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THE BOSTON COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATE MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES JOURNAL

Short on Silver Linings

Terrorists in Elections | Humanitarian Crisis in Syria | Traditions of Oman

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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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"An elderly man in the village of Al Kamil for the Eid market and camel show in a mussar wrapped in a style distinctive to his region. Such deep interior regions of Oman rarely see foreigners, but individuals are still often accommodating to requests for pictures and eager to show off the traditions of Oman."

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Mailing address: 10 Stone Avenue, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Observers of the Middle East are used to hearing difficult stories, but as the disastrous Syrian Civil War grinds into its sixth year, the region's staggering humanitarian crisis has astounded even the most hardened analysts. This unending avalanche of tragedy makes our jobs as reporters and researchers especially difficult. But it is our responsibility to continue to meet the bad news head-on and to continue to raise the alarm, no matter how much we wish to turn away. With this task in mind, the Spring issue of *Al Noor* includes Erica Behrens' searing exploration of the inadequacies hampering aid distribution in Syria, as well as a sobering interview with Professor Joshua Landis.

But even in such a difficult environment, there are silver linings. Emma Vitale's article highlights a US intervention that succeeded in ending a civil war and in so doing provides a template for fruitful mediations in the future. Hannah Gaber's shining photo essay offers a window onto the beauty of Oman. And *Al Noor*'s co-founder, Michael Weston-Murphy, returns to the journal with a reflection on the power of poetry.

For this issue's interview, *Al Noor* staff sat down with Joshua Landis, head of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Oklahoma and expert on Syria. Professor Landis offers a nuanced look at what he calls "A Great Sorting Out," a movement of peoples that is both emptying the Middle East of its Christian population and stifling its Sunnis.

In "From Terrorism to Political Participation: The Cases of Hamas and Islamic Jihad," Rachel Mills takes a close look at Palestinian terrorist organizations. Her research on the trajectories of these groups explores their decision-making processes as they weigh entering the nonviolent political arena.

In "Help Not Wanted: How Foreign Powers Impact the Duration of Civil War," Emma Vitale compares the outcomes of foreign intervention in two Lebanese civil wars. She argues that while intervention can be successful, the indecision and conflicting agendas that characterize most foreign powers' efforts more frequently prolong the original conflict.

In "Desert Traditions: Preserving Cultural Heritage in Oman," photographer Hannah Gaber takes a tour of the Gulf sultanate, from interior villages like Bahla and Al Kamil to metropolises like Muscat. Through images of camel shows, traditional artisans, fishing boats, and more, Gaber shows the endurance of old customs in a rapidly modernizing nation.

In "Not Nearly Enough: Assessing the Humanitarian Response to Syria's War," Erica Behrens analyzes the depth of the humanitarian crisis in the Levant. Her work attempts to understand how and why the international aid community has failed so dramatically in its efforts to provide assistance.

Finally, in "Bridging East and West," a book review on Amin Maalouf's *Samarkand*, Michael Weston-Murphy reflects on the author's 1988 work of historical fiction. He addresses the novel's relationship to Persian culture and its continuing relevance against the backdrop of a changing Middle East.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to *Al Noor* deputy editor-in-chief Ji Young Jang, who has worked tenaciously to design an incredible new website for our publication, **bcalnoor.org**. The website is a testament to her commitment and intelligence. Please visit it to explore this edition of the journal, as well as a complete archive of our past issues.

On behalf of our dedicated staff, thank you for your continued readership and support. It is immensely rewarding to send copies of *Al Noor* to our readers around the world, and we hope you will enjoy this issue. As always, comments, questions, and suggestions are welcome at **eic@alnoorjournal.org**.

Catherine Cole '17
Hagop Toghramadjian '17
EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

TABLE OF CONTENTS

6 A Great Sorting Out: The Future of Minorities in the Middle East
AN INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR JOSHUA LANDIS
by the Al Noor Staff

12 From Terrorism to Political Participation
THE CASES OF HAMAS AND ISLAMIC JIHAD
by Rachel Mills

22 Help Not Wanted
HOW FOREIGN POWERS IMPACT THE DURATION OF CIVIL WAR
by Emma Vitale

32 Desert Traditions: Preserving Cultural Heritage in Modern Oman
A PHOTO ESSAY
by Hannah Gaber

44 Not Nearly Enough
ASSESSING THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO SYRIA'S WAR
by Erica Behrens

54 Bridging East and West
A BOOK REVIEW OF *SAMARKAND* BY AMIN MAALOUF, TRANSLATED BY RUSSELL HARRIS
by Michael Weston-Murphy

A Great Sorting Out: The Future of Minorities in the Middle East

An Interview with Joshua Landis

Al Noor Staff

Joshua Landis is widely recognized as one of the English-speaking world's foremost experts on Syria and the Levant. Raised in Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, he has also lived in Egypt, Turkey and Syria, and speaks Arabic and French fluently. Professor Landis is currently the head of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Oklahoma; he taught previously at Sarah Lawrence College, Wake Forest University, and Princeton University. He is a regular analyst on television and radio and is regularly quoted in publications such as the New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, and Time Magazine. His expertise is regularly sought in Washington DC, where he advises government agencies and has spoken at thing tanks such as Brookings Institute, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the Woodrow Wilson Institute. Since 2004, Professor Landis has published the blog Syria Comment, one of the primary online forums for news, commentary and analysis on Syria and its neighbors.

Perhaps no American analyst knows Syria more intimately or personally than Joshua Landis. Fluent in many dialects of Arabic, Landis spent parts of his childhood in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, and has spent over 14 years living in the Middle East. Four of those years were in Syria, where he met his wife and built relationships with government officials and occupation activists alike. His blog *Syria Comment*, published since 2004, is one of the primary online forums for news, commentary and analysis on Syria and its neighbors. Landis is married to Manar Kachour, who—like President Assad—belongs to the Alawite sect. Her father, Shabaan Kachour, once served as the second highest-ranking admiral in the Syrian Navy. Unsurprisingly, Landis is well-connected with Alawites in Syria, and his analysis is rooted in a deep understanding of the sect's concerns and motivations. However, these family connections have not prevented

Landis from associating with critics of the regime. As early as 2005, his blog was well-known for interviewing Syrian opposition activists, providing them with a rare outlet for free expression in pre-revolution Syria.

On April 8, Professor Landis visited Boston College to deliver a lecture entitled "ISIS, Christians and National Identity." Following his talk, which is excerpted below, he met with members of the Al Noor staff to answer our questions.

ISIS, Christians, and National Identity: An Excerpt

Joshua Landis: Let me make a comparison between what happened in Central Europe during World War II and what's happening in the Levant states today. If you go from Poland to Palestine, all of these nation-states were created in 1919 at the Paris Peace conference, out of multiethnic, multireligious empires that had been destroyed. These were lands that did not lend themselves to neat national borders. After World War II, right down through Central Europe, you saw what I call a "Great Sorting Out." Poland was 36% minorities before the war; afterward, it was 100% Polish. Czechoslovakia was 32% minorities; by the end of the war, all those minorities were gone. The borders didn't change so much as the people were changed to fit the borders, with great movements of refugees. We know about the 6 million Jews who were exterminated. After the war, millions of Germans were also ethnically cleansed from Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, and even Crimea. In Yugoslavia a sorting out didn't happen until 1990, but when it did, it exploded into ethno-religious civil war. You could even argue that what's happening between Ukraine and Russia is—hopefully—the end of this process.

The Great Sorting Out in Europe was long and bloody, and a zero-sum game for minorities.

Let's look at the Ottoman Empire and see how this "great sorting out" took place. Turkey—Anatolia—was 20% Christian in 1914. By the end of the Turkish revolution in 1923 there are no more Christians in Anatolia. The three million Christians were either exterminated or ethnically cleansed. We know about the Armenians—the Turks exterminated them. They marched them out to Syria, and some of them survived, but most died. The Greek Orthodox who lived in Anatolia for over 2,000 years were also driven out.

Let's look at Cyprus. Before 1973 Cyprus was a little mosaic, with Muslims and Christians living side-by-side. After the Turkish invasion, you saw another "great sorting out"—all the Muslims moved to the north, all the Christians moved to the south, and today there isn't any mixing whatsoever.

Lebanon, of course, is the Noah's Arc of the Levant. In 1932, the Christians were a slight majority, and after independence the Maronite Christians had the lion's share of power. The Civil War (1975-1990) was long and bloody, and the Ta'if Accord ensured an even distribution between Muslims and Christians. Today the country is evenly split between Christians, Sunnis and Shiites. But there are over a million Syrian refugees in the country, the majority of whom are Sunni Muslims. They're not going home. It will completely upend the balance of power, in the same way Palestinian refugees helped kindle the civil war in 1975. The Lebanese story isn't over.

Let me shoehorn Israel-Palestine into this discussion. The Jews are our minority. Of course today they're a majority, but they were only 5% in 1840 and 33% in 1948. When the British left, the Palestinians thought they would be able to dominate. But the war was a terrible disaster for them, and two-thirds fled or were driven out. The Jews were able to turn themselves into a majority, the only minority in the Middle East that succeeded in doing so. But that's of course because the Jews had been sorted out themselves—not only in Europe, where six million were killed, but throughout the Middle East. It's a zero-sum game for minorities.

Where are the Christians in this "Great Sorting Out"? In Egypt, the Copts were more than 15% in 1910; today, we believe they're less than 10%. In

"There are over a million Syrian refugees in Lebanon. They're not going home. It will completely upend the balance of power."

Syria they were 15% in 1945; today, they're probably less than 5%. In Palestine, Christians have gone. In Iraq, the Christian population has declined from 1.5 million in 2003 to less than 400,000 today. When ISIS took Mosul, more than 60,000 Christians left in one day. So Christians have been leaving, driven out, just like the Middle Eastern Jews did before them.

Let us go to Syria. The minority that's important here is the Alawites, who since 1970 have held power. They have helped the Christians, the Kurds, the Ismailis and the Druze. And today, the minorities tend to support Assad. The Syrian rebel militias are Sunni Arab, and they're largely Sunni Arab from the countryside. There's an urban aspect to this; wealthier upper-middle class Sunnis have stayed with Assad. They're worried about losing their money, their possessions, and their privilege.

As of the February 2016 ceasefire, the government controls about 65-70 percent of Syria's population; they have the Alawite heartland and the coastal cities. Other than the Kurdish areas, the rest of the country is under Sunni control. If you want to add in the bigger map and include Iraq, you can see what's happened. The Sunni regions have opened their doors to ISIS.

