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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The articles in the Spring 2022 issue of *Al Noor* all explore the intersections of politics and identity in the Middle East in unique and thought-provoking ways. Each of the three articles reminds us not only that the personal is political, but also that the political can be highly personal. They affirm the importance of identity to contemporary politics, while also showing that "identity politics" is far from a new phenomenon.

Opening the issue is Ernest Daniel Fleischer's "Layered Strategies: The Intersection of Violence and Advocacy in the PLO." Fleischer analyzes the tactics used by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), arguing that the PLO was mostly successful in mixing violent and non-violent tactics to balance the weaknesses of each approach. In particular, he examines how the PLO's violent tactics helped to create and spread global awareness of a Palestinian national identity, which later helped the PLO transition to non-violent advocacy.

Next, in "The Life of Sassoon Hesqel: The Zenith of Jewish Integration into the Modern Iraqi State," Nitin Rao uses the life of Sassoon Hesqel, a Jewish Iraqi statesman, as a lens through which to explore Jewish incorporation into Iraqi politics and culture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He examines Jewish education in Iraq, the creation of an Iraqi national identity, and the tensions within Iraq created by Zionism and the establishment of Israel.

Annaliese Gould closes the issue with "Depictions and Narratives of Religious Women in Post-Revolution Iranian Propaganda." In her article, Gould draws on communication theory and feminist cultural analysis to analyze propaganda posters created after the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79. Gould shows how representations of women were central to the consolidation of the revolutionary state. She identifies three narratives about women that are contained in the posters: 1) women as "quintessential martyrs," 2) women as active participants in the revolution, and 3) women as members of their respective communities.

I hope you enjoy reading the Spring 2022 issue of *Al Noor*, and I would like to extend my gratitude to everyone who has made this issue possible, especially our authors, the journal staff, and the members of the Center for Centers at Boston College.

If you are interested in learning more about *Al Noor,* viewing past editions of the journal, or submitting your own work for consideration, please visit our website www.bcalnoor.org. As always, comments, questions and suggestions are welcome at bcalnoor@gmail.com.

Josh Fording '22
Editor-in-Chief

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Layered Strategies

The Intersection of Violence and Advocacy in the PLO

Ernest Daniel Fleischer

Ernest Daniel Fleischer is a 2021 graduate of Oberlin College where he received a BA in international politics and focused specifically on decolonial approaches to the field. Ernest also studied theater and French, which he is now putting to use as an English and theater teacher for elementary school students in Paris, France.

When Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel shook hands in front of President Bill Clinton in Washington, DC, in 1993, onlookers around the world hoped that the bloody, decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict might soon come to an end. This handshake represented the work being done on both sides to move towards peace through a series of agreements known as the Oslo Accords. While the Oslo Accords were deeply flawed and fell short of any of the PLO's foundational goals, they are also the closest that anyone has come to lasting peace in Israel-Palestine. They embodied the PLO's first concrete step towards Palestinian self-governance since the organization's founding in 1964. They allowed the PLO to return to the occupied Palestinian territories after decades of exile and set up a semi-autonomous governing body. The

PLO's position as a legitimate representative for the Palestinian people in communication with Israeli leadership was the product of a decades-long uphill battle.

If one compared an Israeli description of the PLO in its first 25 years with an Arab description of the PLO, the two images would be irreconcilable. To Israel, the PLO and Fatah, the ruling party within the PLO, were purely enemy terrorist organizations. As the Israeli peace advocate, former Knesset member, and former leader in the Israeli armed services Ami Ayalon commented, "I knew Fatah … first as a terror organization. Second, I met them only on the battlefield. I knew almost nothing about what I understand today [to be] the nuances of the ideology."[1] The Arab world, on the other hand, viewed Fatah and the PLO as the leaders of an essential indigenous rights movement. For example, Palestinian lawyer, writer, and human rights advocate Raja Shehadeh categorizes the PLO as a "liberation movement."[2]

The PLO was, technically, both of those things. The PLO's foundational goals included armed resistance and the eradication of the Israeli state.[3] They actively recruited and trained militant guerilla forces who attacked the Israeli military, hijacked planes, bombed buses full of civilians, and killed Israeli athletes. Israel and the United States both classified the PLO as a terrorist organization until 1991 (although most other countries did not). Simultaneously, the PLO also led the global civil society movement for the rights of Palestinians to return home and govern themselves. They gained support from advocacy groups in the US, such as the Association of Arab-American University Graduates (AAUG) and an array of "Third World" civil rights activists.[4] They also maintained close ties with most Arab governments, and they were supported financially by both China and the Soviet Union. These two parallel storylines show that the PLO, before 1989, was a hybrid organization that employed tactics of both advocacy and violence.

An examination of the PLO from its creation to the end of the Oslo peace process shows that the PLO would not have achieved its current prominence and status as the leader of a people without employing both violent rebellion and advocacy tactics. Political philosophy on the efficacy of political violence often concludes that it is not an effective tactic in achieving the organization's declared goals of influencing state behavior. However, violence can be very effective in achieving "process goals," such as attracting media attention and boosting membership and morale.[5] Conversely, transnational advocacy is more effective in achieving patronage from states and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but these activists often struggle to gain prominence in the competitive arena of global civil society.[6] The PLO provides an example of a non-state actor who used both of these tactics to counter the weaknesses of each strategy and propel itself closer to its goals.

Background on the PLO

Before the creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization, most of the world viewed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as Israeli-Arab, and Palestine was not a widely recognized nation. From one perspective, the Arab world was fighting against racist Zionist settlers who were invading the Arab homeland and the Muslim holy land, displacing and killing Arabs as they went. From the other perspective, Israelis were fighting against antisemitic aggressors trying to stop Jews from returning to their ancestral home and creating a space where Jews could finally be safe and have the power of self-determination. Pan-Arabism, popularized by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, dominated the Arab political arena in the 1950s and 1960s.[7] Nasser, along with other Arab leaders, viewed Israelis as invaders and hoped to expel them from Israel-Palestine and repatriate the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs that had fled from their homes during the 1948 nakba. The pan-Arab movement and the fact that Arab states were willing to go to war with Israel allowed Palestinian Arabs to rely on Arab states to be their champions.Therefore, there was no centralized Palestinian leadership.[8]

"[T]he PLO would not have achieved its current prominence and status as the leader of a people without employing both violent rebellion and advocacy tactics."

International framing of the Arab-Israeli conflict slowly morphed into a Palestinian-Israeli conflict after the 1967 Six-Day War. During the Six-Day War, Israel handily beat a coalition of Arab states and conquered and occupied a number of historically Arab territories. In the wake of this war, Arab states backed down from their militant positions against Israel, and it quickly became clear that they could not be champions for the Palestinian people. In their place, the PLO emerged as an independent representative for Palestinians.

