in economic distributions and doubts regarding Palestinian loyalties. Furthermore, the monarchy does not wish to undermine the Native basis of its support, and steps back from liberalization during periods of upheaval. There are solutions to multicultural (or bicultural) societies such as Jordan. A form of consociational governance, where power is shared at the top but autonomy is given to each community, is possible. Both parties though must relinquish any willingness of cultural domination, and the monarchy must feel secure to open government and the military to Palestinians. The regional environment is crucial in this matter. For Jordan to enjoy stable communal life within its own borders, it must have quiet on both its eastern and western borders. ♦

**Notes**

5 This is also known as an indigenous Jordanian identity, Native Jordanian identity, or East Jordanian Identity. For our purposes, I will use Native Jordanian to describe any citizen of Jordan who is not a Palestinian descendent.
7 Nevo. “Changing Identities.” pp 188
8 Layne. pp 42
9 Nevo. “Changing Identities.” pp 188
10 Layne. pp 26
12 Nevo. “Changing Identities.” 190
14 Brand. pp 49
Israel’s neighbor, Jordan, is gaining spotlight as an important actor in the formation of a Palestinian national identity and state.

16 Brand, Pp 48-49.
18 Nevo. “Changing Identities.” pp 190
20 Robbins. pp 99
21 Nevo. “Changing Identities.” pp 194. Many believe that the support of Jordanians for the Palestinians cause was due to disappointment over the results of the 1967 war. Debate continues over the nature of Palestinians support of the fedayeen. Some contend that there was never an attempt to overthrow the Jordanian state, but rather to encourage it to engage Israel. Others disagree, and point to the assassination of Wasfi al-Tall and the several attempts on King Hussein’s life. By this account, 1970 clearly delineated to competing identities and narratives that exist to this day. Many Jordanians call the events of September 1970 “White September” or Jordan’s second independence, indicating the perceived victory of a Jordanian identity, while most Palestinians still consider it “Black September.”
22 Pappe. pp 75
25 Brand, Pp 56
26 Nevo. “Changing Identities.” pp 200
27 Interview with Mohammad Al-Masri. Hamerneh was reinstated 2 years later.
29 Nevo. Ibid. pp 81-82.
30 Interview with Mustafah Hamarneh. August 28, 2005
31 Pappe, pp 87
33 Brisard, Jean-Charles. Zarqawi: The New Face of Al-Qaeda. Other Press, New York: 2005. This is a very well documented overview of the emergence of Zarqawi and global Islamism in Jordan.
36 Interview with Mustafah Hamerneh.
“Bottom Rail on Top”: The Kurds of Iraq
By Michael Nahum