Almost all the rebel groups call the Alawaites arfad, (rejecters of Islam), or majoosi (pagan magi). The Alawites are associated with non-Arab, non-Islamic, Zoroastrian Persians. Under Ottoman rule they were not considered Muslims, because they added a book and a prophet [to the Islamic canon]. If we were to put this in a US context—which doesn't work—the Alawites would be Mormons.

Early on, many of the militia leaders called for a Sunni state, for expelling the Alawites and the Christians. For example. Zahran Alloush (brother of Mohammed Alloush, the chief rebel negotiator in Geneva), made a video two years ago promising to resurrect the caliphate and to ethnically cleanse the majoosi, arfad killers. He said "the Ummayads failed to do it in their day, but we'll finish the job."

It didn't happen—the Alawites smashed the Sunnis and drove millions of them out. The minorities have devastated Sunni power. In a sense you have this big Sunni population stuck between Baghdad and Aleppo, two bookends of Shiites that are getting international support. The end product is that Sunnis are getting smashed.

The Alawites don't want to keep fighting. They don't have enough Alawites to take back all of Syria. The trouble is, if they fall back, if they give up Damascus, Homs and Aleppo, they'll be overrun. At the same time, you can't ethnically cleanse the Sunnis—there are simply too many of them. Where are they going to go? And you can't just beat them down and put them under your foot.

I don't know how this all works out. The "Great Sorting Out" has certain policy implications. If I were giving this talk in Washington, I would ask, what can American power really do? We've seen American power save Yazidis, we've seen it drive back ISIS. We can tweak around the edges, but we've failed in our major effort, which was to create democracy in Iraq. Regime change to promote democracy has not worked. Think Libya or Yemen. We've tried it in a hundred different ways now—we negotiated the leader out in Yemen, we bombed and left in Libya, we occupied and tried to rebuild in Iraq. We've done the same thing in Afghanistan, but we haven't had success. And this is in part because we've launched this "Great Sorting Out" process, which we don't control and we can't understand.

Can you put this back together? That's the real question that weighs on everybody's minds. America presumes that it can. That there will be a unitary Syria, a political solution, that Asaad will leave but the Alawites will stay, that they will embrace the Sunni rebels who call them majoosi, arfad and somehow live together, with the rebels wanting an Islamic state and the minorities saying no, you've got to have secularism. It's not clear how we're going to do that. And in that sense, Obama has been wise to keep us out of this swinging door. Once it became clear that only America would be able to turn Assad out, he got cold feet. He didn't want to own Syria. There are 1,500 rebel militias according to the CIA. You have to unify all those different tribes and militias who are fighting each other and don't like each other. We did that in Iraq. It was very expensive, and Obama didn't want to. It's a bad deal, as Trump would say. It's too expensive, so we're going to stay at home and build the middle class, not the Middle East.

America has spent $5 billion on Syria. That's about equal to the spending of one week in Iraq. That tells you all you need to know about America's interest in Syria.

ISIS, Christians, and National Identity: A Discussion

During your talk, you said religion is driving the "Great Sorting Out" in the Middle East, as opposed to ethnicity, which drove it in Europe. How did this happen?

Joshua Landis: After the Second World War, Arab nationalism was the prevailing ideology. You look at Arafat, at Sadaam Hussein, at Nasser—who was of course the apotheosis of this. You look right across the entire Arab world all secular nationalist regimes. Now they became dictatorships, they oppressed their people, they were brutal, they were of course confused about local nationalism versus pan-Arabism. And ultimately, they couldn't deliver to their people. And Islamism has grown up, progressively, as the alternative. Liberalism and its other alternatives were smashed, because they were much more vulnerable. The Islamists were more hardy, they had the space of the mosque, they had a hierarchy, zakat, they could get independent funding. There were a lot of reasons why the clerics and this establishment could provide an alternative ideology, and why that ideology won.

So you think that Arabism might not have been the right secular nationalism for the region? That if local nationalism had won out, things might have ended differently?

Joshua Landis: Yes, I do think so. The trouble was, it was very hard to get people to embrace these national identities, because they hadn't known them before. They were totally new—Syria, Iraq, and the rest. People had lived in an Islamic, dynastic empire. They had local allegiances to their city, their region, but they didn't have national identity. So to get them to switch to that was a real challenge, and some leaders tried to do it, but they failed. Pan-Arabism had a very big appeal.

Earlier, you mentioned that Syrians love their country, and that 76 percent of Syrians would like to maintain a unified nation. Where do you think this love of Syria comes from, and do you think it has any viability moving forward?

Joshua Landis: I think a lot of Syrians look back at their pre-revolutionary lives, and they want to have that back. They want the old Syria back; the Sunni Arabs just don't want to have Assad rule it. They want to rule it themselves. They want their life back, but without Assad's soldiers, and the Baath Party and all of that. It's very idealistic. But they miscalculated; they thought they could overthrow Assad. So Syrians don't want to be divided up—the whole idea of Arab nationalism is that Sykes-Picot was bad, and dividing-up is a foreign conspiracy. Islamism is much the same thing—they want a caliphate and a unified Muslim world, and they don't want to be divided up. Both Arabism and Islamism share this common notion that external conspiracies divided them, and are evil, and that they need to be united together.

But if the rationale for unity is Arabist or Islamist, is there any room left for minorities? Is there any way for Syria to forge a pluralist future?

Joshua Landis: It's ultimately very hard to see how they're going to put it back together again. I can't see a way out. The Sunni rebels say you've got to get rid of this nizam, this regime, Assad, the whole Baath party, the whole Alawite hierarchy, all the soldiers and the officers. And of course it will be over the Alawites' dead bodies, because they won't give up. They know they'll be killed if they give up power. And the regime has mobilized communities behind them. Alawites are sympathetic with the Assads today, because they think they'll all be driven into the sea if they give up. And they very well might be.

What do you think is the best-case scenario for the Christian minority in Syria? Is it Assad staying in power for the long term?

Joshua Landis: I don't think that Assad really can stay in power for the long term. I think if you were a Christian, or an Alawite, I think you would hope for Russia to impose a partition of Syria. And in a sense Russia would stay in that coastal region and in the

"America has spent $5 billion on Syria. That's about equal to the spending of one week in Iraq. That tells you all you need to know about America's interest in Syria."

urban areas where the Christians live, and America would take over the other parts, where ISIS is and where the rebels are. That would leave Assad and minoritarian rule in the coastal region. Many Alawites today would like an ethnic enclave, and they would like to include the Christians with them. They would keep Homs, Wadi al-Nasara, Damascus, the Armenian regions up near Kessab and so forth. Many don't want the rest of Syria, because they don't know how they can rule it—Der Zor and all those tribal regions. But they don't really have an answer. This is the trouble. I think they would like to have an ethnic enclave, but they would like to have somebody to protect them in it.

You mentioned earlier that there is simply no political appetite for an expensive intervention in Syria. But if you forget domestic constraints altogether, could an outside adjudicator play a constructive role?

Joshua Landis: It depends on how much many you want to spend, and how many people you're willing to send in.

Imagine a commitment of the size we had in Iraq.

Joshua Landis: If the United States were to occupy Syria, there would be jihadists blowing themselves up at roadblocks, the way they did in response to the Israelis in Lebanon, in the way they did in Iraq. It would be difficult launch a unilateral occupation today, because the mobilization against it would be tremendous. On the other hand, in Syria today, people might be willing to accept an international peacekeeping force, with the Americans and Russians cooperating, for example. I think many Syrians would embrace it. They want to end the fighting, they're desperate and they can't see an end. So I think they would accept such a solution, Of course there would be those Islamists who would come out to fight, and so forth, but I think that you could do it like in Yugoslavia.

Speaking of outside adjudicators, the United States originally hoped that Turkey might be able to fill this role. What is your comment on the role of Turkey in Syria, and especially whether or not it has been a reliable partner to the United States?

Joshua Landis: I understand how Erdogan got dragged into this, each step of the way. He made a lot of miscalculations, but so did Obama and everybody else. They all thought that Assad was going to fall. And of course Erdogan once had very good relations with the Assads, and America forced him to withdraw. Once he made the calculation that Assad was going to fall, he started to organize the opposition. He thought he could get a Muslim Brotherhood that would be just like his AK party to take over Syria and rule. And therefore he would have a mini-Turkey to himself, with an Islamist party ruling in a civilized way. And that's what he put his mind to, and it just wasn't going to work out. He didn't understand the Arab world any more than America understood Iraq. Once he got his horns down, he started supporting Nusra and al-Qaeda, and ISIS—and he made all the same mistakes that America has made. Thinking they could use the Islamists to their own ends, beefing them up only to find they're blowing up parks in Istanbul. So Turkey has made some terrible mistakes. But to some extent they're stuck with Syria because they've got a 500-mile border and the Kurdish question. Erdogan had done all the right things for the Kurds and built the economy, and now it's in a shambles. Now a war has started again with Kurds and how he's going to stop that is very difficult to know. ✦

From Terrorism to Political Participation

The Cases of Hamas and Islamic Jihad

Rachel Mills

Rachel Mills is an Honors student in the Boston College Department of Political Science. She graduates in May 2016 from the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences.

In today's "war on terror," the world regularly debates the mechanics of counterterrorism measures in the context of military action. Debates over the use of torture, drone strikes, and intelligence often dominate counterterrorism discussions. In the face of these militaristic discussions of terrorism and counterterrorism, it is surprising that most terrorist groups do not end as a result of military or even of police action. Instead, 43 percent of terrorist organizations end as a result of involvement in the political process. There are many well-known examples of terrorist organizations that have become involved in the political process through the creation of a political party and participation in elections. Hezbollah in Lebanon has had a strong standing in the legislature of the country. The group also participates in other nonviolent actions such as charity work and service provision within Lebanon. The African National

Congress in South Africa, led by Nelson Mandela, was very successful in politics at the end of the apartheid following its history as a violent terrorist organization. Sinn Fein remains a dominant political party in Northern Ireland and has a history of very close ties to the terrorist organization of the Irish Republican Army.What causes a terrorist group to enter the political arena? Scholars have proposed three possible answers to this question: external pressures, shifts in ideology, and changes in the organizational strength of a group. Per the first theory of external pressures, Leonard Weinberg views actions of the state as a key factor in influencing the political transition of terrorist organizations.[2] In addition to the state, public forces may work from outside of the terrorist organization to influence the group to participate or abstain from involvement in national elections. The second argument focuses on a group's ideology. Shifts in a terrorist group's ideology may make the organization more or less likely to become politically involved. This is the position that Julie Herrick takes in her study of the political transitions of Hamas and Hezbollah.[3] Lastly, the organizational structure and strength of an organization may influence the political participation of a terrorist organization. Peter Krause explores the impact of organizational strength on terrorist organizations' use of violence in his study of the Palestinian National Movement and the Algerian National Movement.[4]

This paper explores the validity of these explanations by analyzing Hamas' decision to participate in Palestinian elections in 2006 after abstaining from involvement in 1996. This analysis is deepened by comparing Hamas' decisions at the time of these two elections to that of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a group that that did not participate in either election. The analysis of these two groups finds that on the basis of group membership, public popularity, and the number of attacks, the organizational strength of a terrorist organization is the most important consideration for participation in elections.