The PLO was originally created by a coalition of states called the Arab League, but it developed its own agenda once Fatah, a grassroots Palestinian armed resistance group, took control of it. The Arab League created the PLO as a legitimate body through which existing Palestinian political groups could act. According to the founding summit's official report, the Arab League founded the PLO in 1964 with the mission of "organizing the Palestinian people and enabling them to play their role in the liberation of their country and their self-determination."[9] The original Palestinian National Charter of 1964 outlined its founding ideology and goals of "national unity, national mobilization, and liberation."[10] The original charter also claimed the entire British Mandate territory as Palestine and asserted Palestinians' right to self-determination and self-governance, but it did not explicitly endorse violence. Fatah (Arabic for "Conquest" or "Opening"), the eventual leader of the PLO, was first founded separately in 1959. The group's full name is Harakat al-Tahrir al-Watani al-Filastini, translated as the Palestinian National Liberation Movement. Fatah was created as an underground Palestinian nationalist armed resistance group in a time when the dominant narrative in the Palestinian diaspora was that of pan-Arabism.[11] Fatah took control of the PLO in 1968, using their growing number of seats on the PLO's legislative body, the Palestinian National Council (PNC), and their coalition of sympathizers to elect Yasser Arafat, one of the founders of Fatah, as chairman.[12] Arafat remained chairman of the PLO until his death in 2004. The new PNC also made updates to the PLO's charter, adding language that highlighted Palestinian nationalism and a statement endorsing violence, saying that "armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine."[13] The version of the PLO that the world knows is the version that came into being with the new national charter of 1968.

The PLO as a Hybrid Organization

Non-state actors can pursue their causes in many ways, with varying degrees of force. On one end of the spectrum of tactics is violence, and on the other end is advocacy. Both violent insurgents and transnational advocacy networks are the subjects of substantial bodies of research. The existing literature identifies particular traits of each framework, including the strengths and weaknesses of each type of non-state actor. However, some organizations combine these tactics into a layered approach, as the PLO did in its first few decades.

One important analysis of insurgent violence, devised by Max Abrahms, concludes that while such tactics can often successfully achieve process goals, they rarely, if ever, achieve their outcome goals.[14] Outcome goals are an organization's stated ends.[15] Violent insurgents' stated ends are often ambiguous or unrealistic, making them almost impossible to achieve.[16] Additionally, achieving outcome goals usually requires a change in the target state's behavior, but violent attacks on a state usually lead the state to reinforce its hardline stances and even to violently overreact to insurgent threats. Conversely, process goals sustain the group and increase its prominence by attracting media attention and boosting membership and morale. Often, these achievements are enhanced by government overreaction, which attracts more

The flag of Fatah (MrPenguin20 via Wikimedia Commons)

media attention and motivates member outrage.[17] Consequently, violent insurgence is often effective in raising attention and rallying support, but not in achieving a movement's actual stated goals. I apply Abrahm's theories on violent insurgency to any violence committed by the PLO against Israeli targets.

While violent insurgents struggle to influence states, transnational advocacy networks (TANs), as defined by Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, specialize in agenda-setting and influencing the behavior of states, international organizations, and private actors to achieve their goals. TANs are webs of voluntary, reciprocal relationships among civil society groups who work across state borders to promote causes and principled ideas.[18] They arise when "channels between domestic groups and their governments are blocked or hampered or where such channels are ineffective for resolving a conflict," among other factors.[19] TANs set into motion a "boomerang" pattern to get around these blocked channels wherein advocacy groups garner support from other powerful state or non-state actors.[20] TANs influence these actors by utilizing information politics as well as material and moral leverage.[21] The channels between the PLO and Israel for resolving their conflict are certainly hampered and ineffective. As a response, the PLO works within several TANs, including the Palestinian diaspora, human rights networks, and "global Third World" advocates, in order to influence states and international organizations.[22]

However, Clifford Bob has shown that activist movements, especially from the global South, often struggle to "pitch" and "match" their cause to obtain media attention and support from more powerful NGOs, states, or international organizations. Many view principled global civil society groups as altruistic agents who sponsor any worthy causes. However, Bob posits that "global civil society may be less a realm of altruistic behavior than a competitive arena in which many weak groups vie for the attention of potential patrons."[23] Consequently, social movements must successfully pitch their causes to the world to gain support by skillfully and charismatically navigating international media and NGO networks.[24] Even if a movement knows how to navigate these spaces, it may not win supporters if its cause does not match the goals of the actors it is attempting to influence. In this case, the group must match and reshape its goals to better suit possible supporters' interests.[25] Bob's theory critiques the ability of a social movement to achieve its goals on its own terms. Many worthy movements do not gain traction internationally, and those that do must adapt to the will of their supporters. The PLO is less hampered by the hurdle of pitching due to its high-profile armed attacks, which propelled the Palestinian story into prominent international media. The PLO arguably also had to match its cause as the organization matured in order to gain new allies and open channels of communication with mediator states such as Norway.

By applying the above theories to the PLO, I will analyze how combining advocacy and violence works in practice. These theories all explain the PLO's actions and varying success in different ways. The best way to get a full picture of a hybrid organization such as the PLO is to synthesize the interactions among all of its strategies.

Research Design

This paper explores how violence's efficacy in accomplishing process goals and transnational advocacy's successful track record in setting agendas and influencing state behavior can be used in tandem to counter each framework's weaknesses. Acts of militant resistance and the resulting state overreaction can attract media headlines in a way that social movements rarely do, shooting the organization behind the attack into global prominence, increasing the group's membership, and sparking a debate around the organization's cause. Once the organization has ample access to media, it can employ TAN tactics to shape the agenda regarding international debates surrounding the organization's cause. Similarly, the group can mobilize sympathizers around the world to influence their states or take action in other ways. However, it is difficult to positively influence a target state's behavior while also violently attacking said state. Many states, including Israel, have a policy of not negotiating with people or organizations they view as terrorists. Studies in various countries also show that violent insurgency boosts support for hawkish electoral blocs that take intransigent positions against violent forces.[26]

This study identifies two sets of specific criteria in evaluating the PLO's actions in order to isolate the political effects of violence and transnational advocacy. The results of violent actions can be identified by focusing on the direct global responses to a few of the PLO's most prominent attacks and self-described "counterterrorism" actions taken by Israel against the PLO and the Palestinian people. Advocacy tactics will be explored through the PLO's coordination and exchange of ideas with global civil society and its engagement with states that were open to a constructive relationship.

In order to delve into the intricacies of the PLO's actions, this paper draws on existing theories on non-state actors and analytical published works on the PLO's history, as well as the published writings and speeches of PLO leaders and my original interviews with prominent peace advocates Raja Shehadeh and Ami Ayalon, who are Palestinian and Israeli, respectively.

Raja Shehadeh is a Palestinian lawyer and writer with whom I exchanged emails about his experience and opinions on the PLO's relationship with both violence and advocacy. Shehadeh is a co-founder of Al-Haq (est. 1979), one of the oldest Palestinian human rights organizations in the world. He also served as a legal advisor to PLO leadership during their negotiations in Washington, DC, in 1991.

Ami Ayalon is a retired Israeli military officer and former Knesset member who participated in a virtual interview covering the same topics as that of Raja Shehadeh. Ayalon is a co-founder of the Israeli-Palestinian peace initiative The People's Voice, which aims to collect as many signatures from Israelis and Palestinians as possible for a peace plan guideline that he established with Palestinian professor Sari Nusseibeh. Before retiring, Ayalon served as the director of Shin Bet (Israel's internal security service), the commander of the Israeli Navy, and a commando with Flotilla 13, Israel's equivalent of the US Navy SEALs. Ayalon also served as a Knesset member for the Labor party from 2006 to 2009.

