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Identity and the Politics of Threat: The Case of Jordan and Israel

Dr. Hassan A. Barari*

Dr. Amir S. Al Qarallah

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Abstrac

This paper examines how the constructivist concept of identity informs the conception of threat in both Jordan and Israel. Unlike neorealism, which gives no attention to the explanatory power of identity and considers it as exogenously given, constructivism argues that identity is a social construct that can inform the interests pursued by strategic actors. This paper examines the ways in which cultural, historical, religious and tribal evolutions have created a collective identity with two components: exclusion of the "other" and siege mentality. This study's core argument is that this approach provides the best basis for the construction of threat in both Jordan and Israel. While the geostrategic location of both countries constrains their room for maneuverability, the fact remains that variables related to neorealism cannot adequately account for threat perceptions in both countries.

Keywords: Identity, Threat, Neo-realism, Constructivism, Jordan, Israel

* **كلية الأمير حسين للدراسات الدولية، الجامعة الأردنية.**

حقوق النشر محفوظة لجامعة مؤتة، الكرك، الأردن.

الهوية وسياسة التهديد: الحالتين الأردنية والإسرائيلية

د. حسن عبدالمهدي البراري

د. عامر سلامة القرالة

ملخص

تبحث هذه الورقة في كيف يؤثر المفهوم البنيوي للهوية على تصورات التهديد في كلٍ من الأردن واسرائيل. وفي هذا السياق وعلى عكس مدرسة الواقعية الجديدة التي لا تولي اهتماماً للقدرة التفسيرية للهوية معتبرةً اياها معطى ثابتا، تتمحور البنيوية حول المقدرة التفسيرية للهوية والتي تحدد مصالح الدول. كما وتبحث الورقة في مجموع الأدوار المرتبطة بالتطورات الثقافية والتاريخية والدينية والقبلية والتي أفضت بمجملها الى خلق هوية جماعية مركبة تستند إلى الاقصاء وفقا لمنطق عقلية القلعة والآخر المختلف. بُنيت المقولة الرئيسة لهذه الدراسة على أساس أن منهج دراسة الهوية البنيوية يفسر تصورات التهديد في كلٍ من الأردن واسرائيل. فبينما يشكل الموقع الاستراتيجي لكلا البلدين عائقاً امام هامش المناورة أمامهما، تبقى المتغيرات المرتبطة بمدرسة الواقعية الجديدة عاجزة في تقديم تفسير كافٍ لتصورات التهديد في البلدين.

الكلمات الدالة: الهوية، التهديد، الواقعية الجديدة، البنيوية، الأردن، إسرائيل

1. Introduction

This paper examines the role of identity in the construction of threat in both Israel and Jordan. Scholars of Middle Eastern politics must take into account the ebb and flow of identity politics. It is hardly possible for students of Middle Eastern politics to ignore identity's powerful impact on how states shape their policies. Perhaps Iraq presents a recent example of the impact of identity on politics. The demise of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq unleashed a clash of rival ethnic, sectarian, and ideological groups. This development has resulted, inter alia, in instability in a region in motion. Needless to say, the incongruence of identity and internal structures of states is a key root cause for some conflicts in the region.

That being said, as the most dominant school of thought in International Relations (IR), neo-realism does not appreciate the relative importance of identity for understanding much of the region's politics. In the post- World War II era, realism has dominated the field of IR. For a long time, the notion that state interest is derived from its relative position in the international system has been almost taken for granted by many IR students. Kenneth Waltz highlights the role of systemic factors and their impact on state-state interactions.(1) He argued that inter-state conflict, the difficulty to achieve international cooperation, and security competition among states result from the anarchic structure of the international system; namely, the absence of an overarching authority above sovereign states. According to this line of thinking, issues such as interests and identities are exogenous factors.

Unlike neorealism, constructivism offers a different perspective on whether interests and identities are extrinsic. To constructivists, state identity and

(1) Waltz, Theories of International Politics, 1979.

interests are not imposed by the anarchic international system.(1) On the contrary, it is the interaction among states that gives different meanings to both identity and interests. Seen in this way, the concept of self-help — a realist concept — originates from the interaction among states and not from anarchy. In other words, anarchy does not have to be self-help.(2) The emphasis, and herein lies the crux of the matter, is on the process. Certainly, this concept contradicts the structural, deterministic notion that anarchy is the key explanatory variable that conditions interaction among states. Whether there is a reality independent of our knowledge is an ontological debate that has been far from concluded.

This paper departs from the neorealist deterministic idea about identity and argues that identity politics grew out of the experiences of an identity-based conception of threat. It is, therefore, conceptually distinct from threats derived from the anarchic nature of the international system. In fact, identity politics have become a common cliché in the years after the Cold War.