The Palestinian Movement

This study applies these three competing explanations to the Islamic terrorist movement in Palestine, in particular to the organizations of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. Hamas was founded in the late 1980s and has maintained its identity as a religious nationalist organization dedicated to expelling Israel from historic Palestine and creating an Islamic Palestinian state.[5] The Islamic Jihad emerged in 1980 also as a religious nationalist organization with the immediate goal of destroying and expelling Israel from historic Palestine.[6] The groups exist within the same nation and find particular support within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Their similar foundations and identical goals make these cases particularly unique for comparison.

National elections were held in Palestine in both 1996 and 2006, years after Hamas and Islamic Jihad emerged as organizations and commenced terrorist activities. During this time, both groups achieved recognition within the Palestinian population and also within the world as terrorist organizations.[7] At the time of the 1996 elections, both Hamas and the Islamic Jihad abstained from participation in the political process. Neither party ran candidates for election, both instead choosing to oppose the national elections. However, in 2006, while Islamic Jihad maintained its position in refraining from participation in national elections, Hamas ran for election and shocked the world with a landslide victory in positions to the Palestinian Legislative Council.[8]

Hamas and the Islamic Jihad pose as an interesting case study, because the groups maintain identical end goals and have utilized similar tactics, such as bombs and suicide attacks, in pursuit of those goals.

"Terrorism is a tool for the weak, employed when no other options appear likely to spark change."

Hamas rally in Ramallah, 2007. Wikimedia Commons.

The similar Islamic ideologies of the group provide a unique view into the ideology explanation for participation in electoral processes. The impact of any slight differences in ideology on political participation will be noticeable among the similarities of these two groups. The effect of external pressures will also be more apparent among Hamas and Islamic Jihad, because they exist within the same nation and culture. Differences in external funding or government treatment towards the groups can be isolated within the Palestinian context. Factors such as general support for violence and any historical events impacting the entire country are held constant. Lastly, the groups are arguably the two strongest groups in Palestine behind Fatah, which now more strongly identifies with the Palestinian Authority. As the two most popular organizations still identified as outsiders to the national government, Hamas and Islamic Jihad provide an opportunity to study the effect of organizational structure and strength on the decision to participate in elections.

Hamas: 1996 and 2006

Hamas' unique ideology has made the group more open to political involvement than other Islamic terrorist organizations. Hamas emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood, which focused on social and political activities, and inherited its social welfare network after splitting from the group.[9] Hamas has since maintained the Muslim Brotherhood's strong focus on grassroots social work.[10] This suggests that Hamas' outlook has always been focused on more than the destruction of Israel. The group is also dedicated to the social welfare of the Palestinian population. In addition, Hamas demonstrates internal democratic practices in electing their leaders of the terrorist organization, revealing an openness to electoral processes.[11] These factors are indicators of a willingness to participate in national politics even since the foundation of the organization.

Hamas desires a utopian Islamist society, based on Sharia law but which also incorporates public elections.[12] However, this theoretical openness to elections does not sufficiently explain why Hamas ran for election in 2006 after boycotting the 1996 national election; the organization's official political theory has remained stable throughout this time period.[13] However, the heterogeneous nature of Hamas' organization allows for conflicts and tensions to exist in the group's ideology. A "fundamental tension" within the group exists between the "focus on institution-building and its commitment to armed struggle."[14] Though these tensions have existed since the group's foundation, it is possible that the balance between the focuses on institutions and armed struggle shifted slightly in favor of one side or the other at the time of the elections.

Many of the external pressures that Hamas faced in 1996 and 2006 were similar and therefore cannot explain Hamas' different views on the national elections during those years. Public support and anticipated participation in the elections were high prior to the national elections in both years.[15] Hamas, in

opposing the elections, sided with the minority of individuals in the survey, only 16.7 percent believed that opposition to the elections was right; 63.2 percent of those surveyed believed that opposing the elections was the wrong choice.[16] As a result, Hamas' decision to boycott the elections in 1996 actually contradicted the external pressure of public opinion. In a similar poll in 2005, the public again favored participation in the elections, with 75.1 percent of people in the West Bank and Gaza planning to vote.[17] At this time, Hamas followed the trend of public opinion and participated in the national elections.

The effect of changes in foreign support also appears to be negligible in Hamas' decision to participate in Palestinian elections. In 1995, Iran's financial support of Hamas encouraged the group "to resist Israel and the peace process through violence and terrorism."[18] This financial support meant that Iran had influence in the strategies utilized by Hamas, and Iran was advocating for violence. However, Iran was still supporting Hamas in 2005 when the decision was made to participate in national elections. In fact, the US Department of State indicated that throughout the year, "Iran maintained a high-profile role in encouraging anti-Israeli terrorist activity...rhetorically, operationally, and financially," providing the group with "extensive funding, training, and weapons."[19] Despite this continued utilization of Iranian resources, Hamas in 2006 chose to run for election, placing into question the effect that Iranian support for violence had in the decision to boycott the elections in 1996.

The clearest argument for why Hamas boycotted elections in 1996 but chose to run in 2006 is evidenced by a shift in the group's organizational strength. Attacks perpetuated by Hamas during these time periods indicate a substantial increase in the organizational strength of the group. Hamas participated in 80 terrorist attacks in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza from 1989 to 1996, killing 179 and injuring 549 individuals.[20] While this number of attacks and casualties over a seven-year span is indicative of a strong organization, the numbers more than doubled from 1996 to 2006. Following the decision to boycott the 1996 elections, Hamas was involved in 178 incidents of terrorism.[21] 632 individuals were killed and 2,468 were

An Israeli soldie stands near an Islamic Jihad poster, which celebrates the martyrdom of a suicide bomber who killed three Israelis and injured many more in May 2003. Wikimedia Commons.

injured in these attacks.[22] The increase in number of attacks and casualties demonstrate a growth in the capacity of Hamas as an organization. This increasing strength put Hamas in a better position to become involved in the bargaining of the political process.

Size of the organization and public support for the group further demonstrates Hamas' organizational strength. In 1996, Hamas was a dominant organization relative to other terrorist organizations in the region. Its official membership size was unknown, but it maintained tens of thousands of supporters and sympathizers.[23] Furthermore, a poll conducted in January 1996 found that 12.3 percent of individuals in the West Bank and Gaza Strip trusted Hamas more than any other Palestinian political or religious faction, a percentage of supporters second only to Fatah.[24] Though substantial for a terrorist organization, this support was not enough to encourage political participation at that time. By 2006, however, the numbers had increased. The percentage of individuals in the West Bank and Gaza who stated that they trusted Hamas most out of all Palestinian political and religious factions increased 7.5 percent to a total of 19.8 percent.[25] This substantial increase in public trust is particularly important in the organization's decision to run, because elections rely on the public's perceptions of candidates and the groups and parties that those candidates support.

These measurements of the organizational strength of Hamas in 1996 and 2006 show significant successes in the group's terrorist campaign as well as its campaign for public support and trust. As the group gained strength, particularly in the realm of public opinion, it also gained bargaining power that could be utilized in the political arena. The frequency and impact of the violence demonstrated to the public, the government, and Israel that Hamas was a substantial opponent and player within Palestine. Terrorism is a tool for the weak, employed when no other options appear likely to spark change. As Hamas' strength grew, other opportunities for change, particularly the opportunity to participate in electoral politics, became more plausible and the bargaining impact that Hamas would have within the government grew. Changes of this great a magnitude were not present in the group's ideology or the external pressures that it faced. It appears, therefore, that Hamas' decision to participate in the 2006 Palestinian elections was grounded in the growing organizational strength of the group.

Islamic Jihad: 1996 and 2006

The ideology of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad holds many similarities to that of Hamas. The Islamic Jihad also found its origins from the Muslim Brotherhood, splitting from the group to create a "militant Islamist break-away faction."[26] The groups share common goals, to destroy Israel and to establish an Islamic state in historic Palestine, both of which are ambitious, maximalist goals.[27] Similar to Hamas, the initial supporters of the Islamic Jihad included young Palestinians, many of whom were well educated. These similarities suggest that Islamic Jihad may maintain many of the same principles as Hamas despite their refusal to participate in Palestinian elections. Therefore, these principles cannot explain the differences in 2006 in the groups' participation or lack thereof in the national elections.

However, there are some ideological differences between the groups that may partially explain why the Islamic Jihad has not shown interest in political involvement. Islamic Jihad prioritizes the elimination of Israel over the creation of an Islamic state, seeing Israel's destruction as a precursor to any viable government.[28] According to this view, the destruction of Israel can be achieved only through violent jihad. This extremist, all-or-nothing ideology is not conducive to participation in the slower, give-and-take processes of electoral politics. This contrasts with the institution-building aspect of Hamas' organization, which indicates a more progress-focused outlook towards the goals that both groups pursue. This suggests that ideology may play a role in the predisposition of terrorist organizations, but it still does not explain the variation in a single group's participation across time.

Islamic Jihad faced many of the same external pressures that Hamas faced during the elections. Regarding public pressures, Islamic Jihad decided not to give into the public opinion polls that favored electoral participation in both years and refrain from

"For those attempting to understand and combat terrorism, it is vital to understand the importance of organizational strength and its paradoxical role in encouraging political participation."

political involvement. A survey conducted in October 1995 found that the majority of Hamas and Islamic Jihad supporters agreed that "elections will promote democracy, will bring about change for the better, will improve economic conditions, and will lead to a legislative council."[29] Both Hamas and Islamic Jihad decided against the majority of their supporters to abstain from elections in 1996. Public opinion towards the elections remained positive in 2006; however, Islamic Jihad, unlike Hamas, continued to refuse participation.[30] Islamic Jihad and Hamas' varied response to this consistent public opinion suggests that public opinion towards the elections was not a strong factor in determining the groups' position vis-à-vis elections.