Effects of Militancy and Advocacy

Effects of Militancy

The PLO used violent tactics mainly to achieve global awareness, garner recognition for a Palestinian national identity, and increase membership. All of these effects benefited process goals and did not directly affect the PLO's progress towards its outcome goals.

Fatah's mission of nationalist armed resistance rapidly became popular in the late 1960s, causing a boom in membership and a quick rise to primacy within the Palestinian diaspora. Fatah's first high-profile, successful use of force was its defense of the village of Karameh. In March 1968, after a series of smaller attacks on guerilla posts in Jordan, Israel launched an attack on Karameh, which held much of Fatah's command network. Israel's force was 15,000 strong, and Fatah only had 300 fighters. However, Fatah was prepared, it was in familiar territory, and it had access to Jordanian artillery. Fatah successfully defended the village, albeit with heavy casualties (about 120 killed).[27] As stories of the encounter spread throughout Arab news media, much of the Arab world began to see Fatah as a champion for them all. Armed resistance suddenly seemed like a viable option for combatting Zionism, which sparked a huge uptick in membership. Fatah received an estimated 5,000 new volunteer applications in just the 48 hours following the defense of Karameh.[28]

By 1970 new guerilla groups were sprouting up everywhere, and Fatah and other Palestinian militant groups had trained between 30,000 and 50,000 fighters just in Jordan.[29] Fatah's boosted membership from specific instances of armed resistance closely follows Abrahms' theory on the efficacy of violent insurgence.

Israel's responses to PLO attacks also conformed well to Abrahms' classification of states' violent overreactions to insurgence, further fueling the PLO's membership growth. For example, in the months after the 1967 war, Fatah tried to establish guerilla networks in the West Bank. In response, Israel "demolished the houses of suspected guerrilla sympathizers, imposed rigid and

"The PLO used violent tactics mainly to achieve global awareness, garner recognition for a Palestinian national identity, and increase membership."

"The Dawson's Field hijackings were seen as a public relations coup for the PLO."

economically debilitating curfews on villages accused of harboring guerrillas, and rounded up network after network of suspected guerrilla activists into Israeli jails - more than 1,000 of them detained without trial before the end of 1967."[30] This overreaction was encouraged by Fatah in its early years because Israeli responses "galvanized the Arab people."[31] However, as the PLO became more of a threat, Israeli violence in response to attacks only grew. In response to the PLO's 1978 Coastal Road Massacre, which was its deadliest attack ever (37 civilians dead), Israel invaded Lebanon to push the PLO back from the Israeli border. During this invasion, the IDF killed 1,000-2,000 Palestinians and Lebanese, many of them civilians.[32] While the Israeli invasion did spark outrage, it was also devastating to PLO forces.

The PLO's more controversial attacks against civilians also received immense media attention, propelling it onto the global stage and keeping the Palestinian struggle at the forefront of the minds of the international public. Two of the PLO's biggest successful attacks against civilians were the plane hijackings in Dawson's Field in 1970 and the Munich Massacre in 1972. No civilians were hurt in the Dawson's Field hijackings, but four planes full of civilians were taken hostage, and the empty planes were later blown up as a show of force for news outlets to capture.[33] In response to the airplane hostage crisis, multiple European governments released several of their own hostage PLO members. The Dawson's Field hijackings were seen as a public relations coup for the PLO.[34] Two years later, operatives from another branch of the PLO, the Black September Organization, carried out another high profile mission at the Munich Olympics. The BSO was a guerilla group named after the "Black September" of 1970, when the Jordanian government expelled the PLO from the country, resulting in the death of thousands of Palestinians. The BSO's exact ties to the PLO are unclear, with some accounts stating that it was created spontaneously by low-ranking PLO members (some of whom were Fatah) and others that allege that the BSO was created and controlled directly by Fatah leadership.[35] The Munich Massacre began when a team of BSO operatives killed two Israeli athletes and took nine others hostage at the biggest sporting event in the world. During the hostage crisis, almost every news channel in the world was trained on the unfolding events at the Munich Olympics. By the end of the attack, all 11 Israeli athletes were dead, and "world opinion was forced to take note of the Palestinian drama," as PLO leader Salah Khalaf put it.[36] While Khalaf and others noted the strategic gain from the Munich Massacre, many Palestinians thought that the attack went too far and saw the event as a setback that alienated the PLO from outsiders who might have otherwise been sympathetic to the cause. Fatah leadership severed ties with Black September in the same year.[37] While these two events were some of the most prominent in the PLO's decades of violence, the organization continued to make headlines with its attacks on Israelis into the 1980s.

In addition to making the news, the PLO's mission of armed resistance was likely a major component in gaining international recognition of a Palestinian national identity. While it is difficult to establish causality for the spread of an idea, both Ami Ayalon and Raja Shehadeh suggest that the establishment of the Palestinian national identity on the world stage is the greatest accomplishment of the violent tactics employed by the PLO. Ayalon stated, "I have no doubt that the PLO played a major role or probably the major role in the creation of [a Palestinian] nationality. … I'm not sure that from the academic point of view, we can accept the idea of a [Palestinian] people as a result of the use of violence. I have no idea, probably yes."[38] Similarly, Shehadeh highlighted the accomplishments of violent tactics while pointing out the lack of progress towards outcome goals.

> The Palestinian suffering and narrative were not recognized by the world. The Palestinians were not recognized as a people. The use of armed resistance against Israel as well as such acts as the hijacking of planes was used by some PLO factions to raise attention to the Palestinian cause. They succeeded in that but without making progress in attaining rights for the Palestinian people or winning liberation.[39]

The PLO's success in boosting membership and getting media attention through violent tactics allowed the PLO to avoid the hurdle of pitching and matching its cause in the way that more traditional social movements do. The PLO did not have to climb its way to a spot in the competitive arena of global media because it instead demanded the attention of the world. Additionally, the PLO did not have to match its goals to patrons. Before 1988, the PLO maintained its hardline goals, which included eradicating the state of Israel and the Zionist movement. While this goal would once have been considered achievable, by the time the PLO emerged as the leader for the Palestinian people, it was clear that Israel's statehood was very secure. Abrahms would likely argue that the PLO used the strategic strengths of violent insurgency to overcome one of the more challenging obstacles faced by social movements acting within TANs.