According to an oft-repeated Kurdish saying, the Kurds ‘are a people with no friends but the mountains.’ By almost any reading of Kurdish history in the twentieth century, it is easy to see why. Both ancient (with origins dating to the sixth-century BC arrival of the Mede tribes in Iran) and distinct (speaking a multitude of languages distantly related to Persian) they are, at 25 million, very possibly the largest ethnic group in the world with no state to call their own. Indeed, ‘Greater Kurdistan’ comprises a territory roughly the size of Great Britain and Germany put together, yet partitioned between Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq since 1920. In all of their home countries, the Kurds have been subject to treatment ranging from mere discrimination to outright massacre. In none, however, have their fortunes swung so widely or as rapidly as in Iraq, where in a mere five years (between 1988 and 1993) they have gone from holocaust to virtual independence. As if to add insult to injury, their continuous strivings for autonomy or independence have led some in the West to label them “an unstable element,” based on their “warlike character” and “anarchic society.”[1] Ever since Operation Iraqi Freedom in March 2003, this chorus has been joined by a growing number in the Arab world and among the American Left, where some voices have begun to refer to the Kurds as “the Kosovars of the Middle East … unrelentingly aggressive, fanatically tribal” and eager “to achieve their dream of an ethnically pure Kurdish state.”[2] Such polemics aside, few doubt that the importance of the ‘Kurdish Question’ in modern Iraqi politics – over their role in the ongoing debate over the Iraqi constitution and the place of federalism in the new Iraq – has grown to critical proportions. This article attempts to give context to this debate, to frame it against the backdrop of Kurdish history in Iraq, and perhaps even to deduce from the lessons of the past some sense of direction for the future. In many ways, the central features of Kurdish history have been oppression from without and discord from within. A sterling example can be found in the early 1920s, when independence almost came within the Kurds’ grasp. Immediately following their victory in World War One, the Allies set to work remaking the map of the Middle East. A prime showpiece of their handiwork was and remains the state of Iraq, fashioned of three ex-Ottoman provinces (the vilayets of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra). While the latter two were Arab in both language and culture, the first was unquestionably Kurdish. And yet, brief but strong consideration of many such promises. This particular promise was voided after Shaykh Mahmoud of the Barzinji tribe, who had already begun the revolt resumed. After another coup, friendlier relations blossomed. Indeed, the Kurds’ first moment of reckoning with the new state of Iraq was not long in coming. The British, still alive to the potential for trouble in their binational creation, pressured newly crowned Hashemite King Faisal to sign the Anglo-Iraqi Joint Declaration of 1922, which recognized the Kurdish right to autonomous self-rule within the Iraqi state. It was to be the first of many such promises. This particular promise was voided after Shaykh Mahmoud of the Barzinji tribe, who had already begun and lost the first Kurdish rebellion three years earlier, launched a second rebellion against Iraqi-British rule. This too was a lost cause, and the British re-established their dominion by 1924. Thereafter both Kurd and Arab settled into a monotonous pattern; either a rebellion would break out and be crushed (1927, 1932) or after a period of draining, inconclusive warfare the government in Baghdad would offer some form of limited autonomy, which would either by rejected by the Kurds or, if accepted, soon re-neged on by Baghdad (1944, 1961-63).[6] And after a few years, the cycle would begin anew. In 1958, Colonel Abdul Qassim overthrew the Iraqi monarchy in a coup, heralding the hope among Kurds and Arabs that a new day might dawn for both. They were rapidly disillusioned. Indeed, by the standards of what was to come, the monarchical period can be seen as one of relatively mild despotism. The reason is no great mystery: averaging one rebellion or coup every five years, the Hashemites could not afford to over-antagonize the Kurds. Indeed, in the first decade of military rule, Kurdish fortunes would seesaw up and down depending how secure the junta-of-the-moment was. Qassim, insecure after first taking power, re-affirmed in Iraq’s then-new constitution “Arabs and Kurds are considered partners in this nation.”[7] After a year of both sides solidifying their bases of power – Qassim in Baghdad, the Kurds under Mustafa Barzani’s Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) – the revolt resumed. After another coup, friendlier relations blossomed, only to be followed by more fighting after another year.

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Periodically Qassim, his “quasi-Nasserite successors,”[8] and other factions within Baghdad offered concessions on Kurdish autonomy. “It is important to note,” according to Entessar, “that all the concessions were extracted when the Iraqi regime was trapped in a debilitating war with the Kurdish peshmergas.”[9] Nor were the Kurds wholly honest in their dealings; their definition of ‘autonomy’ fluctuated yearly based on their assessments of the chances for seizing total independence. It’s meaning, as one Kurdish leader declared, “depends on our strength and the strength of our enemy.”[10]

These calculations were sufficiently confused to continue the hostilities, on and off, throughout the 1960s and early '70s. After the Ba’thist coup of 1968, the Iraqi state finally began to solidify its control over the country. In desperation, the Kurds turned to Iran for support against the growing power of their enemy. The Shah, in the words of one British correspondent, “did not want to see a strong Iraq develop next door, nor did he want to have his own Kurds to catch the ‘independence bug’, and so he was content to see them at each other’s throats.”[11] The Shah sought to keep the Kurds on a short string, just strong enough to continue fighting Baghdad but too weak to win. The upshot was that by 1975 Kurdish fortunes had, in Entessar’s opinion, become “a function of Iranian largess.”[12] Up to this point the conflict had taken 60,000 Kurdish lives, seriously damaged 3,000 Kurdish villages (representing 75% of the total), and made refugees of hundreds of thousands more.[13] The crowning act to this ongoing tragedy came in February 1975 when, in exchange for a border deal on the commercially valuable Shatt al-Arab waterway, the Shah agreed to cut off all aid to the Kurds. Frantically inquiring what was to become of them, the Kurds’ nominal leader, Mustafa Barzani was advised to make his peace with Baghdad; for his part, the Shah would “protect those who sought refuge in Iran.”[14]