Funding and resources from external sources may have played a slightly larger role in Islamic Jihad's decision-making than it did for Hamas. Islamic Jihad, unlike Hamas, has not received substantial financial support from Palestinian expatriates. Instead, the group is highly dependent on financial support from Iran and a safe haven for its leadership in Syria.[31] This dependence remained consistent from 1996 to 2006.[32] Due to the greater reliance financial reliance of the Islamic Jihad on Iranian support, it is logical that Iran has more leverage over the Islamic Jihad than it had over Hamas. Iran maintained a firm position in promoting violent anti-Israeli terrorism over this time period.

The stark difference in organizational strength of Hamas and Islamic Jihad appears to be the best explanation for why Hamas chose to participate in elections in 2006 while Islamic Jihad refrained. Across both election periods, Islamic Jihad's organization was not nearly as strong as that of Hamas. From 1990 to 1996, the group was responsible for 22 attacks of terrorism in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza, resulting in the death of 23 individuals and injuring 92.[33] This is less than one-third the number of attacks Hamas was responsible for during the same time period and less than one-sixth the number of fatalities. This number grew to 96 terrorist attacks, resulting in 259 deaths and 992 injuries, from 1996 to 2006.[34] However, Hamas was responsible for almost double the number of attacks and well over double the number of casualties during this same time period. These differences in the violent campaigns of the organizations suggest that Islamic Jihad was equipped with fewer resources and capacities than Hamas during this time period.

In addition to the number and size of terrorist attacks, group membership and public popularity suggest that Islamic Jihad was much weaker than that of Hamas. As with Hamas, the exact size of the Islamic Jihad membership is unknown, but estimates are much lower than those for Hamas. The popularity of Islamic Jihad in comparison to that of Hamas is also small. In 1995, only 1.4 percent of individuals in the West Bank and Gaza stated that they trusted Islamic Jihad more than any other political or religious faction in Palestine.[35] At this time, Hamas maintained the trust of 12.3 percent of the same population.[36] In 2005, the percentage of the population that trusted Islamic Jihad more than any other group rose to 3.7 percent but remained dwarfed by Hamas, which boasted 19.8 percent of the West Bank and Gaza.[37] Public support generated through the charity network was a "major factor" in Hamas' electoral victory in 2006.[38] Hamas' charity network helped to create a reputation for the group within Palestine; Islamic Jihad inherited no charitable focus from its split with the

Muslim Brotherhood. The underwhelming amount of public support that Islamic Jihad maintained in 1996 and in 2006 likely discouraged the group from participating in elections. With such dismal support in the West Bank and Gaza, where the group emerged and is strongest, the chances of national electoral victory were slim for the terrorist organization. The group's weakness in membership size and public support could have ended in humiliating losses had Islamic Jihad chosen to participate in elections. This weakness likely discouraged political participation and encouraged the continued utilization of violent means in order to shift the bargaining terms in the group's favor.[39]

The importance of organizational strength is clear in the examples of Hamas' decision to run in 2006 and not to participate in 1996 as well as in Islamic Jihad's refusal to participate in both elections. In fact, many of the ideological and external pressures mentioned can also be linked back to the strength of the organization. For example, the contradictions found within Hamas' ideology between institution-building and violence are largely a result of the group's size and heterogeneous structure. The negligible impact that Iranian support had for Hamas' electoral participation in 2006 is also an effect of its organizational strength. The group's charitable network and large global support structure allowed Hamas to be more self-sufficient in funding. External, independent resources gave the group more flexibility in its decision to run in the national elections. The Islamic Jihad lacked this strong, independent support network and was therefore more reliant on Iranian funding and subject to Iranian pressure.

Conclusion

The cases of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad in 1996 and 2006 offer lessons that are extrapolable to other terrorist groups. These cases suggest that the organizational strength of a group plays the largest role in explaining the transformation of a terrorist organization to a political party. As demonstrated, ideology may play a role in the predispositions of an organization towards political involvement, with more extremist organizations being less likely to become involved than more progress-focused groups. However, if ideology largely remains constant throughout a group's existence, it is unlikely to explain shifts in one group's position towards elections over time. External pressures may also play a role in political involvement; however, a group becomes more resistant to external influences as its own organizational strength increases. This case study suggests that organizationally stronger terrorist organizations will be more likely to participate in electoral politics than weaker groups.

The main finding of this paper is problematic for counterterrorism strategy, as strengthening a terrorist organization is not the goal of counterterrorism. It would be illogical to argue that counterterrorism strategies should allow groups to grow until the organization has the bargaining power to encourage political participation. The growth in the number of terrorist attacks and casualties that would occur throughout this process, along with the risk of a group becoming too politically influential, are unacceptable. However,

Flag of the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine. Wikimedia Commons.

for those attempting to understand and combat terrorism, it is vital to understand the importance of organizational strength and its paradoxical role in encouraging political participation. ✦

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Help Not Wanted

How Foreign Intervention Impacts the Duration of Civil War

Emma Vitale

Emma Vitale is a 2016 graduate of Boston College's Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences. Originally from Minnesota, she majored in International Studies and minored in Management & Leadership and will be moving to Washington D.C. to pursue a career in international affairs.

The ongoing conflict in Syria is the most recent example in a long string of civil wars that have been dominated by competing foreign interventions. From global powers like the United States and Russia, to regional actors like Iran and Saudi Arabia, to local groups like Hezbollah and the Kurds, the Syrian conflict has drawn in a cosmopolitan crowd of pro- and anti-regime forces. This pile-up of rival interlopers dramatically complicates the path toward settlement. But is intervention always counterproductive? To help answer this question, the Lebanese civil wars of 1958 and of 1975-1990 prove deeply illustrative. This paper will argue that the 1975-90 civil war was much longer, more complex, and harder to end than the war of 1958 primarily because of the differing levels of foreign intervention. In the latter war, the external involvement of clashing regional states with a direct stake in Lebanon's politics was a crucial, not

supplemental, part of the conflict that led to more enduring hostilities and greater difficulty establishing peace. By contrast, the first war saw intervention by just one outside actor—the United States—which firmly supported one side and limited its involvement, helping to end the fighting and resolve the crisis.

External Interventions: For Better or Worse?

Leading scholars on foreign involvement in civil wars are divided as to whether intervention is helpful or harmful in ending hostilities, although in general, scholarship supports the latter view. The most popularly accepted reason for this is that when multiple external states intervene to support opposing sides, they allow both sides to continue fighting while failing to provide a decisive advantage to either one, thereby creating a stalemate and lengthening the war.[1] Patrick Regan refers to this pattern as one of "networks of third-party interveners," concluding that interventions have different outcomes based on the interveners' interrelations but that it is much more common and likely for the outcome to be negative.[2] This is because states generally enter civil wars to further their own security interests, which are likely to be contrary to those of other states because of the security dilemma. Thus, they intervene for opposite ends.[3] These types of external actors are "balancers" and tend to lengthen the duration of civil wars because in trying to offset the influence of other states, they spoil the chances for peaceful settlement.[4] Even when states intervene on the same side of the conflict, they must share the same priorities in order to pursue a collective solution and help end the war.[5]

However, the idea of balancing of external actors necessarily suggests a possibility for beneficial third-party intervention as well: if states with similar preferences coalesce on one side in a civil war and create an unequal balance of power, interveners can have a positive effect and lead to shorter duration of the conflict. Yet despite the potential for more positive outcomes of intervention, evidence shows that there is a greater likelihood that foreign involvement will lengthen civil wars. Out of 190 interventions in 138 intrastate conflicts from 1944-2000, only 57 led to an end in the fighting.[6] Additionally, "the mean duration of civil wars that were terminated and which had external interventions was nine years; while those wars that were terminated but did not have an intervention had a mean duration of only 1.5 years."[7]

A one-sided intervention in the absence of external intervention on the opposing side can curtail conflicts by increasing the supported party's probability of decisively winning the conflict.[8] This supports Richard Betts's claim that "limited intervention may end a war if the intervener takes sides, tilts the local balance of power, and helps on of the rivals to win—that is, if it is not impartial."[9] In terms of making peace negotiations more likely or effective, third parties can be necessary to secure peace settlements because it is extremely difficult for civil war opponents to guarantee the terms for an agreement, such as a ceasefire, on their own.[10] As Barbara Walter argues, "only when an outside enforcer steps in to guarantee the terms do commitments to disarm and share political power become believable. Only then does cooperation become possible."[11]

"Even though it became clear in mid-1976 that Syria was actually intervening on the side of Christians and restraining the PLO, which was in Israel's interests, Israel still valued containment over a settlement to the Lebanese war."

Scholars have pointed to additional reasons why foreign involvement leads to longer civil wars and more difficulty in securing peace negotiations. Continuing with the assumption that states intervene to pursue their own agendas in addition to, or rather than, simply facilitating peace, external actors make wars substantially longer because they decrease the "bargaining range" of acceptable agreements for all parties.[12] For peace negotiations to succeed, opposing sides must all agree on terms that are more favorable than continued fighting, and additional combatants with independent agendas complicate this effort by introducing an additional set of issues to be negotiated, along with more parties that must approve a settlement.[13] Conflicts are also prolonged because outside states generally have less incentive to negotiate than internal actors since they "bear lower costs of fighting and they can anticipate gaining less benefit from negotiation than domestic insurgents," and so convincing them to stop fighting becomes more difficult.[14]

Based on these arguments, it is unsurprising that the 1975-90 Lebanese civil war lasted much longer and proved much more difficult to resolve than the 1958 war. The 1975 war saw a Syrian intervention met by met with fear and distrust of its motives by Israel, leading to Israel's counter-intervention and a proxy war between the two for the next 15 years. Attempts at negotiations or peace settlements at various stages were prevented or even spoiled by Syria and Israel because of their deep entanglement in the conflict and their significant stake in its outcome. On the other hand, the 1958 war ended after a limited but decisive intervention by the United States. Without facing comparable external support for the opposing side, this intervention helped the Lebanese government triumph over rebel forces and restore stability to the country.

Varying Interventions and Varying Outcomes in the 1958 and 1975-90 Lebanese Civil Wars

By 1975, a new conflict had broken out along the same sectarian lines, with Muslims—including the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)—pushing for reform and freedom for Palestinians while Maronite Christians seeking to preserve their hegemonic status quo and end the Palestinian armed presence in Lebanon.[15] The civil war became increasingly complicated over its 15-year span, and ultimately involved Syria intervening both on behalf of the Maronites and on behalf of the Muslim-Leftist-Palestinian coalition. Meanwhile, Israel intervened for security reasons to keep the Syrians and Palestinians

A US Marine in his foxhole during the 1958 US intervention. Wikimedia Commons.

out of southern Lebanon. Other external actors were involved as well, including the Arab League and the United States, who acted as an "impartial" peace broker between the Syrians and the Lebanese.