Effects of Advocacy

Transnational advocacy has been an integral part of the PLO since its conception, and it slowly built a wide coalition of supporters over the years, working through a variety of TANs. The PLO's network started with Arab states, then expanded to China, Russia, Eastern Bloc states, some African countries, American activists, and international organizations such as the UN. Some of these supporters, including the UN, supported the Palestinian right to self-determination and the repatriation of Palestinian refugees but did not support armed resistance or the elimination of Zionism.[40] The PLO obtained these supporters by working through TANs focused on pan-Arab solidarity, transracial solidarity, leftist ideology, anti-American imperialism, and human rights frameworks, to name a few.[41] As veteran Fatah organizer Hani al-Hassan said in 1980, "In the Palestinian arena, we should not forget that the armed struggle sows while the political struggle reaps."[42]

A memorial to the 1972 Munich Massacre committed by the PLO. (Avishai Teicher via Wikimedia Commons)

The entire Arab world supported the Palestinian cause before the PLO was even created, so it is not surprising that this bloc of countries has consistently been the PLO's staunchest supporter. The PLO has based itself in Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia at various points in its development, and each country has provided active support for the group. Other Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia, consistently supplied arms to the PLO.[43] These states also helped to expand the PLO's circle of influence. For example, Egyptian President Nasser introduced Arafat to Soviet leadership in 1968, which led to a sustained relationship between the PLO and the USSR in which the USSR provided lasting support.[44]

Additionally, the PLO independently established an indispensable diplomatic relationship with China. The first contact between China and Palestinian advocates was around the same time as the PLO's founding in 1964. Relations were first established with the Chinese Committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity (CCAAS). PLO leadership also met with Chariman Mao Zedong during their first trip to Beijing and established a permanent mission in the city.[45] Advocates pitched the Palestinian cause as a native people engaged in a "popular struggle" against Israel and US imperialists.[46] This narrative meshed with the ideology behind Mao's Cultural Revolution, which supported leftist politics, subversion of US imperialism, and transracial solidarity.[47] China started as one of the PLO's most important supporters in 1964, but by the early 1970s, when the PLO had developed a more diverse support network, China's importance to the movement faded.[48] China specifically supported the PLO's mission of armed resistance and sent an estimated $5 million in arms to Palestinians between 1965 and 1969 alone.[49] The

PLO's relationship with China is an example of its layered tactics at work, in which it used advocacy to strengthen its firepower.

The PLO's second major non-Arab patron was the Soviet Union, which was also actively courted by PLO leadership. Fatah leaders fostered links with the Soviet Union after being introduced through Egyptian President Nasser. Regular communication resulted in an official PLO delegation, led by Arafat, visiting Moscow for the first time in 1970.[50] The Soviet Union's rhetoric in support of the PLO was strong, but their action was lacking. For example, the Soviets gave a stern warning to Israel in response to Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, implying that the USSR would defend Lebanon and the PLO. However, this material backing never appeared.[51] Strong language without material follow-through was common among supporters of the PLO, and that significantly hampered the PLO's ability to influence Israel. In this instance, the Soviets were cautious of their stance with the PLO due to their rivalry with China, and the Soviets did not want to back the same group as Mao. The Soviets were more reformist, hoping the PLO would join peace talks in phases, while Mao was a hardline revolutionary.[52] Soviet support for Palestinians was also clearly self-interested, as opposed to Mao's more ostensibly principled stance.[53]

Finally, the PLO gained support from civil society groups worldwide, with particularly high-profile activity in the US. Arafat pitched the Palestinian cause as a "Third World" struggle as early as 1969, when in an interview, he addressed revolutionaries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, stating that "our struggle is part and parcel of every struggle against imperialism, injustice, and oppression in the world."[54] The PLO began to develop a close relationship with the Association of Arab-American University Graduates (AAUG) in the late 1970s, which proved very helpful in building a coalition of American activists. The AAUG successfully pitched the Palestinian struggle to a diverse set of communities that also grappled with racism, imperialism, and colonialism.[55] As a result, the PLO gained allies among Black Americans, Africans, South Asians, and other "global Third World" communities.[56] In 1979, a delegation of Black American leaders and media representatives visited the PLO in Lebanon, met with Arafat, and vocally supported the Palestinian cause.[57] The delegation was led by Jack O'Dell, a prominent member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the head of Pacifica Radio. The PLO's communication with American activists was an instance of the PLO attempting to employ what Keck and Sikkink would call the boomerang effect, wherein an organization that is suppressed in its home country relies on advocacy groups in more democratic countries to pressure their governments into intervening.[58] However, despite the broad base of allies within the "Third World," transracial solidarity, and human rights TANs, the US never embraced the PLO over Israel.

As the PLO grew its base of supporters both within the Palestinian diaspora and throughout the world, it increasingly gained legitimacy. One by one, states and non-state actors began making statements supporting Palestinians' right to statehood. Most importantly, the PLO reached a threshold of support in 1974 in which they gained official legitimacy both through the Arab League and through the UN. The Arab League recognized the PLO as the sole representative for the Palestinian people, and the UN General Assembly granted the PLO status as a "permanent observer." While these accomplishments were only the first steps on the PLO's long and unfinished road to Palestinian statehood, they marked the beginning of real progress. When asked about the PLO's success through advocacy, Raja Shehadeh stated that the PLO's globally recognized legitimacy is one of its greatest achievements.[59] The PLO's sustained effort to establish and maintain ties around the world also allowed it to shape its narrative of fighting against oppression through armed resistance. As discussed below, however, the PLO's only concrete step towards its outcome goals came after it renounced violence.

Renouncing Violence: A Strategic Move

While violence was integral to making the PLO prominent enough to act as a negotiating partner with Israel, the PLO then had to renounce violence in order to have any positive influence on Israel's behavior. As long as Israel saw the PLO as a terrorist organization, there would be no negotiations. The PLO slowly started moving away from armed

"The PLO's change in tactics first and foremost allowed previously hesistant countries to establish diplomatic relations with the PLO and broker peace talks."

resistance and focused more on diplomacy after it was pushed out of Lebanon in 1982 and no longer had a good staging ground for armed strikes.[60] This move away from violence did not become official until 1988. Amid the First Intifada, a popular Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank, the Palestinian National Council signed a document known as the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, accepting the creation of a Palestinian state solely in the West Bank and Gaza, and renouncing violence. Arafat himself renounced violence and recognized the state of Israel two months later in an address to the UN.[61] These two moves marked a drastic change in strategy within the PLO. The organization's renunciation of violence along with its step back from infeasible goals characteristic of violent insurgent organizations (e.g., the eradication of the Israeli state) lent it newfound legitimacy on the world stage.

The PLO's change in tactics first and foremost allowed previously hesitant countries to establish diplomatic relations with the PLO and broker peace talks. As Raja Shehadeh states, "The renunciation of violence allowed some like the Scandinavian countries to recognize the PLO and open diplomatic missions and provide funding for the Palestinian Authority."[62] Among these Scandinavian countries is Norway, which brokered the 1991 back-channel peace talks in which PLO and Israeli leadership spoke face-to-face for the first time, resulting in the Oslo Accords. Additionally, the renunciation of violence also led the US to feel more comfortable working directly with the PLO, and they began an official "dialogue" with the PLO shortly after.[63] In giving up violence, the PLO could be seen as finally "matching" their cause, to use the language of Clifford Bob, in order to gain support from the UN, the US, and Scandinavian countries in addition to gaining recognition from Israel.

The PLO's move to get to the negotiating table also solidified its power in a moment when its authority as the leaders of the Palestinian movement was in danger. The PLO was based in Tunisia because it had been expelled from Lebanon when Israel invaded in 1982, and Israel had never allowed the PLO to keep any personnel in the Occupied Territories. Many Palestinians in the Occupied Territories felt disconnected from the PLO and felt that the PLO was not delivering results that improved their daily lives.[64] The younger generation of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories decided to take matters into their own hands and began a popular uprising in 1987, which included mass peaceful protests, boycotts, and strikes, as well as violent riots and stone-throwing.[65] This movement, which became known as the First Intifada, utilized layered strategies much like the PLO but with slightly different aims and more grassroots mobilization. The spike in activity inside Palestine challenged the PLO's power, especially because the PLO could only operate remotely.