This paper examines identity politics in the case of both Jordan and Israel, focusing on the perception and construction of threat. It argues that the persistence of fear and the perpetuation of conflict inform the way each society views itself. Jordanian society is far from homogenous. It is home to various sects, minorities and two major demographic components: Palestinians and Jordanians. The influx of a huge Palestinian community in the aftermath of the 1948 War has changed the basic fabric of Jordanian society. Jordan is a case of pan-Arabist, Islamist, Palestinian, and tribal identities interacting with one another. The fact that half of the population —those coming from Palestine —

(1)Wendt, A. Anarchy is what states make of it: The social construction of power politics, 1992. PP. 391-425
(2) Ibid.

have a strong sense of Palestinian identity is important as it has created a duality, and in some cases, mutual suspicion.

In the same vein, Israel is driven by the Jewish and Zionist ethos. In the 2000 Herzliya conference, Israel reaffirmed the definition and contents of its identity as a Jewish-Zionist state. The passing of a new "Nation-State Law" which gives primacy to Jews over Israeli Arabs, or other faiths and ethnicities, underpins the centrality of identity for Israeli Jews. Nowhere in the Middle East that a state has been so driven by both its concept of identity and threat as much as Israel.

Study Objectives

Various competing explanations for the emergence of threat perceptions have been advanced by various IR scholars. The aim of this study is to examine whether there is a link between identity formation and states' perception of threats. In this paper, I intend to take the debate to a different arena by focusing on the relationship between identity and threat construction. To be more specific, this paper examines the process that has shaped a unique Israeli identity— one that could be defined by a twin construct of exceptionalism and siege mentality. The key question is: how has identity contributed in the construction of threat in Israel?

This paper also examines how the importance of the Palestinian cause has informed an identity debate in Jordan thus pushing Jordanian decision-makers to carefully weigh how any potential solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would impact the identity of the Jordanian state. By doing so, the paper intends to present an alternative view to the dominant positivist-rationalist perspective that depicts the Middle East as a Hobbesian world. Thus, rather than focusing on neorealist assumptions of state behavior in an anarchic international system, this paper draws attention to the constructivist root causes of these behaviors. The reason for this twist is the fact that the neorealist approach pays little

attention to how particular constructed images and identities inform threat perceptions in both Jordan and Israel.

In the case of Jordan and Israel, identity politics play a crucial role in how they identify the source of threat. For Israel, the conflict with the Palestinians is inherently intractable due to the fact that Israelis fear for the survival of the Jewish-Zionist state. Indeed, at the core of the conflict is a zero-sum game simply because the two identities, Jewish-Zionist and Palestinian, clash. A key question is how identities help shape the threat perception —whether real or imagined — in both Jordan and Israel. The paper also examines whether identity constitutes a prism though which Israelis and Jordanians view threat. A key assumption is that identity serves as a lens through which Jordanians and Israelis filter their perceptions of threat and reality. These perceptions reflect the unique historical experiences and characteristics of each state. They also reflect social and personality factors.

Study Methodology

This paper employs a qualitative approach based on the theory of constructivism and secondary sources. For the purpose of conducting this research, there is a need to go beyond the well-established approach of neorealism in the study of both Jordan and Israel to a more complex method that places identity at the heart of what constitute states' preferences. The use of theory helps generate this study's key hypothesis and the tools for conducting the research. One of the main reasons that this research avoids the focus on neorealism is that this paradigm has no theory of preferences.

More importantly, the ontological foundation of the research is that reality does not exist independent of our knowledge. For this reason, the role of normative concepts in argumentation and legitimation is reflected in the research based on constructivism. The research methodology is based on the

theory of constructivism. The research analyses aspects of identity construction in both Jordan and Israel and examines whether it has impacted state preferences and threat perceptions.

The Conceptual Framework

The construction of threat and national security are concepts of paramount importance to IR students. As security could be broadly defined as the absence of threat, these two concepts are often seen as two sides of the same coin. Threat perception has long been a common subject for debate in both intergroup conflict and International Relations literatures. In IR literature, the definition of threat is straightforward. It is defined as a state in which one agent or group has either the capability or intent to inflict a harmful consequence on another agent or group.(1)

The key to politics in any given field is the interaction between social and material power. As Kenneth Waltz argues, "the web of social and political life is spun out of inclination and incentives, deterrent threats and punishments. Eliminate the latter two, and the ordering of society depends entirely on the former – a utopian thought impractical this side of Eden" (Waltz, 1979: 186). On the whole, the realist school of thought suggests that threat is a direct function of power. Through this lens, all outsiders are seen as potential threats. Key to this notion is the belief that the more powerful the country, the more immediate the threat. While realists do not make an explicit identity argument, they claim that alliances among states are a function of shared values, similar beliefs and even a common history. This is simply shared identity. For instance, despite the shift in the balance of power, this paradigm argues that Britain did

(1) Davis, Threats and Promises: The Pursuit of International Influence, P.10.

not view the United States as a threatening power because both share a common identity.