Clearly, a major differentiating factor between these two wars was the level of foreign intervention. Of course, the wars are not otherwise perfectly comparable—1958 was more clearly pro- versus anti-government and Palestinian resistance was not a significant factor yet—but it is an important case vis-à-vis the 1975 war, which saw a much larger and more evenly distributed intervention. Additionally, both occurred during the Cold War and after Israel's independence.

Syrian Aggression and Israeli Reaction in the 1975 Civil War

Lebanon occupied a unique place in the Middle Eastern world because of its ambiguous national identity. This left the country vulnerable to external forces.[16] The primary actors with an interest in Lebanon were its neighbors Syria and Israel, as well as regional Arab powers. The Arab-Israeli conflict and the pan-Arab movement constituted the two most important elements of this environment, and because Syria and Israel fueled (and at various times, reignited) the Lebanese civil war, this war can ultimately be seen as "yet another chapter in the Thirty Years War between the Arabs and the Israelis that [had] wracked the region since 1948."[17] This broader conflict underlay both Syrian and Israeli motivations for intervention in the war. Syria has historical ties to Lebanon, through contemporary economic links and the idea of a pre-Sykes-Picot Lebanon and Syria united as "Greater Syria." With the advent of the Ba'th regime in 1963 and in the context of broader pan-Arab ideology, Syrian interest in its politically precarious neighbor was especially high.[18] With the outbreak of violence in 1975 and Syria competing against Egypt and Iraq for dominance in the Arab world, Syria saw its chance to enhance its Arab nationalist credentials and influence over Lebanon by successfully intervening in and resolving the crisis.[19] Additionally, with the PLO operating out of Lebanon following its expulsion from Jordan, Syria found an opportunity in the war to show its leading role as an Arab state supporting the Palestinians against Israel.[20]

The progression of the war demonstrates that Syria's self-interested intervention became problematic. Its involvement began with small levels of military assistance to the Muslim-Leftist-Palestinian insurgents, increased to indirect intervention through Palestinian guerrilla forces, and then escalated to direct deployment of 30,000 regular Syrian forces.[21] After a hopeful resolution to the 1975-1976 stage of the conflict, intervention further exacerbated the crisis; Syria ensured that the "peacekeeping" force was made up predominantly of its own troops, thus ensuring Syrian influence. Marius Deeb argues that the force was not designed to ensure peace at all: he contends that Syria deliberately kept Lebanon in an "artificial domestic conflict" for its own regional power interests and ambition, and prevented peace at many junctures throughout the war.[22] In this view, the peacekeeping forces were no more than a guise for Syria to prolong the war.[23]

The most curious aspect of Syrian intervention in the 1975 war is that Syria shifted its support from the Muslim-Leftist-Palestinian opposition to the Maronite government in the midst of the war and then back to the Palestinians soon afterward. Yet, despite the inconsistent military alignment, the desired outcome remained the same.[24] Initially, Syria aligned with its traditional ally, the Muslim coalition, to show its support for the Palestinian resistance

"Without foreign involvement the quasi-proxy war between Syria and Israel, the Lebanese conflict likely would not have continued after 1976."

The "Green Line of Beirut," dividing Muslims and Christians, at the height of the 1975 war. Case/WIkimedia Commons.

movement. However, once it became clear that Yasser Arafat and the PLO had different ambitions than the Syrian regime and could not be controlled or manipulated, Syria became concerned that a radical change in Lebanon's political structure would not be in its interest, and thus switched to supporting the Christians to preserve the status quo and maintain its influence in Lebanon.[25] This is important because the support for the Maronites was purely out of power considerations; Syria still had significant ties to the opposition and only wanted the PLO controlled and de-radicalized, not eliminated. This accounts for its eventual renewal of support for the Palestinians. Syria's tactical maneuvering shows its self-interest in the internal conflict and its reluctance to allow either Lebanese coalition to decisively win, thereby prolonging the war.[26] Syria sought not only to restore security, but also to preserve its power in Lebanon and to win Arab support by championing the Palestinians. The Syrian intervention thus actively contributed to the worsening of the conflict.

Israel's involvement in the 1975 war was also based on self-interest: Israel's concern for its security on the northern border and its fear of Syrian overextension and aggression into southern Lebanon.[27] Israel, too, viewed the Lebanese civil war through prism of the Arab-Israeli conflict: it did not want Lebanon to become a part of a war coalition against Israel or to serve as a base for the forces of any coalition state, and it did not want Palestinian terrorist attacks against Israel to be carried out from Lebanese soil.[28] As Syria was viewed as the most hostile Arab neighbor, especially after the Sinai II agreement with Egypt, Israel was suspicious of Syrian involvement in the Lebanese civil war, and thus initially took a very defensive position toward the conflict. Israeli foreign minister Yigal Allon's September 1976 declaration that "we do not have to intervene in what is happening inside Lebanon as long as the conflict is confined to the Lebanese people themselves" demonstrated the country's intention to balance Syrian intervention.[29] Even though it became clear in mid-1976 that Syria was actually intervening on the side of the Christians and restraining the PLO, which was in Israel's interests, Israel still valued containment of Syria over a settlement to the Lebanese war.[30] Thus when Syria decided to deploy its peace-keeping troops to south Lebanon to disarm the PLO in late 1976, Israel vehemently rejected the move and reignited the conflict by beginning artillery shelling and air strikes after the peace negotiations had already taken place.[31] This does not only illustrate self-interested external interventions prolonging an internal conflict; it also it demonstrates that even when multiple actors intervene on the same side, diverging preferences can negate any potential stabilizing effect.

An account of the "resolution" of the 1975-76 war is now necessary, because the Arab League summit in October 1976 that ended this first phase of hostilities is crucial to a demonstration of the impact of foreign

intervention. The summit in Riyadh was orchestrated by Saudi Arabia, because it felt threatened by the pace of Syria's direct intervention, showing the predominance of external factors over internal Lebanese issues (even the resolution began because of Syria's intervention) as well as the argument that outside forces can be valuable in incentivizing and enforcing peace negotiations. The Saudis persuaded Assad and Arafat to attend, and along with Lebanese President Sarkis and representatives of Egypt and Kuwait, the forum "worked out a series of agreements to resolve the Lebanese crisis."[32] The settlement was far from perfect—it was more a Syrian-Palestinian peace accord than an intra-Lebanese one—but it reduced hostilities and ended the overt conflict as it had intended to do.[33] The summit created the Arab Deterrent Force (ADF) to restore security in Lebanon and expanded upon a framework for Lebanese-Palestinian relations, requiring the Palestinian resistance to strictly adhere to the terms of the 1969 Cairo agreement, a previous accord limiting their presence in Lebanon, and facilitating the confiscation of heavy weapons from all Palestinian and Lebanese armed groups.[34] Thus the general hostilities of the main war ended in October 1976, and in the first few months, steps were taken toward normalcy in Lebanon.[35] There were still clashes and sectarian issues, but the since the ADF had "both the power and the will to carry out its responsibilities," it could overpower attempts by Maronite militias or the Muslim-Leftist-Palestinian alliance to move beyond pre-war positions.

The October settlement was hardly perfect, nor was the conflict fully resolved, but ultimately there was little danger of internal adversaries breaking the fragile peace in Lebanon: "After the loss of over 65,000 lives and the breakdown of 55 previous ceasefire agreements, the Lebanese were in no position to resume hostilities without outside assistance."[36] However, hostilities did resume after 1976 and the conflict raged on for 13 more years. It is precisely because of outside involvement that the war continued and the Riyadh peace accords failed. Israel was so opposed to Syria's continued presence in Lebanon, and especially the presence of ADF forces in south Lebanon, that tensions reignited once again in 1977 over Syria's perceived security threat to Israel.[37] This escalated once Syria reconciled with the PLO and Israel began to see Syria as even more of a threat. In March 1978, Israel directly intervened in south Lebanon to impose a "security border," an action it repeated in 1982 to destroy the Palestinian presence in Lebanon and impose a new political order on south Lebanon.[38] Thus after 1976, Israel pursued a more aggressive interventionist role rather than a reactionary one, spoiling the peace settlement and prolonging the war because of its conflict with Syria and its own agenda seen through the prism of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Without foreign involvement and the quasi-proxy war between Syria and Israel, the Lebanese conflict likely would not have continued after 1976.

America's Singular Intervention in the 1958 Lebanese Civil War

Yet foreign intervention is not necessarily a recipe

President Camille Chamoun, who led the country from 1952-1958. Wikimedia

"It is precisely because of outside involvement that the war continued and the Riyadh peace accords failed."

for disaster. The United States' limited yet decisive military intervention on behalf of the Lebanese government in 1958 illustrates the potential of decisive foreign involvement to bring civil wars to an end when there is a lack of comparable involvement on the opposing side.

In 1958, American concerns about the Middle East were growing because of Egyptian President Nasser's tilt toward the Soviet Union and his advocacy of Nasserite revolutions promoting pan-Arabism. To counter, the U.S. put forth the Eisenhower Doctrine in March 1957 to assist any Middle Eastern state "threatened by international communism." Lebanese President Camille Chamoun was the first—and only—Arab leader to invoke the policy.[39] In July 1958, Chamoun began to face violent opposition after proposing to change the nation's constitution to enable a re-election bid.[40] The division was primarily along sectarian lines—pro-government Maronite Christians against anti-government Muslims who wanted Lebanon to join with the newly formed United Arab Republic.

The United States was reluctant to involve itself in the civil strife because it did not want to seem too pro-Maronite, and it was not supportive of Chamoun's unconstitutional political ambition to seek a second term.[41] This is the first of several crucial distinctions between intervention in the 1958 war and intervention in the 1975 war. Syria was eager to enter the conflict in 1975, as was later Israel, but in 1958 the U.S. had very limited interest in Lebanese affairs. It wanted to ensure a pro-Western government, but beyond that it had no real security concerns or ambition in the country. This limited interest thus translated to limited, partial, and decisive intervention, which hastened the conflict's end.