The PLO faced harsh criticism and challenges from both moderate and radical Palestinian groups. Many Palestinians in the Occupied Territories disliked the PLO's declining use of force and instead supported more militant organizations such as Hamas. Hamas, which countered the PLO's secularism with Islamist ideology, gained massive popularity in Gaza soon after the start of the First Intifada, and the organization took more extreme stances than the PLO in favor of violence against Israel. Conversely, more moderate factions of the Intifada pushed the PLO to renounce violence. As Ami Ayalon recounted, "they told [Arafat], look, you are sitting in Tunisia. You don't know what is happening here. You don't feel the humiliation, et cetera, et cetera, the daily occupation, and if you will not accept the idea of two states as the vision or the goal of the Fatah, we shall not recognize you as our leader."[66] Consequently, the PLO needed to get results soon to keep its primacy within the Palestinian arena, and the diplomatic feat of the Oslo peace process made that possible.

While the PLO's renunciation of violence allowed it to

achieve more through advocacy than ever before, the threat of violence from other Palestinian groups was still a vital aspect of its power. Israel needed an incentive to come to the negotiating table, and they were happy with the Israeli-Palestinian power dynamic at the time. The only real cost incurred for not making peace with Palestinians was the possibility of armed attacks from Palestinian militants. After the PLO renounced violence, the biggest threats to Israeli security were the Intifada and Hamas, neither of which the PLO could control from Tunisia. These threats are what drove the Israeli government to the negotiating table.[67] As Ron Pundak, Israeli professor and one of the Oslo negotiators, recounted, "The Intifada is back, and violence is reaching new extremes … we sense that the matter is urgent. … we met with the PLO and discovered we had a partner."[68] Thus, even after the PLO had renounced violence, it still leveraged violence committed by other Palestinians to strengthen its diplomatic position with Israel.

Despite the advantages that came with the PLO reshaping its goals, this drastic shift did not come without consequences. While the PLO gained legitimacy internationally, they lost legitimacy in the eyes of many Palestinians. To the Palestinian people, armed resistance and the goal of a Palestinian state that encompassed all of Israel-Palestine were still integral aspects of their cause. Arab opposition labeled Arafat a traitor to the Palestinian cause, and threats were made on his life.[69] Israeli violence against Palestinians also did not slow, and multiple high-profile massacres occurred in the Occupied Territories during the Oslo peace process. The continued bloodshed provoked Palestinian outrage and disappointment in the PLO. As Mahmoud Al-Zahar, co-founder of Hamas, stated in an interview at the time, “People now are totally convinced with the attitude of Hamas after the massacres. … [Fatah is] going to lose much of the support of the people who believed in Fatah at the time. … yes, everybody is angry actually, and it is expected for revenge.”[70] Another aspect of the PLO's lost legitimacy in the eyes of Palestinians was its acceptance of the terminology of terrorism, which Arafat announced in his speech to the UN in 1988. Palestinian advocate and lawyer Raja Shehadeh noted, "I believe that by submitting to the Israeli terminology of calling

From left to right: Yitzhak Rabin, Bill Clinton, and Yasser Arafat meet in 1993 to negotiate the Oslo Accords (Abarrategi via Wikimedia Commons)

legitimate resistance to the occupation terrorism, the PLO lost legitimacy and effectiveness as a liberation movement."[71]

Renouncing Violence: Timing

The PLO could have handled the timing of its renunciation of violence better. If the PLO had given up violence sooner, then it would have come to the negotiating table in a much stronger position, and it might have obtained more concessions from Israel. The organization was at its strongest in the mid-1970s when it was based in a country that bordered Israel, it had recently been granted observer status by the UN, it had political and economic support from virtually all Arab states and the USSR (among others), and it was the undisputed leader of the Palestinian people.[72] Once the PLO's mission was recognized internationally, violent tactics stopped serving the organization and quickly became a liability. For example, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1978 in response to the Coastal Road Massacre resulted in the deaths of over 1,000 Palestinians and Lebanese, and it displaced over 100,000 people.[73] Israel then invaded Lebanon again in 1982 in response to an assassination attempt that Israel blamed on the PLO, even though a different Palestinian group actually carried it out.[74] This invasion ultimately destroyed the PLO's base in Lebanon and forced the leadership into exile in North Africa. The PLO's exile led to the rise of rival Palestinian groups in the Occupied Territories. By the time the PLO reached the negotiating table in 1991, Israel had exiled it to North Africa; it had lost backing from the USSR, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Kuwait (because the USSR was dissolved and the PLO fumbled its reaction to the Gulf crisis in 1990-91); and it had Palestinian rivals, such as Hamas.[75] Consequently, the PLO had a much weaker position at the negotiating table than it would have had 15 years earlier. Raja Shehadeh pointed out the weakened state of the PLO, commenting, "The PLO's weakness is reflected in the shoddy deal it made with Israel which did not (for example) include a condition that Israel would cease building Jewish settlements in the [Occupied Territories]."[76] Shehadeh referred to the two agreements signed during the Oslo negotiations in 1993 and 1995.

The PLO's case suggests that the timing of a transition from violence to nonviolence in a layered strategy is key. Further research is needed on cases of transition from violence to nonviolence in order to detect patterns in successful transitions. However, it seems that the optimal time to transition is after the organization has obtained international recognition but before the target state is provoked into a full military offensive. While the completion of the Oslo plan eventually fell through, it was for reasons beyond the PLO's control and did not reflect on the PLO's use of advocacy or violence. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who led the Israeli side of the Oslo peace process, was assassinated in 1995 by an Israeli nationalist. Right-wing Likud party member Benjamin Netanyahu succeeded Rabin as Prime Minister, beating the moderate-left Labor party candidate by a razor-thin margin in the next election. Netanyahu had no interest in peace talks with the PLO, and the Oslo peace process quickly fell apart. Despite this disappointing end to Oslo and the weak negotiating position of the PLO, the movement's accomplishment of getting to the negotiating table with Israel was substantial because it meant that Israel, the US, and all of Israel's other allies finally accepted both the validity of the PLO's leadership and the existence of a Palestinian nationality.

Conclusion

The PLO began as the leader of an unrecognized people, with only a handful of state allies. It used violence to accomplish process goals such as gaining global attention and boosting its membership. Simultaneously, it used advocacy to expand its circle of allies and shape the narrative surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Each of these strategies countered the other's weaknesses and offered unique strengths that propelled the PLO towards its goals. However, given that the PLO could not attain its goal of Palestinian self-governance through force, it eventually renounced violence and focused solely on advocacy to achieve its outcome goals. The focus on advocacy allowed the PLO to gain channels of communication with countries that had been otherwise reluctant to engage. This led to the PLO finally getting Israel to come to the negotiating table. The PLO gained more by using strategies of both violence and advocacy than it would have with just one or the other. Breaking down the PLO's different strategies provides insight into its layered approach, but the analysis does have limitations. First, it is nearly impossible to truly isolate two different tactics when they are employed simultaneously with the same end goals.[77] While my analysis had a clear methodology for analyzing the direct repercussions of specific acts taken by the PLO, each strategy constantly influenced the other, as demonstrated by China's diplomatic relations with the PLO and its lasting commitment to supply arms. Second, the PLO did not have complete agency over its fate. Its achievements or lack thereof were sometimes due to other actors' decisions that were beyond its control. Most importantly, as long as Israel maintains its material dominance over Palestinians, it will hold tremendous power over their success or failure as a movement.[78] Despite these limitations, there is still much to learn from examining the PLO's layered approach.