Within two months, Kurdish resistance collapsed. Eager to secure their new conquests, the Ba’thists embarked on a “sweeping campaign to Arabize … the southernmost spurs of Kurdistan,” and to clear all Kurds out of a designated zone from the Iranian border, where hundreds of thousands had already fled. According to Human Rights Watch, an Iraqi official admitted in November 1975 that some 50,000 Kurds had already been deported to the south, “although the true figure was almost certainly higher.”[15] Government attempts to ‘Arabize’ parts of Kurdistan had a long history in Iraq, going back to 1937, when King Ghazi had settled large numbers of the Al-Obeid and Al-Jubour tribes in the area around the Haweja irrigation project.[16] Nevertheless, these prior attempts had been infrequent and half-hearted; the Ba’thists, like the military regimes before them, intensified the process dramatically. According to Kurdish scholar Mohammed Ahmad, the new “ethnic cleansing program” began with the inaugural destruction of thirteen Kurdish villages “under the pretext that they were too close to the oil fields of Kirkuk.”[17] Kirkuk itself was ringed with Arab settlements. Arabs were encouraged to move north and armed “with a view to supporting government troops against Kurdish fighters.”[18] In the next three years, the Ba’tists deported 500,000 Kurds to mujamaat (“resettlement collectives”) in the south and razed some 1,400 villages.[19]

In 1979 Saddam Hussein consolidated his rule; a year later he invaded Iran, thus inaugurating the longest war of the 20th century. With so many troops otherwise engaged, “Kurdish reactions,” in O’Ballance’s words, “ran true to form.”[20] By 1983, the old musical chairs game of negotiations and rebellion was in full swing. Now, however, the stakes had been raised. Kurdish leaders recalled the Iraqi pledge: “If you help us, we will never forget it. But if you oppose us, we will never forget it. And after the war is over, we will destroy you and your villages utterly.”[21] With the commencement of the Anfal (“spoils of war”) campaign in 1988, the Ba’tists made good on their promise. It is impossible to do justice to the horror that unfolded over the next six months in the space allotted here. Simply put, by year’s end, over 100,000 Kurds, the vast majority of them civilians, had been exterminated by means including poison gas, induced starvation and mass executions of the sort which would be familiar to any Einsatzgruppe.[22]

The Kurdish leadership, still reeling from these massacres, sat out Desert Storm in 1990-91, only to see the Kurdish street break out in spontaneous rebellion. Saddam’s vengeance was swift, buoyed by Bush Sr.’s desire not “to get involved in Iraq’s internal affairs.”[23] Only after two million refugees fled to Iran and Turkey, “fearing another massacre,” in Hakan Yavuz’s words, was the West shamed into action.[24] That action came in the form of the “no-fly zone,” which banished the Iraqi military from the northern half of Kurdistan. Arabization continued in the remainder, however, until 2003. After 1991, Kurds saw a flowering of the self-rule for which so many had been sacrificed. Power passed into the hands of two organizations which had led the fight for decades. One, the KDP, was the child of the legendary Mustafa Barzani, who had been the leading light of Kurdish politics and organized heretofore scattered tribal resistance on a firm national basis for the first time. The other, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, was composed of personal and ideological rivals of the KDP organized under Jalal Talabani. The two parties operate their own newspapers, their own militias, and their own networks of patronage. Politically they have, to a large extent, replaced the tribes of yesteryear.

Similarly, their feuds have become the heirs to the ancient tribal disputes. From 1993 to 1996, they engaged in a mini-civil war which generated some 92,000 internal refugees as of 2000.[25] Nevertheless, by 2003 they had matured into two elected bodies whose accountability and stability, if not quite meeting Western standards, still could serve as a model for the rest of Iraq. When Coalition forces invaded, moreover, Kurdish peshmergas served as the northern front by seizing the cities of Mosul and Kirkuk from Hussein’s forces.