When they arrived, American troops did not engage in combat against the opposition forces; having landed, they "simply took their positions at the airport and in Beirut and dug in."[42] This puts the interventions in the two wars on different levels and again illustrates the benefits of limited, though partial, military involvement and the drawbacks of external forces becoming primary actors in a nation's civil conflict. With "Operation Blue Bat," U.S. Marines landed on the beaches of Beirut and were escorted to designated areas by the Lebanese forces; subsequent troops were "carefully deployed to avert their involvement in hostilities."[43] Military intervention was followed by a "concerted mediatory effort" through a special American envoy, Richard Murphy, and talks between Murphy and Lebanese leaders led to a political compromise that allowed presidential elections to take place at the end of July, effectively ending the crisis.[44] U.S. deployment of forces peaked at 14,300 men in mid-August, and a phased withdrawal of troops began, with the last soldier leaving on October 25.[45] Clearly, while American military intervention played a critical role in reducing the hostilities by helping the pro-government side win, its diplomatic intervention was also a crucial factor in helping resolve the conflict.

U.S. involvement was not perfect—the arrival of American troops was met with hostility and frustration from the opposition, and the resolution of the war did not address the basic weakness of the Lebanese state, namely the "divided political loyalties of its multi-religious population". However, it resulted in a quick end to the fighting and peace negotiations that addressed what they could at the time, demonstrating that limited and partial intervention can shorten conflicts in the absence of competing intervention.

Conclusion

Foreign involvement in civil wars, illustrated by the differences between Syrian and Israeli intervention in the 1975-90 war and American intervention in the 1958 war, generally leads to longer conflicts and more difficult peace settlements. When one external actor intervenes in a civil war with a clearly defined

mission and exit strategy, and avoids getting entangled in the hostilities, it can help bring peace by securing one side's victory. This only holds, however, if there is not a comparable intervention on the opposing side by a different external actor, or intervention on the same side by another foreign power with competing interests. Foreign involvement can also be beneficial in shortening conflicts and bringing peace by providing incentives for settlements or helping with negotiations.

However, this circumstance of limited, partial, and independent intervention is not the norm, and generally external actors do more harm than good, as the 1975 war suggests. When multiple states have a significant stake in the outcome of a civil war and align with different sides to balance each other, their intervention will prolong the war by creating a stalemate—both sides are given the resources to keep fighting, but not to win. As in the 1975 war, when the external states also have their own agenda, the war becomes even more complex and difficult to end. Not only do those states become part and parcel of the conflict rather than supporting allies, but they also make settlements less likely because there are more interests to take into account and more actors that could spoil the peace.

The negative impact of foreign involvement today is profoundly evident in the case of Syria—it exemplifies essentially all of the ways in which intervention prolongs war and prevents peace. There are multiple actors on all sides—Iran and Russia supporting Assad, Turkey and the Gulf states supporting the rebels, and the United States and the Kurds somewhere in the middle—work to balance each other prevent a conclusive end to the conflict. Though it may be too late for Syria—just as it became too late for Lebanon—policymakers and those who hold them accountable should remember the sobering lessons these indecisive proxy wars when attempting to defuse future conflicts. ✦

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Desert Traditions: Preserving Cultural Heritage in Modern Oman

A Photo Essay

Hannah Gaber

Hannah Gaber spent six months in Oman photographing and filming a documentary on the changing culture and future of the sultanate to complete dual MAs in journalism and Middle Eastern and North African Studies. She has visited Oman twice, and other documentary and photographic experiences include Turkey, Peru, Cyprus, France, and all around Arizona as graduate assistant to the State Department-funded Arizona-Afghanistan Journalism Partnership, which paired the University of Arizona with Nangarhar University to train and teach Afghan journalism professors English, professional, and teaching skills.

Page 33: Employees at the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque in Muscat, denoted by their uniform versions of the traditional Omani dishdasha (dress) and mussar (head wrap), indulge in a quiet moment under the colonnade.

Page 34, above: This fort in Bahla in the interior of Oman is a UNESCO Heritage Site and was historically the center for Ibadi Islam, the official religion of Oman. Many Omanis also believe Bahla to be the center of black magic in Oman, and some will go as far as to refuse to visit the area.

Page 35, right: The village of Al Hamra in the interior of Oman was fully inhabited until the 1980s. Advances like air conditioning in modern homes, cars, and job opportunities in the city have led to such traditional homes being abandoned, and such crumbling villages are all over Oman.

Page 36, top: Traditional dress is common in Oman, especially in villages like Al Kamil. Many in the interior are Bedouin, and the Bedouin-patterned mussar and kohl around the eyes, seen here on a little boy watching a camel show, are signifiers of long-standing traditions.

Page 36, bottom: Fishing has always been a vocation in Oman. Beaches like this one in Seeb, in the Muscat governorate, see fisherman plying their craft in the mornings and evenings as well as much recreational use by families and youth during the day.

Page 37: A woman demonstrates how to extract seed oils in a house museum in the village of Al Hamra. Jobs like these are supported by government efforts to preserve traditions and history.

Page 38, below: Traditional camel shows still take place in villages deep in the interior of Oman, such as Al Kamil. Surrounding the Eid celebrations, people gather at larger-than-usual markets in their village centers to watch the skilled riders and meet with breeders and peddlers.

Page 39, right: Traditional workshops for Omani handicrafts litter the countryside, often supported by the Ministry of Heritage and Culture or the Public Authority for Craft Industries in an attempt to preserve trades rendered obsolete by modern conveniences. This clay workshop in Bahla is one example.

Page 40: There are always many children at traditional markets, as seen in this photo from the Friday cattle and goat market in Nizwa, considered the capital of Oman's interior region. Children are very important in Oman, not just because of traditional family values, but because 60 percent of the country's population is under 30, and the nation has placed a premium on teaching them about their heritage and culture in hopes they will not lose their historical identity.

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Page 41, top: For National Day, Omanis take to the streets with flags, wrapped cars, loud music, and costumes in ostentatious displays that are otherwise totally out of character, cramming the highways long into the night. Here, along the coastline of Muscat on Al Shati St., also known as Love Street, the grandness of the 45th National Day celebration is kicked off.

Page 41, bottom: Traditional camel shows like this one in Al Kamil in the interior of Oman gave rise to the races made famous by the UAE, which many in Oman say were the salvation of the camel, in the the same way horse racing was for the horse, once it had been replaced by machines for transport and heavy labor.

Page 42, left: The Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque can host 20,000 worshippers and covers an area of more than 400,000 square meters. Its glimmering marble and colonnades in ornate Islamic motifs from around the world mark a notable departure from the traditional minimalist style of Ibadi mosques. Presented as a gift from Sultan Qaboos to his nation to mark 30 years of reign in 2000 and opened in 2001, it was perhaps also intended to announce Oman's arrival as a developed nation and Gulf economic power.

Page 43, above: A view of the sun setting over Muscat. ✦

Not Nearly Enough

Assessing the Humanitarian Response to Syria's War

Erica Behrens

A senior at the University of Southern California, Erica Behrens studies International Relations and Arabic. She is also a reasearch assistant for the USC Middle East Studies Program and has spent time working and studying in Geneva, Switzerland and Amman, Jordan . Her interests include conflict resolution, peace building, social entrepreneurship, democracy promotion, human rights, and refugee issues.

Now in its sixth year, the Syrian civil war ranks among the greatest humanitarian disasters since World War II.[1] The most recent estimate puts the death toll as high as 470,000, the result of bombings, rocket attacks, air raids, shootings, mass killings, starvation, and exposure to toxic substances, among other causes.[2] In addition to the great loss of life, the conflict has displaced millions.[3] 4.3 million civilians have fled the country, 6.6 million are internally displaced, and 13.5 million need additional humanitarian assistance.[4] Of those who have fled the country, the majority have gone to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. Only ten percent have sought refuge in Europe.[5] Those who remain in Syria not only risk death but also face a greatly diminished quality of life. The fighting has caused such immense destruction that the country has regressed four decades in terms of

human development. Four out of five Syrians now live in poverty, and health and educational structures have been damaged or destroyed completely, with at least 4,000 schools ruined or repurposed.[6] An estimated 3 million Syrian children have stopped attending class. Access to healthcare has been drastically restricted, as the majority of Syria's hospitals have become inoperative and the majority of the country's health professionals have fled to safety.[7]

Such an extensive humanitarian crisis requires an equally extensive humanitarian response. Both inside and outside the country, the UN, various international NGOs, and local NGOs are working to deliver life-saving assistance to Syrian civilians, led by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). The group aims to organize the efforts of national and international humanitarian actors to best "alleviate human suffering" and "ensure a coherent response."[8] Outside Syria, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees is leading the international humanitarian response. The agency seeks to "safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees" and to help those in need of asylum to find refuge in another state.[9]

But how well are the needs of those affected by this crisis actually being met, and who, if anyone, should be held responsible for the needs that go unmet? After over four years of fighting and several millions of people in need, the blame cannot be placed on a single actor. An unwillingness by outside governments to put the needs of the Syrian people first has allowed the conflict to escalate into the crisis that it is today and has left millions of civilians dead, wounded, or in urgent need of aid.

Gauging How Well the Needs of Syrians Are Being Met

Personal testimonies illustrate the magnitude of the failure of the international response. In a 2015 Oxfam report entitled "Failing Syria," Samah, a mother of six, compares life in the camp in which she and her family now reside to "dying every day a thousand times over." She describes the daily "cold, illness, and hunger" through which her family must suffer and the humiliation of needing to rely on an outside organization for meager amounts of food. She describes how, if it weren't for her children, she "would prefer to live under the threat of airstrikes" in her home than under the undignified conditions of the camp.[10] Samira, a 45 year-old Syrian refugee and widow, lives in a one-room self-made shelter with 12 other people in Lebanon. She feels that, "living here is worse than in Syria, [because] here, we have to keep worrying about every detail…We need bread for the children; we don't have any food at all."[11]

Many see pictures of refugees in UNHCR tents and incorrectly conclude that refugees mainly live in UN camps.[12] In reality, the vast majority of refugees live in urban environments. Within Jordan, it is estimated that 84 percent of Syrian refugees live outside the camps. Because they live among Jordanians, the majority of these refugees lack access to UN assistance and are trying to make a living on their own, although the most do not have work permits.[13]

As Western powers grapple over how many refugees, if any, they will accept, it is important to remember that the countries directly bordering Syria have accepted the bulk of the refugees for years. However, neither the refugees nor those accepting them

"Although many are undoubtedly in need in these areas, the concentration of aid-giving outside Syria is partially responsible for drawing Syrians out of the country, creating more refugees."

anticipated the longevity of this crisis. Four and a half years later, neighboring host countries are growing weary of their role as hosts. Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq are experiencing a kind of "host fatigue" as tension increases between natives and refugees and local families find it harder to deal with the continuing strain.[14]