The PLO had several qualities that made it successful as an organization that used both advocacy and violence. First, the movement developed a well-defined, principled goal (the creation of a Palestinian state in historic Palestine) coupled with a mission of armed resistance, which streamlined the organization's varied strategies into one cohesive ideology. Second, the organization had broad popular support for armed struggle, making its violent tactics an appropriate way to advocate for its stakeholders. Finally, it transitioned away from violence once its process goals had been

adequately met (although the PLO might have benefitted from transitioning earlier). While further research is needed to establish a pattern of efficacy in organizations with layered strategies, the above qualities could be used as a jumping-off point for future social movements that wish to pursue a layered approach.

Future research on groups with layered strategies in both advocacy and violence could explore whether the mechanisms described in this paper are present in similar organizations, such as the Irish Republican Army or Hezbollah. Both of these groups were founded as principled non-state actors with ideologies of armed resistance who eventually renounced violence and transitioned to become political parties.[79] The relative success or failure of their strategies in achieving process goals and outcome goals could be evaluated in comparison to the PLO's history in order to establish general indicators for a movement's efficacy.

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The Life of Sassoon Hesqel

The Zenith of Jewish Integration into the Modern Iraqi State

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Standing before the League of Nations in December of 1931, the prominent Iraqi Jew Sassoon Hesqel[1] declared "the Jews regard themselves as Iraqis and do not claim any minority rights."[2] As Minister of Finance to Iraq's King Faisal, Sassoon Hesqel—or Sassoon Effendi, the Middle Eastern bureaucratic appellation by which he was also known—represents the zenith of Jewish integration into the Iraqi state. Despite the relative wealth and literacy that set them apart, Iraqi Jews like Sassoon were eager to participate in the new Iraqi state as Iraqis, and they managed to do so for the brief period of the British Mandate, though not fully. Sassoon Hesqel's

life offers a window into the trajectory of Iraqi Jews in the post-Ottoman period. Jewish integration reached a peak under Sassoon's ministership, propelled by British influence during their period of control between 1921 and 1932. Sassoon died in 1932—the same year as Iraq's independence from Britain—and King Faisal died one year later, ushering in a new Iraqi nationalism that associated Jews with Zionist, anti-Arab enemies and alienated them from participation in the state and full equality in society. A deadly pogrom in 1941 and increasing tensions would force most of Iraq's Jews to flee for Israel and Europe by 1950, leaving Sassoon Hesqel all but forgotten in Iraq's foundational narratives.

This paper primarily draws on the scholarship of historians like Orit Bashkin, Moshe Gat and Jonathan Sciarcon, as well as the primary source letters of Gertrude Bell, to place Hesqel's life in the milieu of Iraqi Jews in the Mandate period. This paper will have five parts: Part One will be a background tracing the broad strokes of Sassoon's life and fitting it into the story of Mesopotamia under the Ottoman Empire leading up to the formation of Iraq. Part Two will examine the role of superior education in both Sasson's life and the lives of Iraqi Jews in the Early Iraqi state. Part Three will analyze Sassoon's and Iraqi Jews' professions of "Iraqi-ness" and "Arab-ness" as they dealt with questions of national identity in their new state. Part Four will discuss how Sassoon and other Iraqi Jews felt about Zionism and how they negotiated their relationship with Zionism as its tensions aggravated divisions in Iraqi society. Part Five will be a conclusion.

Children at an Iraqi Jewish school in Baghdad, 1959 (via Wikimedia Commons)

Background

When Sassoon Hesqel joined King Faisal's government in 1921, a whirlwind of change overtook the land from the port of Basra to the Mesopotamian highlands touching Anatolia—what would become Iraq. The Jewish population of the region is traditionally thought to have existed there since the times of the biblical Babylonian captivity. The Ottoman Empire captured Mesopotamian lands from the Safavid Empire in Iran at the beginning of the 16th century and fought for the control of Baghdad with the Safavids until 1636, when the Ottomans solidified control for the duration of their empire's existence. Under Ottoman rule, the lands of modern Iraq were separately governed in three vilayets, or administrative districts—Mosul in the north, Baghdad in the center, and Basra on the southern coast.[3] That development is significant for this paper's discussion because Jews in the northern vilayet lived among Kurds and thus lived different experiences than the Jews of mostly Arab Basra and Baghdad, the latter of which this paper will principally focus on. In 1839—soon after the Sultan managed to reestablish direct control over Mesopotamia—Ottoman governors implemented the centralizing Tanzimat reforms in the region, consolidating the Jewish community under a Chief Rabbi in Baghdad and creating administrative councils which occasionally included Jews.[4] The stability and modernization introduced by the Tanzimat reforms and the sustained effects of urban migration transformed Baghdad's Jewry from a poor community that composed only three percent of the city to an affluent one representing thirty-five percent of the city.

Near the end of the Tanzimat period—which concluded in 1876—Sassoon Hesqel was born in Baghdad in 1860 to Rabbi Hesqel, a distant relative of the Sassoon family,[5] which had capitalized on Mesopotamia's convenient location in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean trade network and builta merchant empire that included outposts in the British imperial cities of Bombay, Rangoon, and Shanghai as well as London.[6] Sassoon Hesqel received primary education

"Though professing reluctance to continue in politics, Sassoon Hesqel ... accepted the position of Minister of Finance in Faisal's new government."

at a school of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), a French organization dedicated to uplifting 'backwards' and less fortunate Jewish communities in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa.[7] In the company of his relative Menachem Salih—who had been elected a parliamentary deputy for the vilayet of Baghdad during the brief First Constitutional Period starting in 1876—Sassoon proceeded to Istanbul to continue his education at the Sultan's School and later attended the Diplomatic College in Vienna before obtaining a law degree in Istanbul and then returning to Baghdad to work as a translator in the consular services.[8,9] During the Tanzimat era and the First Constitutional Period, a new ideology of "Ottomanism" spread throughout the empire, based on a shared patriotic allegiance to the state and compatriots regardless of religious, ethnic, or linguistic affiliation. Sassoon came of age and entered the bureaucracy in this milieu of patriotic equality. In 1908, a secret organization of young dissenting army officers who called themselves the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) led a constitutional rebellion, forcing Sultan Abdulhamid II to reconstitute the parliament he had closed in 1878.[10] Sasson Hesqel won election as one of Baghdad's parliamentary deputies, and served in that position through 1918, even chairing the parliamentary budget committee.[11] The historian Orit Bashkin writes about the enthusiasm for a non-sectarian revival of Ottomanism that the CUP revolution inspired in imperial minorities, reflected by Jewish participation in non-sectarian political organizations and their organization of an Ottoman Jewish military academy to prepare for the previously unheard-of development of Jewish military service.[12] Nevertheless, the "Turkocentric" instincts of the "Young Turks" who led the CUP alienated imperial minorities and pushed Baghdad's Jews, Christians, and Muslims towards the Arab nationalism that had been building since the reign of Abdulhamid II.[13]