The debate between neoliberals and neorealists which took place towards the end of 1980s was based on a joint commitment to rationalism. They both take anarchy as a fundamental reality of international politics. A state, in this anarchic international system, is self-interested. Put differently, the self-help system is exogenously given regardless of the interaction among states. In this vein, self-interest identities are extrinsic to the process. It is as if all states' interests are a function of states' relative position in the international system. Systemic-oriented scholars tend to adopt systemic models for studying the Middle East. Stephan Walt has presented a new model to account for shifting alliances in the Middle East. He modified Waltz's model of balance of power and instead argued that states balance against threat rather than power. He argues that the balance of threat can serve as a better predictor of the shifting alliances among states. He tested his theory in the Middle East where many scholars give consideration to non-systemic factors in accounting for regional politics. Walt considers the Middle East as no different to other regions in the sense that governments may wrap their policies with ideologies and identities, but these self-interested leaders would use local legitimation principles to rationalize foreign policies driven by power policies.(1)

The commitment to materialism (structure that constrains behavior defined by a set of three factors: the distribution of power, technology, and geography) and individualism (actors have fixed interests and with structure constraining their behaviors) was challenged by scholars who ultimately became affiliated with constructivism. Interestingly, constructivism deals with the relationship between structure and agents in a more enlightened manner. The duality of

(1) Walt, The origin of alliance , 1987.

structure-agent is a subject of debate among IR theorists. One perspective is that agents are born with already-shaped identities and interests and then treat other actors and the broad over-arching structure their interactions produce as a constraint on their interests. In this view, actors are presented as pre-social, with interests that are static and cannot change through interactions with other agents. Contrary to this, another view is to treat the structure not as a constraint but rather as constituting to the actors themselves.

Clearly, this systemic and rationalist approach has many merits and can account for many significant events in the Middle East. Nevertheless, it is insufficient to explain much of these foreign policies and threat perception among and within states. This paper uses a different lens through which to assess and examine the foreign policy of two key countries: Israel and Jordan. In particular, it looks at how identity conditions threat construction in these two countries.

Michael Barnett attaches great importance to identity as a source of state behavior in the Middle East. He helped develop constructivist-inspired models to account for central features of inter- Arab politics.(1) His work on the link between identity and foreign policy furthers our understanding of how the formation and transformation of national and state identities inform Middle Eastern countries' foreign policies. Peter Katzenstein's work on the causal relationship between identity and foreign policy is also of great importance for IR students. Katzenstein employs a sociological perspective on national security politics. He makes the case that those actors define security interests according

(1) Shibley & Barnett, Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East , 2002.

to their response to cultural factors. He focuses on the meanings that states and other political actors attach to power and indeed security.(1)

Unlike rational paradigms, constructivism assumes that actors are also social entities with identities that are indeed shaped by the norms and ideas of the social environment in which they interact. In other words, constructivists place the ideational over the material. In doing so, they attach great importance to the shared knowledge between individual actors and the whole system, which in turn instills meanings in material sources.(2) It follows that anarchy does not have to be self-help. Rather, it is constructed by the interactions of actors. Anarchy could therefore be Hobbesian, Lockean, or Kantian. In Alexander Wendt's words, it is "what states make of it."

Another assumption of constructivism is that agents and structures are mutually constituted. They do not form a causal relationship. Structures are formed through shared knowledge and mutual interaction between the system on the one hand and its individual units on the other. This is how ideas and interests are defined. Unlike neorealists, constructivists do not take the international system as given or predetermined by the preferences of state actors. Based on this line of thinking, actors' identities form interests and policies. State interests are not exogenously formulated. Identities therefore form the basis of interests. While neorealists insist that interests are static, constructivists argue that interests are shaped and reshaped in a process of social struggle.

(1) Katzenstein, The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics, 1996. P.2.
(2) Wendt, A. Anarchy is what states make of it: The social construction of power politics, 1992.

1. Jordanian Identity and Threat Construction

Since its establishment in 1921, Jordan has had to grapple with the issue of identity. The British sought to establish a buffer state allied to London. However, contrary to British designs, King Abdullah I saw the then-emirate as the foundation stone and base for a larger Arab kingdom. Indeed, he sought to form a Greater Syria. Abdullah saw Jordan as the natural inheritance of the Great Arab Revolt of 1916.