Indeed, at the time of this writing, while the Sunni Arabs are the backbone of the insurgency, and even many Shi’a have joined the likes of Muqtada al-Sadr, the Kurds have remained consistently pro-American. As one ex-peshmerga said simply, “We consider ourselves to be part of the coalition forces.”[26] These close connections, coupled with their staunch advocacy of federalism, have earned the Kurds much criticism. Yet, if this history should suffice to demonstrate anything, it is that their “natural fear of a strong Baghdad” is a well grounded one.[27] Al-Jazeera may continue to call upon Kurds to forgive and forget, to put their faith (and their oilfields) in the hands of the central government, but no amount of constitutional handholding will suffice to undo
eighty years of history. That history has ingrained in the Kurds a fierce determination to never again be at the mercy of their neighbors. Indeed, the massacre, dispossession, and oppression which forms the legacy of the Ba’thist era has ensured a future of intercommunal mistrust for the peoples of Iraq, regardless of what any Constitution might propose. Moreover, the federalist tint of the Constitution insisted on by the Kurds merely gives de jure legitimacy to a de facto situation already over a decade old. While preserving the Kurds within a broader Iraqi confederation, it grants them (and the Sunnis and Shi’a) the autonomy to govern their internal affairs as they see best. As Peter Galbraith, certainly no starry-eyed proponent of the Iraq War, observed that, to Kurds, “Iraq has been an eighty year nightmare of repression and genocide” and that the Constitution is “merely the ratification of a breakup that has already happened.[28] In the view of this author, it is not Kurdish dreams of independence that pose the true danger to Iraq’s future, but fantasies of reimposing the artificial unity of the Ba’thist years, such as those still cherished by many Sunnis. In the present climate, both are impossible of realization. The difference between them is that Kurdish leaders (if not necessarily the Kurdish street) have come to understand what one of Jalal Talabani’s advisers called the “difference between declaring and sustaining a state.[29] Surrounded by enemies of proven hostility, the Kurds are willing to avail themselves of international protection within a federated Iraq – provided that that Iraq does not threaten their hard-won autonomy. By contrast, Iraqi centralization and Sunni dominance have so long gone hand in hand that many (most?) Sunnis still presume that the one will automatically lead to the other. Under the present democratic regime, however, it can serve only to empower Shi’a Islamist parties over the whole of Iraq, an eventuality odious to both Sunnis and Kurds, and one which is blocked by precisely those federalist clauses which have garnered so much criticism.

Yet in the final analysis, what at first seems a frighteningly complex situation boils down with almost painful simplicty: Kurdish nationalism is here to stay and so is the Kurdish memory of past injustices. Iraq, if it is to survive, must accommodate both. Perhaps the passage of time will dull their force. For the moment, however, the history is too fresh.♦

Notes
2. Antiwar.com, “Our Kurdish Problem” by Justin Raimondo, 10/5/05, “Kurds and Israel, longstanding ties!” Al-Jazeera, accessed over the internet, 7/20/05 & “Iraqis have learned little from the past” Iraq-USA, Editorial, 8/26/2005, Jamil Talaat Kazoun
5. Ibid.
6. For a detailed, highly readable account, see McDowall’s “Modern History of the Kurds”.
7. Entessar, pg. 59
8. Michael Hudson, Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy, pg. 273
9. Entessar, pg. 9
10. Adamson, The Kurdish War, pg. 92
11. Edgar O’Ballance, The Kurdish Struggle, pg. 73
12. Entessar, pg. 76
13. Ibid., pg. 319, 326
14. O’Ballance, pg. 98
15. Human Rights Watch, Iraq’s Crime of Genocide, pg. 34
17. Ibid., pg. 38
18. Ibid., pg. 39
19. McDowell, History of the Kurds pg. 340
20. O’Ballance, pg. 124
21. Human Rights Watch, pg. 28
22. For a detailed summary, both Samantha Powers’ A Problem from Hell: America in the Age of Genocide, and Human Rights Watch: Iraq’s Crime of Genocide come highly recommended.
23. Entessar, pg. 152
24. M. Hakan Yavuz, “Turkey’s Kurdish Centered Foreign Policy”, The Kurdish Question pg. 212
25. Ibid.
26. “Not all of Iraq is anti-U.S. as Ramadan begins”, Salt Lake Tribune, accessed over the internet, 10/10/05
29. Robert Olson, “Turkey and Kurdistan-Iraq Relations”, The Kurdish Question, pg. 118

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In Islam, particularly in the Sunni tradition, a tension has and continues to exist between the religion’s manifestation in the hands of political leaders and its blessing or criticism (generally the latter) by leading religious scholars and innovators of the respective time. This article will discuss the writings and application of Taqi al-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah, a 13th century jurist and theologian, who wrote prolifically on the governments and Islam during his time and is today both widely celebrated and ostracized—depending on the forum—for his significant contribution to the religion’s juridical tradition.