In 1914, the Ottoman Empire joined World War I on the side of the German Empire and Austria-Hungary, setting into motion the events that would give birth to the Kingdom of Iraq. As conscription, hunger, and violence consumed Mesopotamia, some officers from the region defected to the British-sponsored Arab Revolt led by Sharif Hussein of Mecca of the Hashemite family and his sons.[14] While the Arabs expected independence at the conclusion of the war, Britain and France split the lands of the Ottoman Empire among themselves under the authority of League of Nations mandates, which theoretically tasked the British and French with preparing peoples not able "to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world" for independence.[15] The proposed British Mandate of Mesopotamia consisted of the former Ottoman vilayets of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra. After a 1920 revolt challenging direct British rule in their Mandate of Mesopotamia, British colonial officials convened the 1921 conference in Cairo to resolve imperial issues in the Middle East. With the nominal input of a few local notables, including Sassoon Hesqel, the British put forth the Hashemite Prince Faisal—son of Sharif Hussein—as nominee to rule Iraq, and, shortly afterwards, they confirmed him as King of Iraq through plebiscite. From 1921 to 1932, the British held the mandate for Iraq but ruled indirectly through King Faisal.[16] Though professing reluctance to continue in politics, Sassoon Hesqel capitulated to the requests of his friend, British Middle Eastern political officer Gertrude Bell, and accepted the position of Minister of Finance in Faisal's new government.[17]

Jewish Education in Baghdad

The European-style 'modern' education offered to Baghdad's Jewish children in the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle propelled them to elevated positions in business and Mandatory bureaucracy over their Muslim and Christian compatriots. Prior to the 1860s, primary education principally happened through religious

"Iraqi Jews conceptualized 'Arab-ness' as distinct from Islam and aspired for the 'Iraqi' national identity to have no religious dimensions."

establishments. The first AIU school in Baghdad opened in December of 1864—four years after Sassoon Hesqel's birth—representing the first Jewish school in Baghdad that delivered a primarily secular education.[18] Initially, students came from poor Jewish families which could not afford a religious education for their children, but elite families quickly realized the value of the secular Alliance education, and rich Jewish children soon joined the student body.[19] Based in France and founded by the leading French Jew Adolphe Crémieux, all Alliance schools used French as the language of instruction, but Baghdad's Alliance school offered particularly strong English courses compared to other schools because of Baghdadi Jews' strong ties to the British Empire.[20] The strong command of European languages possessed by Mesopotamian Jews—supported by their modern Alliance education—supported their virtual monopoly over imports and exports in the region towards the end of the 19th century through to the inception of the Iraqi state.[21] Having advanced from an Alliance primary education to schooling in Istanbul and Vienna, Sassoon's life typifies this kind of internationalism that developed among Mesopotamian Jews. Starting in 1869, the Ottoman government began a campaign of public education modernization—reflected in Sassoon and other Baghdadi's migrations to Istanbul for higher education—but as the historian Emine Evered writes, the government's focus on European provinces left Arab 'backwaters' like Mesopotamia behind until late in the empire when the Balkans had been lost.[22] As a result, Mesopotamian Muslims continued to receive a relatively poor education through religious madrasas while the proliferation of the Alliance schools from Baghdad to Basra and surrounding towns enhanced the Jewish advantage in education.

With the fall of the Ottoman Empire, both the British military administration and King Faisal's government required a new local, educated stratum to fill the government bureaucracy—a role particularly suited for the well-educated Jews of Baghdad and Basra. This secularized Jewish "effendia" avowedly believed nationalism and secularism were the cure to sectarianism in Iraq.[23] Educational reforms of the monarchic era introduced state-run schools with the secular, modern educations that the Alliance schools had offered for decades, allowing a significant number of Arab Muslims to attain the education possessed by elite Jews. Bashkin writes that Arabization of Iraqi Jews was accelerated both for poor Jewish children by the nationalistic agenda of the government schools but also for children in Alliance and other Jewish schools often staffed by Arab nationalist teachers.[24] However, over time, the newly educated strata of Muslims grew to resent the overrepresentation of Jews in the country's bureaucracy and commercial life. Indeed, at the time of independence in 1932, close to 2,000 Jews worked in the civil service—far outweighing their proportion of Iraq's population—which fueled the grievances of newly educated but unemployed young Arab Muslims.[25]

Being Arab and Jewish

Iraqi Jews conceptualized "Arab-ness" as distinct from Islam and aspired for the "Iraqi" national identity to have no religious dimensions. This conceptualization prompted Sassoon Hesqel to claim before the League of Nations that "the Jews regard themselves as Iraqis and do not claim any minority rights."[26] Bashkin points out that by around the Second Ottoman Constitutional Period in 1908, Jews had moved from publishing in Hebrew to publishing in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish. Looking at a Hebrew spelling table from 1910, Bashkin proves that not only did Baghdadi Jews write in Arabic but they also spoke and thought in Arabic rather than the Hebrew-script vernacular Judeo-Arabic of a few decades prior.[27] The leading Jewish newspapers of Baghdad, Al-Misbah and Al-Hasid, called for an Arab renaissance, publishing the thoughts of leading Arab reformers like the Muslim reformer Muhammad 'Abduh.[28] In one instance, the Grand Rabbi of Baghdad presented King Faisal with a copy of the Talmud, and Faisal gave a speech at the Grand Rabbi's residence in which he expressed to the Jewish and Christian leaders in the audience that "Nationalism does not have anything to do with Muslims, Christians, or Jews, but with an entity called Iraq."[29] This specific episode evokes the Abbasid Era, in which Christian and Jewish scholars worked side by side with Muslim scholars in the House of Wisdom in the Caliph's cosmopolitan capital of Baghdad. Holding that their community traced back to the pre-Islamic Babylonian captivity, the Jews of Baghdad could believe that Iraqi culture had shaped them and they had shaped Iraqi culture over two and a half millenia just as much as Iraq's Muslim population had. In speaking Arabic, writing in Arabic, and joining in the discussions of Arabic-Islamic reformism, the Iraqi Jewish community acted no differently than the Iraqi Muslim community, because these were Iraqi Arab issues and they saw themselves as Iraqi Arabs.