At the heart of the debate lies the way in which Jordan was established. Undoubtedly, the British played a key role in the establishment of the modern state of Jordan. Perhaps that is why Joseph Massad overstates the colonial impact (Britain) on the formation of Jordanian identity. He depicts Jordanians as if they had no say in their own national enterprise.(1) To be sure, the British played a role, but Massad has inflated the colonial impact.

Jordan's involvement in the 1948 War produced two interrelated outcomes: an increased geography and a near-triple in population. The outcome of the war left Jordan with two distinct communities: East bankers, or tribes and families who traditionally resided within the borders of Jordan east of the River Jordan, and Palestinians. For Jordan to integrate Jordanians of Palestinian decent into a new Jordanian identity, it first had to stand up to Israeli policies towards the Palestinians and their lands. But the balance of power was not in Jordan's favor. Therefore, Jordan was tasked with a monumental challenge: stand up to Israel to please or appease the Jordanian public while not simultaneously provoking an Israeli response.

Arabism as an identity embraced by many Jordanians complicated matters further for King Hussein, the grandson of Abdullah I. Arabism, an ideology

(1) Joseph, Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan, 2001.

strongly promoted by Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt during 1950s and 1960s, posed a grave challenge to Jordan. On one hand, the Jordanian monarch sought to appear as embracing Arabism, but Nasser gave the movement a very different content and context. Interestingly, Nasser emphasized Arabism as an identity entailing independence from colonial powers and fully supporting the Palestinians in their struggle against Israelis. Nasser also sought to undermine the Jordanian monarch under the pretext of promoting this strand of Arabism. The resulting struggle between republics and monarchies led to the Arab Cold War that ended officially with the demise of Nasser in 1970.(1)

The question of national identity in Jordan has always been a bone of contention among Jordanians. There are two main national groups: Transjordanians – the original inhabitants of current Jordan – and Palestinians who by virtue of Jordan's involvement in the Palestinian cause became Jordanians. As early as 1950, the Jordanian state has worked meticulously to integrate Palestinians into Jordanian society. More often than not, the state articulated a vision that the Jordanians and Palestinian in the West Bank constituted one indivisible people.(2) This vision promoted by the monarch was challenged when the nationalist Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) came into being in 1964.

Explicit in the establishment of the PLO was the emphasis on a single and distinct identity. This new development challenged Jordan's claims to represent the Palestinians. The PLO, particularly after the 1968 battle of Karameh in which it along with Jordanian forces resolutely repelled an Israeli advance, triggered increasing sentiments of Palestinian national identity. Worse still,

(1) Kerr, M. The Arab Cold War: Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir and His Rivals (1958-1970), 1971.
(2) Asher, Israel, Jordan, and Palestine: The Two State Imperative, 2012.

Jordanian authorities feared that the PLO would be irredentist. It took the bloody events of September 1970, a confrontation between the regime and the PLO now known by some as 'Black September,' to convince an increasing number of Jordanians that they have a distinct identity. Jordan's decision to expel the PLO from Jordan served as the first building block in a separate, distinct Jordanian identity. Against this backdrop, successive Jordanian governments began to restructure Jordanian institutions around a Jordanian identity, a process that was called 'Jordanization'.

The fault lines between two distinct identities were obvious during Black September. In the words of former Jordanian Minister of Information Laila Sharaf, "The national identity of Jordanians started to delineate itself since 1970, when there was a clash between Palestinian and Jordanian identity.")1(Indeed, the bloody confrontation between the Jordanian army and the PLO compelled both Jordanians and Palestinians in Jordan to question where their loyalties lay. The assertion among most Transjordanians is that the army had to interfere militarily and that such an intervention served as a significant factor in protecting Jordanian identity.)2(Put plainly, Palestinians were seen as a threat to Jordan. Moreover, the bloody confrontation between the PLO and Jordan convinced a greater number of Jordanians that there were some Palestinians and other Arab forces that were set on helping the Palestinians establish an alternative homeland for them on Jordanian soil.)3(

The resurgence of a Transjordanian nationalist movement as early as 1970 came as a reaction to the widespread perception that Palestinians constituted a

(1) Fruchter-Ronen, I. Black September: The 1970–71 Events and their Impact on the Formation of Jordanian National Identity, 2008. P. 252.
(2) Abu-Odeh, Jordanians, Palestinians and the Hashemite Kingdom in the Middle East Peace Process, 2000 . P. 191.
(3) Asher, S. Israel, Jordan, and Palestine: The Two State Imperative, 2012.P .177.