The Roots of Islam in the Political Sphere
Since its revelation in the seventh century, Islam has functioned as both a source of religious guidance and as a political blueprint. During the Prophet Muhammad’s lifetime the religious tenets he revealed, in addition to molding a new religious identity, also gave rise to a paradigm of a proper Islamic society. This encompassed specific regulations on everything from how to treat widows and orphans, to the importance of charity and the structure of the household. At the Prophet’s death in 632 C.E., Islam almost immediately took on a new political form that previously hadn’t existed (nor was considered necessary) since the Prophet himself was considered the final source on instruction in the way of God. The fundamental question of how ‘the Islamic polity’ should be governed opened a new chapter in Islamic civilization.

It was at this point that Islam experienced its most monumental split—between the Shi’ites and the Sunnis. The Shi’ites, (short-hand for Shi’at Ali, “the faction of Ali”) believed that relatives of the Prophet Muhammad who were specially ordained with divine and even supernatural powers, known as Imams, should bear the crown of Islam. To them, the rightful successor to Muhammad was Ali, the Prophet’s son-in-law and third Caliph. The first two Caliphs – Abu Bakr and ‘Umar were selected by a council of elders and, though not recognized by the Shi’ites, were the first leaders of the Sunni sect. Deriving its name from the Arabic word for “example” (sunnah), this faction held that a Caliph must be elected leader and need not have special divine influence or even relation to the Prophet.

In time, schools of thought emerged from these two groups, creating a base not only for religious exegesis as found in other monotheistic faiths, but also an equal, if not greater emphasis on political, social and judicial discourse unique in its quantity and scope of material. Heralded as a leading Mujadid (“renewer”), or reformer of the religious behavior of the Islamic community by attempting to bring it back to its original form, Taqi al-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah produced work whose novelty was its inflammatory attack on the governments and caliphs as well as the redefinition of who classifies as a Muslim and the reorganization of priorities in civil disobedience—all concepts never before proposed. Though during his lifetime largely marginalized, he posthumously came to represent a significant contribution to the canon of Islamic jurisprudence.

Ibn Taymiyyah’s Definition of “Muslim”
To fully understand the significance of his writings, one must first examine Ibn Taymiyyah within the historical context of his time. In 1258—five years before his birth—the Golden Horde pillaged Baghdad and, with it, brought down the five century-old Abbasid Caliphate. About forty years later, the Mongols invaded Ibn Taymiyyah’s native Syria, causing a long-lasting period of warfare and political tension between the conquering Mongols and...
and the Turkish Mamluks, who would ultimately overcome the invaders to re-establish their reign.

Growing up, Ibn Taymiyyah was exposed to the more stringent Hanbali school of Islamic jurisprudence, which often expounded quite narrowly on all matters by drawing very literal instruction from the Qur’an, the Hadith (the recorded sayings and behavior of the Prophet) and from the actions of the first Muslims. [2] In writing his theses, Ibn Taymiyyah was faced not only with the question of how to interpret the written law as it pertains to religious rituals but also with the timeless issue challenging every generation of Islamic exegetes: how to understand those statutes in light of the realities of his day. As his thoughts solidified, Ibn Taymiyyah gained notoriety as a very harsh and uncompromising personality in both religious and secular circles, often offending thinkers, believers and rulers. In 1305, his ideology even led to his arrest on grounds of his supposed usurpation of power in the Mamluk capital of Cairo. [3] Ibn Taymiyyah attempted to clarify to the Muslim populace what seemed like a war over identity. Witnessing the battles between the Muslim Mamluks and the Muslim Mongols, there emerged an apparent contradiction to the fundamental tenet of Islam that a Muslim shall not fight another Muslim. (Q. 4: 92) [4] Nonetheless, Ibn Taymiyyah drew an unprecedented distinction between Ghazan, one of the first the Mongol Ilkhanid rulers to convert to Islam, and the Mamluks. The latter actually upheld the laws of Islam and fought on behalf of it, whereas the Mongols fought with the support of a coalition of troops comprising Christian Armenians, Georgians, pagan Mongols and Shi’ites- thus calling into question the legitimacy of their fight. [5] Ibn Taymiyyah’s discussion of fay’, or religious expenditure, reveals a similar subtlety of distinction in his discussion of Muslim identity. In his Political System of the Shari’a, he outlines a hierarchy of recipients of state revenue, the first of which is the mujahid, or the one who fights on behalf of Islam. The remaining hierarchy, however, proves more surprising as he continues by drawing a similar distinction between different levels of Muslims, including ranking them according to when each accepted Islam. [6] This controversial statement, much like the previously noted example, seemed to clash with the fundamental Islamic principle of the equality of all Muslims. (Q. 4: 152) [7] 