Jordan, just south of Syria, and Lebanon, just west, have accepted approximately a million and 1.5 million refugees, respectively.[15] These numbers alone are staggering, but consideration of the size, economic situation, and level of resources that both countries maintain makes the figures even more incredible. Jordan's pre-refugee population stood at eight million, and Lebanon's at a mere 4.5 million, which means that refugees now constitute roughly a fourth of the total population in the latter country. Neither nation is economically rich, and both are lacking in natural resources. Lebanon has among the highest levels of national debt in the world, and Jordan is profoundly water-scarce. Ironically, rich Arab neighbors in the Gulf, such as Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, have yet to offer resettlement to even a single refugee.[16] Despite their hard circumstances, Lebanon and Jordan have coped better than expected thus far. However, some warn that the countries may be reaching their limits, speaking of potentially destabilizing economic and social pressures if the refugee flow continues.[17]

The realities of this "saturation" mean that thousands of Syrians are barely making ends meet. As of January 2014, two-thirds of Syrian refugees in Jordan were living in "abject poverty, with less than $40 per person per month." In a study conducted by UNHCR and the International Relief and Development in 2014, almost half of the 150,000 refugees interviewed, all of whom were living outside the camps, had no heating, a quarter had unreliable electricity, and 20 percent had no functioning toilet. High rental fees put immense strain on the budgets of Syrian families, forcing many to cram together into one space in order to afford the accommodation.[18] UNHCR is attempting to distribute cash assistance to thousands of the most vulnerable out-of-camp refugees, but the number of impoverished Syrians not receiving this assistance is rising.[19]

As poverty increases, more and more Syrians are forced into more desperate means of survival. Mr. Antonio Guterres, the standing UN High Commissioner for Refugees, warns that "more children will drop out of school to work" and others will be forced to engage in prostitution or "survival sex."[20] With such dire lack of access to food and healthcare in some areas, many have embarked on the expensive, arduous, and often treacherous migration to Europe, a trend that will likely increase as conditions deteriorate.[21] Some have even decided to return to Syria, desperate to have at least some of their old comforts and possessions. "I've no relatives left here and no money," explained one refugee, a mother of three from southern Syria, explaining herself in a BBC news report. Another, Abu Ahmed, describes

A Syrian refugee family in its rented house in Jordan. UK Dept. for International Development/Wikimedia

his need to go back in order to obtain medical treatment for his daughter: "It's a hard life here…[but] in Syria, it will be available."[22] That refugees feel desperate enough to return to a warzone speaks to the great inadequacy of the humanitarian response.

The Inadequacy of Funding

The response plan put forth by the UHCHR is intended to assist both refugees in the camps and countries that are hosting refugees outside of the camps. However, the plan demands $1.3 billion in funding and is currently only funded at 35% of that demand. The number of refugees is increasing, yet funds are diminishing. The humanitarian agencies of the UN are "on the verge of bankruptcy," meaning that millions are and will continue to be left in need. UNHCR and UNICEF do not receive their budgets from the UN's central fund, paid by member states. Rather, the UN's humanitarian work is funded by individual governments and private donors. Refugee commissioner Guterres currently is asking that member states "make more regular payments to the main agencies" to change this system, but there is no easy fix for the dearth of necessary funds.[23] This shortage applies to NGOs as well—their funding is inadequate, and the nature of donations-based aid inherently complicates the situation, as foreign donors change their priorities frequently.[24]

The Syrian Regime

Another formidable challenge to an efficient UN humanitarian response is the Syrian regime. The government severely restricts the access that humanitarian aid workers have to the country, making it difficult to conduct successful humanitarian operations such as carrying out needs assessments or opening field offices. The government has made it difficult for agency staff to gain visas, forcing agencies to operate out of neighboring countries.[25] Assad's government is not merely hindering the delivery of aid inadvertently, but in some cases intentionally preventing its delivery while also purposefully escalating its need. There have been reports of "intentional policies of starvation in areas under siege by the government," as well as military attacks.[26] The evident goal of this deplorable strategy is to de-populate opposition-held territory, immediately weakening opposition support, and to discourage potential future support.[27] Additionally, while not purposefully attacking civilians like Assad has done, other government leaders in the region have not done their part to ensure that aid is delivered as efficiently as possible. Egypt, Iraq, Israel, and Saudi Arabia have taken measures to restrict access to aid workers within their borders, further complicating if not completely inhibiting the aid delivery process.[28]

Obstacles to Access and Tracing

All aid-giving organizations are struggling to reach those in Syria. It is difficult to trace the delivery of supplies all the way to their intended recipients.[29] Worse, aid that falls into the hands of militants may bolster their power as they use the aid to supply their own forces or, more seriously, to manipulate those in need by withholding vital supplies of food and other forms of aid. Of course, corruption or manipulation surrounding the aid-giving process is not unique to Syria. In fact, there is less aid theft within Syria than in past humanitarian conflicts, but UN agencies and NGOs have admitted that "it is hard, if not impossible, to know where supplies end up," especially in areas designated as difficult-to-reach.[30]

US troops delivering aid to rebel-held areas in Syria.
SMSgt George Thompson/Wikimedia

"That refugees feel desperate enough to return to a warzone speaks to the great inadquacy of the humanitarian response."

However, the uncertainty of aid delivery is particularly troubling in the Syrian case because of the threat of ISIS. The size, sophistication, and relative success of the terrorist organization makes it unlike any other. Social media images appeared earlier this year "showing Islamic State logos" on the UNWFP food aid boxes. Images such as these, and the general uncertainty as to where aid is ending up may also hurt future donations. Donors want reassurance that their money is making a positive impact, not being used impartially or falling into the hands of the aggressors.[31]

Despite these potential outcomes, aid groups want to continue delivering aid, and thus must accept some level of uncertainty and risk. Food aid reaches just 12 percent of the 4.6m Syrians living in areas defined as "hard to reach," and medical supplies only make it to 4 percent.[32] An ISIS blockade has prevented UNICEF from sending water treatment supplies to the Syrian governorates of Raqqa and Dier ez-Zor for the past eleven months. When members of the Free Syrian Army captured ground around the Nasib border-crossing between Syria and Jordan, UNICEF was blocked from treating 500,000 liters of water.[33] Aid workers reported that "the complex nature of the Syrian conflict…has forced them into clandestine operations." They must often go through local partners to carry out these operations, making it impossible to trace the delivery of all of their supplies.[34]

Further complicating the issue of aid access and tracing is the fickle state of the situation on the ground. It is extremely difficult to structure aid systems around a constantly progressing civil war. The constantly-changing, urgent developments of the crisis have created an unanticipated level of need, and the international response has proven itself unfit to handle such a need. Furthermore, although attempting to deliver aid in any conflict situation is perilous, the publicized ISIS kidnappings and killings of aid workers, such as those of the British Alan Henning and the American Kayla Mueller, have characterized the conflict as a particularly dangerous one. Much of Syria has simply become "too dangerous to operate in."[35] Since the conflict began, "76 humanitarian workers have been killed," over half from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society, the Syrian counterpart to the American Red Cross. In addition, "over 32 United Nations staff members have been detained or are missing."[36]

Because of these dangers, most large aid agencies have resorted to providing relief where it is safe, mainly outside of Syria in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. Although many are undoubtedly in need in these areas, the concentration of aid-giving outside Syria is partially responsible for drawing Syrians out of the country, creating more refugees. Despite the fact that several more millions are displaced within the country than have fled, it is estimated that aid agencies are spending about $5.5 billion on registered refugees outside the country, almost twice that which they are spending on those displaced within.[37]

Assessing the Efforts of the UN, Individual States, and NGOs

However, these factors alone do not fully explain the great inadequacy of the humanitarian response to Syrians in need. The UN, for one, is not without fault. This blame falls less on individual agencies, and more on the UN as a larger body. Ban Ki-moon, current Secretary-General of the United Nations, has expressed his anger at the international communities' "impotence to stop the war" in Syria, including that of individual members states, and added that the UN's credibility has suffered because of this ineffectiveness. The Secretary-General has criticized the dynamics of power politics that exist within the UN Security Council (UNSC), namely the blockage of certain effective resolutions for the sake of protecting national interests. The permanent members of the

"Turkey has come under scrutiny for its apparent support for ISIS. Evidence suggests that it has provided direct aid."

UNSC include China, France, Russia, the UK, and the U.S., and though the Secretary-General did not explicitly identify any country in particular, the statement seems aimed at Russia and China who, being allies of Assad, have "on several occasions" purposefully prohibited the passage of resolutions critical of the Assad's regime.[38] Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the UN and former UN envoy to Syria, resigned from the latter position in 2012 after only five months. The diplomat expressed his frustration at the "finger-pointing and name-calling" at a time when action was, and still is, so desperately needed.[39]

Individual states are not blameless either; the Syrian government is not the only regime fueling the conflict. Even countries with no geographical proximity to Syria have actively contributed to the deepening of the crisis. The question of whether Syria should be labeled a "proxy war" is debated, but countries such as Russia, the U.S., Iran, and various Arab Gulf States certainly have taken means to influence the war either through direct military involvement or through one-sided military aid.[40] For its part, Turkey has come under scrutiny for its apparent support for ISIS. Evidence suggests that, in addition to undermining anti-ISIS Kurdish militias, it has also provided direct aid to the terrorist group.[41]

The support funneled into all sides of the conflict from various outside sources, particularly the transfer of "arms, ammunition and other forms of military support," is fueling the conflict and thereby actively undermining the effort to improve the humanitarian situation. The degree to which the war is being perpetuated by outside forces and the extent to which the UN is failing to lessen these influences or implement its resolutions is apparent in the fact that over 90% of the weapons currently in Syria were produced by UNSC permanent member states.[42]

The many inadequacies of the UN in Syria raise questions about the organization's capabilities as a relief provider. Many independent NGOs have expressed their belief that they are more equipped to handle the humanitarian crisis. It is not difficult to see how independent NGOs are, in many ways, better suited to tackle the burden of providing aid. NGOs are much smaller and do not have to deal with the multiple levels of bureaucracy, and often have greater knowledge of the situation on the ground. However, it is also important to note that many of the challenges that plague UN agencies, such as restricted access, dangerous conditions, and restrictions from the Syrian regime or other governments, do apply to NGOs as well.[43]

There is also discussion of whether local Syrian NGOs or international NGOs are better suited to the task. Syrian NGOs are more in tune with the situation on the ground and are better able to understand the limitations they will face, yet at the same time, they are less developed and often do not have the necessary skills to function as relief organizations.[44] Some international agencies contend that, unlike local NGOs, they are "above the political fray and scourge of local corruption." While it is true that they may be less subject to local politics, they are still subject to pressures from home, which can negatively impact efforts.[45]