threat to Jordanian identity. If anything, Jordanian nationalism coalesced around East bankers, thus excluding Palestinians. According to Kamal Salibi, "the status of the Palestinians as Jordanian citizens of full rank and standing was compromised in various ways, especially in cases where their political loyalty was suspect."(1)

During the 1970s and 1980s, King Hussein was in a political and diplomatic limbo. On one hand, he longed to recover the land lost to Israel in the 1967 war. But on the other, he felt that he could no longer be legitimate enough to speak for the Palestinians. With Rabat's Arab League resolution recognizing the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians, King Hussein was further constrained in his bid to restore the land lost in the war. A twist of events during the 1980s convinced the King that his twin objectives of preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state and the annexation of the West Bank were incompatible. Against this backdrop, the King opted for disengaging Jordan's administrative and legal ties with the West Bank in July 1988.

Slowly but surely, the idea that an independent Palestinian state would be irredentist and a threat to Jordan dissipated and gave way to the emergence of a new school of thought that argues that the establishment of a Palestinian state is in the kingdom's best interests. Jordanians fear that the failure of a two state solution would not lead to a one state solution where Palestinians and Jews live in a bi-national democratic state, but instead in a defacto 'alternative homeland' for Palestinians within Jordan. For this reason, King Abdullah II has long argued that the failure of a two-state solution would be detrimental to Jordan's stability.

(1) Salibi, The Modern History of Jordan, 1993. PP.246-7.

To Jordan's dismay, events that have unfolded since the eruption of the Second Intifada of 2000 have hardened Israel's position vis-à-vis the Palestinians, land and peace. The deteriorating security situation has helped move Israeli society to the right. Israel has intentionally and unilaterally changed the status quo in the occupied Palestinian territories. To be sure, the West Bank is now fragmented, with a majority of the territories under the control of Israel. More than 650,000 Israeli settlers live in settlements constituting 2.7% of the area of the occupied territories. Policies have made it extremely difficult to establish a Palestinian state and some Israelis even examine other alternatives. In this vein it has been argued that:

> It is not clear that the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea is sufficient for two viable states. The problems of the future state (lack of infrastructure, shortage of employment, division between the West Bank and Gaza, etc.) will fall on Israel's shoulders. Moreover, the international community will say it is Israel's "moral obligation" to help the new state after so many years of occupation. Indeed, doing so will also be an Israeli interest since it is to Israel's advantage that the Palestinian state is not beset by despair, poverty, and frustration. That will not be the case if the West Bank is part of the "greater" Jordanian kingdom .(1)

Though not entirely wrong, this interpretation has two flaws. First, Jordan would be not be as stable as Eiland would like us to believe. Second, Jordan

(1) Eiland, Regional Alternatives to the Two-State Solution , 2010. P. 27.

may implode from within. On the whole, Jordanians frequently discuss the conspiracy of the 'alternative homeland'. They fear that the identity of the state would be compromised in any resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict other than the two-state solution. This has become more obvious over the last decade as Israeli support for a Palestinian state is has been on the decline. Israeli public support for the establishment of a Palestinian state has shrunk in the past ten years, down to 43% in 2017. Yair Sheleg, from Israel Democracy Institute, makes the case that the alternative homeland option should be revived. In his book, Only the Jordanian Option: No to Annexation, No to Two States, he states that: "If the American president and many others in the West, who now realize the risks they face from unstable Arab countries, are convinced that this would be the best solution, then with the tools they have and the use of the carrot-and-stick approach, they can convince Jordan to move in the desired direction."

To sum up, Jordanians' perception of threat is linked to their identity which has been formed and forged socially over the decades. While there are some serious economic and geo-strategic challenges, the fear of an alternative homeland for Palestinians in Jordan remains the ultimate nightmare. The 'alternative homeland' looks as the eventual and best option for Israel to rid itself of the Palestinian state once and for all and maintain the Jewishness of Israel. For Jordanians, Israel's attempt to solve its demographic dilemma at the expense of Jordan would mean that Jordan would be less Jordanian. Passionate debates rage in Jordan about this issue. The rejection of any confederation with the Palestinians is driven by Jordanians' fears that they would certainly be outnumbered by the Palestinians and immediately become a minority in their own state. Jordan, already inundated with a large number of Palestinian refugees, would be automatically "Palestinized."