Creating a Framework for Muslim Government

For Ibn Taymiyyah, the appointed public leader’s commitment to uphold and carry out the Shari’a serves as the paramount guarantor of a properly constructed political body. [8] He says that just as Muhammad received the key to the Ka’ba- the black monolith in Mecca believed to be the abode of Allah- as a sign of his leadership as a Muslim over the Muslim people, so to “anyone carrying out a public function should entrust the affairs of the Muslims to the best Muslim.” Should this not occur, then that person will be seen as “a traitor in the eyes of Allah and of His Messenger.” [9]

When considering the structure of a “polity,” Ibn Taymiyyah does not have Plato or Rousseau in mind. Rather, he establishes that “the aim of the public functions is to try to reform the religious life of the people…a reformation of the worldly affairs is necessary for the establishment of Religion (sic).” [13] Considering the previous point about the dual personality of a leader, it follows from this thought that the role of a leader must not only be the distribution of tasks to his subjects but also, and perhaps more importantly, establishing fertile ground for Islam throughout his domain vis-à-vis protection and punishment. However, unlike in today’s world, Ibn Taymiyyah establishes that, according to the Prophet, in cases of fighting between fellow Muslims out of zeal and passion, “the killer and the killed go to Hell.” [14] This statement appears to contradict the author’s aforementioned sentiments about the status of the Muslim Mongols. It can be inferred that the author, given his background and context, chose his words carefully and recognized their implications. Therefore, the precise definition of “Muslim,” “fighting,” and what he calls “zeal” is lacking. Though superficially his words sound just and lawful, it creates difficulties for his disciples to apply his ideology to their own circumstances. One can go so far as to extrapolate that today his words may be incorrectly applied to contexts of which the author himself would have disapproved.

Ibn Taymiyyah on Jihad

Many both from within and without the faith have argued that today’s most radical clergymen stray drastically from the literal interpretation of Jihad (“holy war”) in that they disregard the basic tenet of offering the unbeliever the opportunity to convert before executing him/her.

Ibn Taymiyyah, a staunch advocate of religious submission, opens his discussion of Holy War by writing that upon ordering His messenger to propagate Islam, God did not allow Muhammad to fight or kill anyone until she dismissed his/her opportunity to convert. [15] Nonetheless, the author makes clear that the obligation to fight is explicit and necessary for every law-abiding Muslim. “Jihad is the best of all the voluntary actions which man performs,” Ibn Taymiyyah writes. “As it is, by the consensus of all the learned men in the Law, better than the voluntary extra portions of the religious duties, better than the grand pilgrimage and the lesser pilgrimage…better than the voluntary prayer and voluntary fasting as indicated by the Book and the Sunna.” [16] Similarly, in his Institution of the Hisba, Ibn Taymiyyah stresses that “for the fighting men to abandon the Jihad on behalf of the Muslims is therefore one of the greatest wrongs possible...Therefore his punishment for neglecting the Jihad, and the blame he incurs, is greater by far than for the other offences.” [17] According to Ibn Taymiyyah, the tradition of waging a physical Jihad is an obligation not only in religious matters, but is equally not to be neglected in matters of government and economics. For example, he permits performing Jihad on People of the Book (Christians and Jews) not only if they do not accept Islam, but also if they violate any treaties negotiated with them. [18] Ibn Taymiyyah conceives of the notion of warfare on behalf of religion more as a defensive action rather than an offensive one. Focusing foremost on the interests of the Islamic state, he attempts to single out those threatening elements, including criminals, colonists, and unbelievers. Therefore, when considering his praise for engaging in such activity, again the context of his lifetime must be taken into account. Responding to the imminent threat from the Mongols and the rival empires, a structure of flexible interpretation had to be established that would provide
defense guidelines for the growing nation. Contrary to Islamic scripture, he posits the highly controversial thought that the oppressor must be struck down in this world even if he is punished in the next. [19] Such action was traditionally reserved for Muslim courts and sovereigns. Murder in the name of religion was in fact ill received by Muslim governments since the first recorded incidents of such activity in the 11th century by the notorious peripheral Shi’ite sect known as the Nizari Isma'ilis (dubbed “The Assassins”). However, Ibn Taymiyyah and his disciples after him, began reviving this tradition and bringing it legitimacy from inside the faith. During his lifetime, efforts to do so stemmed largely from the impending need to counter the Mongol threat. [20] In generations that would follow, similar stringent Qur’anic interpreters would come to view secular issues as theological fronts for murder and war in increasingly unconventional fashions.