Many Syrian NGOs are new creations, born when the termination of services from the Syrian government left many in need. Civil society organizations, as independent from government control, did not exist in Syria previous to the conflict and so did not learn how to function as truly independent, non-governmental organizations.[46] These local NGOs often have great potential but lack such necessary components as professional training, financial expertise, experience with human resources and supply chain management, among other skills. If these organizations could develop these organizational skills and be trained in capacities specific to operation in a conflict zone, they might be able to realize this potential. However, most donors are not willing to give these efforts adequate funding.[47]

The role of international and local NGOs is

difficult to assess because of the complicated situation on the ground. Gaining information about NGO operations is further complicated by the reluctance of many NGOs to disclose details about their operations, fearing that doing so may "jeopardize the safety" of their workers or of those they are trying to help. Fortunately, the Syrian government has granted 18 international NGOs and 11 UN agencies permission to operate inside the country and has allowed certain local NGOs to work in conjunction with the UN to provide humanitarian assistance.[48]

Finally, although NGOs prove superior in some aspects, such as having less bureaucracy and greater knowledge of the situation on the ground, UN entities generally have greater access to those in need, especially in besieged and hard-to-reach areas. The UN entities have the ability to carry out "large-scale operations with consistent standards, such as vaccination campaigns and food delivery." Individual NGOs are inevitably more limited and cannot conduct such widespread, impactful operations.[49]

Moving Forward

Though seemingly obvious, the best way to improve the humanitarian response to the conflict is to bring an end to the conflict itself. At the least, fighting must decrease significantly before the relief efforts that do exist can be carried out fully. Humanitarian organizations must be able to do their jobs without facing blockades, unnecessary government restrictions, and fear for their safety. The greatest responsibility for ending the humanitarian crisis lies with those actively fighting in the conflict. However, there are measures that other international and regional actors can take to pressure these parties into a solution and to reduce further escalation.[50]

The UNSC permanent members must put aside their individual interests and take decisive action. Outside states must stop using the fighting in Syria for their own political gain and instead work together to reduce the enormous size and complexity of the current crisis. The UN must end the existing impunity that allows the actors in this conflict to commit such horrible atrocities. The plans put forth by the UN Peace Envoy to ensure greater respect for the rights of civilians must be taken seriously, and peace talks in which all sides of the conflict are present and the needs of the Syrian people are prioritized must take place. Civil society must be represented in the negotiation of agreements, especially groups that speak on behalf of those most vulnerable in this conflict, such as women and youth. The inclusion of these types of groups is not only just but also necessary if such agreements are to have long-term success.[51]

The aim of assessing the various actors taking part in the humanitarian response is not to argue that one should operate exclusively but rather to realize the ways in which these actors are working together and should continue working together to build their capacity for aid. In addition to encouraging cooperation, it would be worthwhile to explore the greater potential of local NGOs on the ground. Rather than deem these groups incompetent, it is better to strategically address the issues that prevent them from reaching their full capacity and aim to fix these inadequacies. Those making donations must not impose misguided priorities on the organizations they are funding, and rather focus on increasing the management skills and operational capacity of those closest to the conflict, who have the greatest expertise of the situation on the ground.[52]

In the meantime, international actors must continue to supply the direly needed funds to those providing relief, even though the protracted conflict has already cost billions. Relief funds must not be sent only to those organizations directly providing relief, but also to communities that have taken in the bulk of the refugees. In addition to financial contributions, states must continue to bring refugees within their borders, offering resettlement or at least temporary asylum. This burden primarily falls not on the countries that have already accepted millions but instead on those who have yet to take in refugees, especially those who have greater financial means to accommodate them, such as Saudi Arabia or Kuwait.[53]

The conflict in Syria is yet another example in which the world has failed to prevent, and now to respond to, a great human injustice. But the humanitarian response, even when effective, can never fully counter nor overcome the pain and destruction created by the crisis in the first place. Until governmental

actors decide to put the well-being of innocent civilians ahead of individual gain, the Syrian crisis, and other such horrific humanitarian crises, will carry on, and civilians will continue to bear the brunt of war. ✦

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Bridging East and West

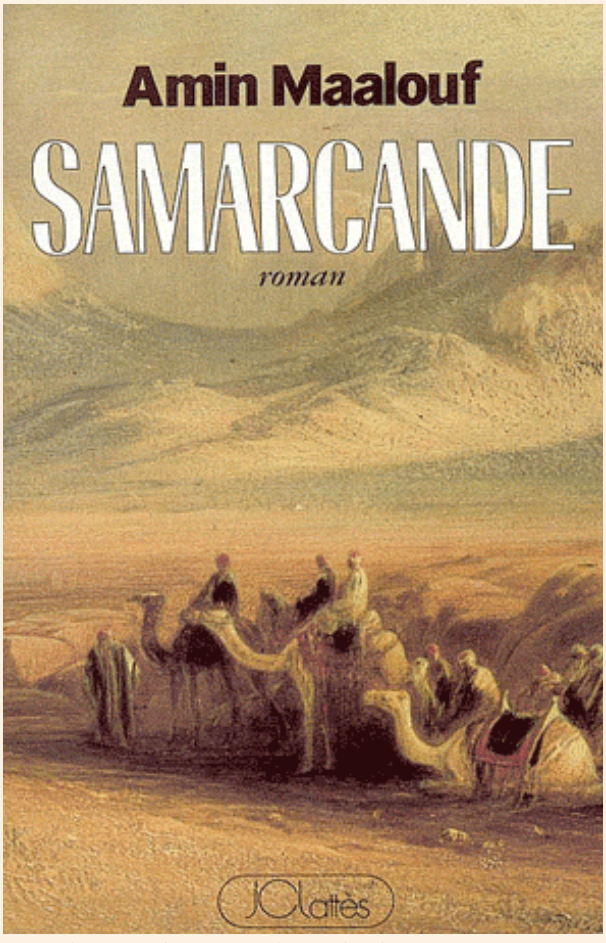
A Review of *Samarkand* By Amin Maalouf, Translated by Russell Harris

Michael Weston-Murphy

Michael Weston-Murphy is a Lisa Goldberg Fellow at the NYU Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service and is a co-founder and former Editor-in-Chief of Al Noor.

Lord Tennyson wrote in Ulysses, "For always roaming with a hungry heart / Much I have seen and known…" It is this spirit that fills the pages of Amin Maalouf's *Samarkand*, translated by Russell Harris. The second novel by the Paris-based Lebanese author, it is now one of many erudite stories of historical fiction that he has published over the past three decades. In each work, Maalouf imagines a rich narrative filled with historical figures and real events, of which most of the actual details have been lost to time.

In *Samarkand*, Maalouf paints the story of one of Persia's most famous poets, Omar Khayyam. In the novel, upon Omar's arrival to Samarkand (now in present-day Uzbekistan), he is brought by local townspeople before the qadi, or local judge, for being a failasuf, or philosopher. The admiring magistrate gives him the following advice: "The Almighty has granted you the most valuable things a son of Adam can



Original cover art for 1988 novel *Samarkand*.

have–intelligence, eloquence, health, beauty, the desire for knowledge and a lust for life, the admiration of men and, I suspect, the sighs of women. I hope that He has not deprived you of the wisdom of silence…"(13). In addition to this counsel, Khayyam is presented with an empty book to fill with words he should not speak, lest he blaspheme. The manuscript, which comes to contain some of Omar's most famous lines, becomes the protagonist of the story.

Omar Khayyam was a real 11th-century philosopher, theologian, astronomer, proto-scientist, and man of letters. He is perhaps best known for his poetry, specifically his rubaiyat, or quatrains. While Omar Khayyam was prominent in the Persian public consciousness for many centuries after his death, his work only became widely read in the West when the English Victorian poet Edward FitzGerald produced a translation, titled "Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam." While the faithfulness of translation and the provenance of the quatrains in FitzGerald's work are disputed, the effect of the publication was profound. Khayyam became one of the most popular non-English poets in the English-speaking world. It is with this context in mind that Maalouf creates his imagined origin story of Omar's Rubaiyat.

In addition to the tale of the Rubaiyat's genesis, the novel weaves in a second, interconnected story, that of the fictional adventurer Benjamin O. Lesage—the "O." for Omar. A half-American, half-French orientalist from Annapolis, Lesage is beckoned to the East by the pull of destiny after a conversation with his cousin in France. Lesage's cousin asks him, "If you were certain that such a manuscript existed, would your interest in Omar Khayyam be reborn?" To which he replies, "Naturally" (168).

From Paris to Istanbul to Isfahan and finally to Samarkand, Lesage stumbles into many of the major historical events at the turn of the last century. All the

"It is a refreshing reminder to the contemporary reader that a young American once died a martyr's death in the name of Persian democracy."

while, he seeks to find and read Khayyam's lost manuscript containing the original Rubaiyat. Through Lesage's journey, Maalouf deftly tells the story of American involvement in Persia at the sunset of the Qajar dynasty. Given the current context of Iranian-American relations, it is a refreshing reminder to the contemporary reader that a young American once died a martyr's death in the name of Persian democracy and that another used his financial acumen to help Iran's young government defend against the territorial ambitions of great powers.

At one point in the novel, Benjamin Lesage's news editor says, "Just yesterday, abroad did not exist for us. The Orient stopped at Cape Cod. Now suddenly, under the pretext of the end of one century and the start of another, our peaceful city has been laid hold of by the world's troubles" (213). This sentiment resonates today as a reflection the cyclical nature of American isolationism, illustrating to the reader that the "rediscovery" of the world by the United States is not new.

Amin Maalouf, winner of the 1993 Prix Goncourt. Claude Truong-Ngoc/Wikimedia Commons

While *Samarkand* was published two decades ago, its depiction of an oft-forgotten history remains relevant today. As the story evolves, the reader witnesses the odyssey of the fictional Rubaiyat manuscript. At times the language seems dated—words like "Orient," "Occident," "Persia," "Constantinople," and "Providence" appear often—but it simply reflects Maalouf's grasp of the period's lexicon. As this edition is a translation from the original French, credit is also due to translator Russell Harris for the accessibility and fluidity of the English.

There is perhaps one major shortcoming to *Samarkand*. On the first page of the novel, the story of the RMS Titanic takes center stage. In a post-Leonardo-and-Kate world, the device of the voyage of the great White Star ocean liner comes off stale. This is not Maalouf's error but rather the evolution of popular culture. Even so, it does unfortunate damage to the tale—and is an intriguing example of how, through no fault of its own, literature does not always age well.

Ultimately, this novel demonstrates the power of the narratives, both real and imagined, that we tell ourselves as we find our place in the world. When done well...oh, how beautiful it can be. ✦

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