Israeli Identity and the Construction of Menace

There is a large body of literature that examines how Israeli mentality shapes Israelis' attitudes towards war and peace. Nowhere in the region has the issue of identity played a greater role in the articulation of threat, and indeed national interest, than in Israel. Identity in Israel is, by and large, based on the belief of shared attributes among Jewish citizens in Israel that sets them apart from other ethnic and religious groups. This in turn creates an inherent sense of belonging to both the Israeli experience and the official narrative of the Zionist movement. These notions, whether real or imagined, serve as the glue that binds Israelis together in an imagined, social whole (Merom, 1999, p. 4. In other words, there is a type of "cognitive harmony" which compels Israelis to rely on no one but themselves or on Israel's military strength.

While Israeli politicians have anchored much of the state's foreign policy to the language of national security, the focus of their narrative has been mainly on the traditional concept of security. However, the security culture that developed in Israel is linked to and driven by identity. Therefore, this national security culture could be defined as a "dominant social construct or frame which provides the parameters within which a state's security 'reality' is discussed, debated and constructed". (1) The key to understanding Israeli foreign policy is an appreciation of the genesis of its position on issues of security, its beliefs, and how the two have been fostered since Israel's establishment. Seen in this way, Israeli leaders' beliefs and perceptions of 'the other' are of paramount relevancy to the state's constructing of menace. These deep-seated and ingrained concepts of the other, long linked to Israel's security, have informed Israel's relations with other Middle Eastern states and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Through this approach, Israeli

(1) Emily, L. & Malz, T. Culture and Security Policy in Israel, 2003.

leaders have adopted security policies which fall into the realist school; self-reliance, deterrence and the maintenance of military status quo (or more accurately, the maintenance of a strategic advantage).

From its start, the central objective of the Zionist movement was always been to find a way to resolve the Jewish question and create a state that would provide Jews with a homeland and protection. The process of in-gathering Jews in Palestine started in 1882 with the first wave of Jewish immigration to the land between the Mediterranean and the River Jordan. Zionism thus came into being as a brand of ethnic nationalism that postulated the Jews as an ethnic nation.(1) Central to the Zionist project was the objective of securing as much land as possible to prepare for the declaration of the state. Throughout this period, the spread of Jewish settlements in Palestine resulted in friction between indigenous Palestinian and Jewish communities.

Given its existence as a Jewish-Zionist state, the religious and ideological lenses are fundamental in shaping Israel's national interests and the way Israelis construct and perceive threats. As Brecher succinctly puts it, Israel's Jewishness "pervades thought, feeling, belief and behavior in the political realm."(2) Throughout Jewish history, there have been many negative connotations, so much so that some argue that Israeli policy is determined by its perceived history of negatives.

With this in mind, one can hold that Jews have a pre-existing identity informed by their perception of their history as a succession of negative events. The recollection of these events has contributed in no small amount to shaping Israeli identity, which constructivists argue has set the course for the formulation of Israel's national security and threat perception. On the whole,

(1) Smooha, S. The Model Of Ethnic Democracy, 2001.PP. 58-59.
(2) Brecher, The Foreign Policy System of Israel: Setting, Images, 1972 . P. 229

Israeli Jews have a deep-seated conviction that other nations hold negative views and intentions toward Jews. Decades of anti-Semitism in Europe and prosecution only reinforced this intrinsic siege mentality. Evidence shows that the shared siege mentality that shaped national identity continues to influence the opinions and voting habits of a sizeable portion of Israeli population to this day.([1])

The mantra that Israel is a "nation that dwells alone" concisely captures the Israeli sense of isolation, victimization, and indeed, insecurity. For this reason, the state was made by and certainly for the Jewish people.([2]) More often than not, Israelis wrap their foreign policy in the language of national security. An immense number of foreign policy decisions were made based on Israeli "concern for the protection of the collective sense of Jewish values, and the preservation of the well-being of Jews elsewhere, and took actions on behalf of Jews all over the world as long as Israel's national interests were not sacrificed."([3])

It is worth noting that the declaration of identity was triggered by two types of threat. First, in the immediate aftermath of the 1948 war, Israeli leaders, for a variety of reasons, underlined the inevitability of the "second round" of war.([4]) This first type is called the "basic" threat. It was as if Israel would always fear another round of conflict with one or more Arab states, which implied the need for an ongoing state of high alert and military readiness.([5]) The security-minded camp in the first decade of Israeli governments following the state's establishment used these threats to justify the continuation of confrontation with

(1) Barari, Israel's Security: Another Perspective, 2006. PP. 629-639.
(2) Brecher, The Foreign Policy System of Israel: Setting, Images, Process, 1972. P. 231.
(3) Barari , Israeli Politics and the Middle East Peace Process (1988-2002), 2004.
(4) Emily, L. & Tamar, M. Culture and Security Policy in Israel, 2003. P.8.
(5) Heller, Continuity and Change in Israeli Security Policy, 2000. P.11.