How Can We Understand Ibn Taymiyyah Today?

Though the ideologies and characters of today’s fundamentalist Muslim leaders differ greatly from one to the next, there are additional issues that must be assessed. Which of today’s Muslim governments can be considered legitimate? Are there, in fact, established criteria for determining a proper Muslim government? Moreover, who can arbitrate whether or not they are legitimate? Whereas in the past jurists would often draft treatises and have some sort of qualifications based on where and what they have studied in their youth, today it seems radical leaders arise in different countries and communities almost every day and gain some sort of following. And finally, how can the welfare of human lives and communities be considered under such stringent preaching when uniquely modern means of warfare and politics exist?

One conclusion is true. When studying the views, actions and clout of today’s religious Muslim firebrands, one notices a common thread. Each of these leaders responds to what he considers an existentialist threat to his notion of what a proper Muslim society must resemble. Beyond their citations of Ibn Taymiyyah and other important Islamic minds, as bin Laden and others have done, their mere reactionary response strategy for countering those threats harkens the actions of his predecessors. So, while creating a set formula for evaluating Islamic fundamentalist currents may hinder or alter its effects in the short term, a true vision for its extrication in the long term would only arise from comparing it to the ideologues that helped sow the seeds for its fruition centuries ago.

Notes

3. Ibid. 7.
“Arab Super Star” Competition Graces the Beaches of Beirut

By Farrah Bdour

Of the latest cultural phenomena to sweep across the Arab World are numerous pan-Arab TV singing competitions, the most infamous being “Super Star” and “Star Academy”. Based in the cosmopolitan Lebanese capital, Beirut, these programs gather together youth from across the Arab World, who despite myriad differences, share a passion for Arabic music and a dream of fame. For many in the region, these Arab versions of “American Idol” and “British Pop Idol” are becoming the heart of national pride. The format of “Arab Super Star” is similar to that of its prototypes: young Arab men and women aspiring to be pop stars compete in seemingly never-ending rounds, singing a combination of modern and classical Arab favorites, until a winner stands alone. The audiences, no longer passive spectators, share their own voices to determine the outcome, by casting their votes through the Internet, an automated telephone service, and mobile text-messaging.

“Super Star” has also generated an inter-Arab rivalry, whereby each contestant’s national affiliation is an integral part of his/her identity on the program. No doubt that part of the appeal of voting is the chance to side with your people, thus justifying why the studio is generally filled with fans of all ages waving a sea of flags in solidarity with their onstage compatriots. For instance, during the final episode of “Super Star 2”, as the Libyan Ayman al-Aatar (soon to be crowned Arab Superstar of 2004) and the Palestinian Ammar Hassan stood on stage together to hear the results of the final vote, they held their respective nation’s colors. Interestingly, Ayman and Ammar then exchanged flags in anticipation of the announcement. Both had stood side by side in recognition of each other’s talents, acknowledging at once both the distinctions inherent in their national backgrounds and the power of artistic expression to transcend these barriers in the spirit of true camaraderie.

More than anything else, “Super Star” is distinguished from other cultural spectacles to have taken hold in the modern Arab World, because it is a show that does not pretend to promote the kind of Pan-Arabism that merges all Arab nations and peoples into an undifferentiated mass of identical interests and backgrounds, nor does it assume upon them an untenable, over-simplified commonality. Rather, “Super Star” celebrates individual achievements and the different socio-cultural experiences that have helped foster them within a common linguistic group. In the end, the only thing shared by the contestants and the audience is an admiration for Arabic music.