Israel's neighbors. Second, day-to-day security was also important. Infiltrations by Palestinians who sought to retrieve their property after being expelled by Israeli forces in the 1948 war and border incidents were seen as a threat to day-to-day security. ([1])

Zionism is an extension of the same lens through which Israelis tend to interpret events and threats. Undeniably, Israel is the creation of Zionism. During the 19th century, Zionism emerged as an answer to the phenomenon of anti-Semitism and the failure of assimilation of Jews in Europe, which made Jews feel insecure. Zionism has employed a combination of myths of exile and redemption. Stressing the Holocaust, another negative event in Jewish history, as the most demonstrable example of the need for a Jewish homeland, the Zionist lens provides the 'legitimacy' of Israel's creation as a means for protecting Jewish rights and interests.([2]) For this reason, the discourse and narrative of the Holocaust has gained considerable magnitude in the construction of Israeli identity. Interestingly, since the building of the first Jewish settlements in Palestine, Zionism has emphasized the insecurity of the Jews. First name needed Jobotinsky, for instance, called for an Iron Wall.([3]) Seen in this way, the quest was not for any state, but for one that is secure, sovereign, and Jewish. Up until today, Zionism continues to be the ideology of the state with which an overwhelming majority of Israelis (Jews) identify.([4])

While there have been multiple, varying interpretations, reinterpretations and modifications to the Zionist lens over time, its core beliefs remain unchanged. Above all else, it promotes the continued existence of a Jewish state. Against

(1) Morris, Israel's Border Wars, 1949–1956, Arab Infiltration, Israeli Retaliation and the Countdown to the Suez War, 1993.
(2) Barari , Israeli Politics and the Middle East Peace Process (1988-2002), 2004.
(3) Shlaim, The Iron Wall, Israel and the Arab World , 2000.
(4) Aronoff , M & Aronoff, Y. Explaining Domestic Influences on Current Israel Foreign Policy: The Peace Negotiations, 1996. P.85

this backdrop, one can understand Ariel Sharon's disengagement from Gaza. Moreover, the majority of Israel Jews who support territorial compromise do so out of fear for the identity of the state.

In recent years, changing demographic dynamics have forced Israelis across the spectrum to grapple with the dilemma that lies at the heart of the state's character and identity. Can Israel be both Jewish and democratic? Certainly, the most salient existential threat Israelis face today is the demographic threat. Several scholars make the case that changing demographic trends in the area stretching between the Mediterranean and the River Jordan would eventually render Jews a minority. In other words, the Palestinians constitute a demographic threat to the Jewish identity of Israel. In an interview given to Israeli Daily Haaretz on January 22, 2019, Israeli historian Benny Morris voiced a deep pessimism and a sense of threat derived from identity. In his words, "This place will decline like a Middle Eastern state with an Arab majority. The violence between the different populations, within the state, will increase. The Arabs will demand the return of the refugees. The Jews will remain a small minority within a large Arab sea of Palestinians, a persecuted or slaughtered minority, as they were when they lived in Arab countries. Those among the Jews who can, will flee to America and the West.([1])

The demographic threat to a Jewish majority is often repeated in Israeli public debates and news. More specifically, public debate in Israel revolves around the question of how to sustain a Jewish and democratic state. Ever since its conception, the Zionist movement has sought to maintain a demographic dominance and a Jewish identity for the state of Israel. With the onset of the new millennium, Israeli governments have enhanced their securitization. The

(1) Morris, Haaretz, January 22, 2019.

looming demographic threat to the Jewish identity of the state still instills fear in the society.(1)

The driving force behind this deep securitization is existential threat. If anything, Zionists frame demographic shifts as an existential threat. Securitization rationalizes actions to overcome threats. To invoke security threats is also to justify the state's use of force and mobilization of powers to confront and contain existential threats.(2) For this reason, Israelis resorted to ethnic democracy as a model of ruling. The Jewish-Zionist nature of the state is indeed inherently anchored in the state's identity. The most recent example of this welding of Zionism with national identity is the Israeli Knesset's 2018 passing of the Nation-State Law.

The new law clashed with Israeli Arabs' attempts to push a de-ethnicization of the state. For their part, Israeli Arabs draw a distinction between Israel's existence as a state and its Jewish-Zionist character. While they acknowledge Israel's right to exist within the 1967 borders and reconcile themselves to the status of a minority within it, they are opposed to, or at the very least have deep reservations over, the concept of Israel as a Jewish-Zionist state.