Within a milieu of limited freedom, this independently produced TV program both celebrates individual achievement in an authentically Arab musical tradition, and puts Arab audiences at the center of the decision-making process. Rami Khouri, the editor of Lebanon’s Daily Star newspaper, explains: “Arab people don’t often get a chance to vote for something and have their vote count... People really think they can vote and affect the outcome, which isn’t the case in political elections...You’re voting for representatives from countries and that instinctively gives people a reason to get excited, emotionally and politically.” [1]

Opposition to “Super Star” and other Arab reality TV shows has not been absent. Some have argued that such programs are a distraction from the region’s conflicts. Other conservative groups, such as the Islamic Action Front, have branded these shows as a sign of intruding Western culture that wishes to “change the cultural identity of the people.”[2] “Super Star” was not criticized as heavily as was its counterpart “Star Academy,” which brings together sixteen young Arab males and females in a communal house in Beirut to compete for a recording contract while attending sports, music and dance classes all on view twenty-four hours a day. Saudi religious scholars have decreed this program as corrupt; an “abominable state of mingling of the sexes” that encourages “depraved behavior.”[3]

Despite severe criticism, such shows have proven to be incredibly successful, gathering in over a few million viewers. In fact, the first two series of “Super Star” in 2003 and 2004 proved to be the most popular TV programs ever shown in the Middle East, with each final generating over three million votes from participating viewers. Furthermore, Ihab Hamoud, the show organizer asserts that “at one point in time, we had 98% market share in Lebanon, and for the first episode of this series, we had 50% market share in Saudi Arabia.”[3] It is unclear exactly how many individuals...
have participated but such figures certainly indicate the involvement of a significant part of the Arab population. Beyond the difficulties of opposition and harsh criticism, “Super Star” has faced impediments of its own that have interrupted the original plan. The assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik el-Hariri in February delayed the third season for eight months. The hit show is produced by Lebanon’s Future Television and is transmitted across the Middle East by Al-Mostaqbal satellite station, both formerly owned by the late Prime Minister. The effect of such reality TV shows in the Arab World is both undeniable and unmistakable; they are shaking up the region’s conservative culture, fueling national passions, and testing social mores in an environment of shifting loyalties and transforming gender norms. Winners along with runner-ups, are indeed icons, whose legions of fans are typically characteristic of national leaders and religious figures. At a time when so much energy and money is spent on exporting democratic values though nation-building and strong-arm diplomacy, “Super Star” and similar Arab programs are genuine evidence of the success of democracy when engineered from within.

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Puzzle 1
Match each ‘Stan’ with the brief description of its political situation:

1. This Caspian nation is led by former communist Saparmurat Niyazov, whose personality cult has drawn him comparisons with North Korea’s Kim Jong Il.

2. Large-scale protests over alleged election fraud in this country led to the resignation of President Askar Akayev on April 4, 2005, culminating a series of events known as the Tulip Revolution.


4. Having experienced a crippling civil war from 1992 to 1997, this country is estimated to be the poorest of all of the former Soviet republics.

5. This country currently has ten challengers running against President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the leader since 1989, in elections scheduled for December 4.

6. In May, hundreds of people demonstrating against the arrests of 23 accused Islamic radicals were shot and killed by police in the city of Andijan in this nation.

A. Tajikistan
B. Uzbekistan
C. Turkmenistan
D. Kazakhstan
E. Kyrgyzstan
F. Afghanistan

Middle East Scramble
Unscramble the following letters to form the last names of current Middle Eastern leaders. Then use the letters from the boxes to form the mystery phrase, a two-word phrase that describes a tactic used by Gulf leaders after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War.

RAAUBKM  □ □ □ □ □ □ □
OSRNGA  □ □ □ □ □ □ □
DEGRNOA  □ □ □ □ □ □ □
OHALDUA  □ □ □ □ □ □ □
ZIAARK  □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Mystery Phrase
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Answers to "Middle East Scramble": Mubarak (Egypt), Sharon (Israel), Erdogan (Turkey), Lahoud (Lebanon), Karzai (Afghanistan). Mystery phrase is "Oil Embargo."