In the case of Israel, there is a strong link between nation-building and people's collective memory. During the British Mandate of Palestine and the state's formative years, Jewish leaders deliberately nurtured and promoted an official narrative based on identity. Metaphors were also employed to get the society to act together as a cohesive whole. In the first decade after Israel's establishment, the official Zionist narrative was an integral strategy to keep internal difference at bay, given the "imminent" threat posed by the Arabs who

(1) Abulof, U. Deep Securitization and Israel's Demographic Demon , 2014. PP. 396-415.
(2) Barry ; Waever & De Wilde, Security: A New Framework for Analysis, 1998. PP. 22-23.

were bent on the "politicide" of Israel. Jews in Palestine were depicted as David whereas the Arabs were presented as Goliath.

In a nutshell, identity has determined much of the threats perceived by Israel. Since the vast majority of Israelis believe that Israel should survive as both Jewish and democratic, the presence of Palestinians will continue to pose a threat. It follows that Israeli policy vis-à-vis the Palestinians is driven by the need to maintain the Jewish/ demographic identity of the state.

Conclusion: Theoretical Observations

The role of identity in the construction of threat is, like all other concepts of social sciences, riddled with contests between various IR paradigms. Whether identity informs the process of constructing threat is a hotly-debated issue. This paper offers an alternative analysis to the dominant positivist-rationalist approaches that have examined Israelis' and Jordanians' construction of threat.

Neorealists underscore the importance of material factors simply because power is seen as the best indicator of threat, and because it is relatively not hard to measure. Hence, a materialist account of international relations is the one that expounds causation through reference to material reality that exists independent of ideas. In contrast, many constructivists tend to focus exclusively on ideational factors. Typically, national identities are placed within a broader historical narrative. This is obvious everywhere in the world. But narratives themselves serve as a key mechanism to construct a collective identity and a collective memory. At the heart of constructing a sound narrative are the participants themselves.([1]) Arguments that inflame passions could lead to conflicts and wars driven by the identity of the enemy (Arabs, Jews, Serbs, Catholics, Protestants, etc…) are of relative importance.

(1) Shibley & Barnett, Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East , 2002. P.66.

And yet, identity is all but static. Given the fact that identity is in flux, the formation of collective identity is a continuous cultural and political process. To be specific, collective identity is an ongoing struggle over the demarcation of the borders of inclusion and exclusion in a given society. It follows that a line of "us" vs. "them" is clearly drawn and therefore sets social psychological processes in motion. In many cases, what may start as a simple cognitive demarcation can easily turn into a reified frontier.

This study has shown how constructivists take ideas and norms seriously. It has also highlighted how identity confers agency on others and that for this reason constructivism can provide a theory of agency, something that all structural theories failed to do. The focus on the duality of structure and agency is one of the hallmarks of constructivism. One of its contributions is that the outcome is function of the process itself. Seen in this way, one could argue that constructivism – an approach that gained currency in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War – has seized a middle ground between the protagonists of the third debate (positivism and post-positivism). Besides postmodernism, reflectivism and poststructuralist, constructivism comes under the rubric of critical theory.

As far as constructivism is concerned, both Jordan and Israel attach importance to the material components of threat construction. And yet, in both cases, the structures of sociality are by far over the structures of materiality. Threat perception in both countries is not exogenously constructed but rather socially-constructed. Israel still views threats from a Jewish-Zionist lens through which every perceived threat is filtered. The deep securitization with regards to the 'demographic time-bomb' should be understood through this lens.

Israeli Jews have deep-seated conviction that other nations hold negative views and intentions toward Jews. Decades of anti-Semitism and persecution in

Europe, the culmination of the Holocaust, only reinforced this deeply-embedded siege mentality. This paper makes the case that siege mentality has discouraged Israelis from embarking on proper peacemaking with the Palestinians. Indeed, the collective siege mentality has shaped much of Israel's attitudes and behaviors toward the worlds, particularly the Palestinians.

Nowhere has Israel's siege mentality been more apparent than in its conduct of peacemaking with the Palestinians. This paper makes the case that Israelis' collective siege mentality has played an important role in Zionist convictions and ideology. As this article showed, the hegemony and supremacy of this notion has caused mistrust and negative attitude towards the world in general and particularly, the Palestinians.

By the same token, Jordan's fears of the grave consequences of a change of its identity compel the country to advocate for a two-state solution. The survival of Jordanian identity is a top priority for the vast majority of Jordanians and this has conditioned the country's policy preferences for over four decades. At this point, one should also revisit the work of Stephan Walt on the origins of alliance to understand state's preferences of alliances. To be sure, Walt has come up with the balance of threat concept as modification of realists' argument on alliance theory. The threat is not determined. It is the conviction of this study that Jordan's construction of threat is based mainly on the country's perception of threats.

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