Despite the aspirations to equality and the promises made by the constitution, Iraqi society maintained a ceiling on Jews' political participation. Their allotted representation in the legislature was marginal and "genuine political activity…was out of bounds."[30] And despite their proliferation in the bureaucracy, they could not join the Ministries of Defense or Foreign Affairs—two critical organs of foreign policy-making.[31] Sassoon's achievement of serving as Minister of Finance belies the tragedy that he was the only Jewish cabinet minister in Iraq's history—in a country where Jews made up a plurality of the capital's residents alongside communities of Sunnis, Shi`as, and Christians. The de facto ban on Jewish participation in the elements of the nation in which the state interacted with other states—the legislature, Ministry of Defense, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs—raises doubts about the extent to which Iraqi Jews were perceived as loyal Iraqis, let alone loyal Arabs. The well-known petition for British citizenship from 56 prominent Jews when British forces marched into Baghdad, as well as the closeness of Jews to the British administration[32]—Sassoon was a friend and ally of the British officers making Iraq policy and had relatives in England—likely led to the perception that Jews were not as loyal to Iraq as other ethnic and religious groups. The 1925 Constitution of Iraq set out in Article 13 that "Islam is the official religion of the state,"[33] so although Jews aspired for a non-sectarian state and conceptualized themselves as full Iraqis, the state established the basic supremacy of Islam from the start.

Iraqi Jews arrive in British Mandatory Palestine in 1941 after fleeing antisemitic violence in Iraq (Moshe Baruch via Wikimedia Commons)

Reckoning with Zionism

As tensions over Zionism in Palestine bled over into Iraq, Iraqi Jews explicitly declared their opposition to Zionism but could not stave off the flood of anti-Jewish sentiment that the Palestinian question caused. As early as 1909, Sassoon Hesqel expressed to a Zionist reporter that there was "hardly any unity between Jews of different nations"—and thus no such thing as a Jewish nation—and much more benefit in studying Arabic than learning a dead liturgical language like Hebrew.[34] Sassoon studied in Vienna during the birth of the Zionist movement in the 1880s and 1890s, yet, coming from an environment in which Jews were actually more prosperous than the dominant ethnoreligious groups, he did not conceive of a Jewish nation nor see the need for a Jewish state. Indeed, the biblical notion of Exile underpinned the tragedy of Jewish existence in Europe, yet, as we have seen, during the upwelling of Arab nationalism before and during independence Baghdad's Jews conceived of themselves as part and parcel of Iraq's culture and history—not a community in exile. According to Bashkin, "by 1929, most Iraqi Jewish intellectuals had sided with the Arab Palestinians," publishing articles in Al-Misbah expressing sympathy with the Arab Palestinians and, sometimes, hope for Palestine

"Increasingly targeted by discrimination and violence, the once-prosperous Jewish community of Iraq had almost evaporated by 1952."

to adopt the same model of coexistence as Jews and Muslims in Iraq—that is, one that was decidedly tilted de jure in favor of Muslims but prosperous and peaceful for Jews.[35]

After the 1929 Palestinian revolt, however, exiled Palestinian anti-Zionists carried their anti-Semitism with them to Iraq, beginning a decade of reversed fortunes for Iraqi Jews. After independence in 1932, the government allowed nationalist organizations to develop, often led by expatriates from Palestine and Syria who expressed a virulent Arabism that portrayed Jews as Zionists and fifth columnists supporting the British.[36] The most prominent anti-Zionist (and also virulently antisemitic) exile was Hajj Amin al-Husseini, a Palestinian leader who fled to Iraq after the massive Palestinian revolt of 1936. By 1934—one year after Faisal's death and two after Sassoon's—Iraqi ministries had fired "scores of Jewish civil servants," with hundreds of dismissals following in 1936.[37] It seems that in the absence of both the British and the relatively tolerant Faisal, nationalist ministers during the period of regency for Faisal's young son finally allowed the poisonous tensions elsewhere in the Arab world to infiltrate Iraq and government policy. Simultaneously with the import of these Arab-Zionist tensions, Nazi propaganda began to filter through Iraqi society through the efforts of German consul in Baghdad Fritz Grobba. Grobba published *Mein Kampf* in Arabic, and his message penetrated particularly to the officer class, some of whom formed a society known as the Golden Square that overthrew the government during World War II and allied Iraq with Germany.[38] In the brief anarchy after British soldiers moved into Baghdad and overthrew the Golden Square government, remaining Nazi sympathizers carried out an unprecedented pogrom that killed 180 Jews.[39] Increasingly targeted by discrimination and violence, the once-prosperous Jewish community of Iraq had almost evaporated by 1952, fleeing the toxic combination of Arab nationalism and anti-Zionism for Europe and Israel after the latter's independence.

Conclusion

Born right as Iraqi Jews began a trajectory toward the height of their prosperity and integration into Iraqi Arab society, Sassoon Hesqel died too soon to see his community's Arab identity revoked. With the end of the Turkish Ottoman yoke, Iraqi Jews envisioned a new government built on shared citizenship rather than Islam, or at least a cosmopolitan revival of the diverse Arab caliphates of the ninth and tenth centuries embodied in King Faisal. While Hesqel's ministership in the 1920s resembled that vision, Faisal's death and the British withdrawal served to produce an Iraq more akin to the prevailing concept of the homogeneous nation-state in Europe—one which had no place for Jews because of their supposed anti-Arab links with Britain and Zionism. In modern Iraq, the sterling contributions of Jewish statesmen like Sassoon—whose insistence on receiving oil royalties from Britain in gold rather than pounds saved the Iraqi government millions—have been forgotten because they do not fit into the Arab nationalism that took hold after Sassoon's death. Though to Jews it might have seemed that Iraq could have been a diverse and tolerant state where all minorities could coexist with equal rights, in hindsight, the very attributes that helped Jews to prosper probably foretold the demise of the Iraqi Jewish community. Their close relationship with Britain and their dominance in the commercial life of Iraq meant that a reckoning was due eventually. Sadly, that reckoning occurred far earlier than elites like Sassoon Hesqel could have anticipated because of the tensions from Zionism, and it had the absolute effect of evicting the long-settled Jewish community from Iraq.

A monument in Ramat Gan, Israel, to Iraqi Jews killed in a 1941 pogrom and in the 1960s (Avishai Teicher via Wikimedia Commons)

ENDNOTES

1. Sassoon is alternatively spelled "Sasun." Hesqel is alternatively spelled "Hesqayl," "Hasqayl," "Heskell," and "Eskell." I have copied the spelling of "Hesqel" from Orit Bashkin, but I use "Sassoon" rather than her "Sasun" because that is the anglicization employed by the Sassoons of England.
2. Aline Schlaepfer, "Defining Minorities: Mission Impossible? The Case of Hashemite Iraq," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 50, (2018): 770.
3. Beth K. Dougherty and Edmund A. Ghareeb, *Historical Dictionary of Iraq* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 344.
4. Orit Bashkin, "'Religious Hatred Shall Disappear from the Land'—Iraqi Jews as Ottoman Subjects, 1864-1913," *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 4, no. 3 (2010): 307.
5. Dougherty and Ghareeb, *Historical Dictionary of Iraq*, 262.
6. Moshe Gat, "Jewish-Arab Relations in Iraq: From the British Occupation to the Mass Exodus (1917–51)," *Immigrants and Minorities* 24, no. 3 (2006): 302.
7. Jonathan Sciarcon, *Educational Oases in the Desert: The Alliance Israélite Universelle's Girls' schools in Ottoman Iraq, 1895-1915* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017), xviii.
8. "Sir Sassoon Eskell," *The Scribe*. http://www.dangoor.com/thescribe73_06.pdf.
9. Gertrude Bell to Hugh Bell, February 20, 1924, in Gertrude Bell Archive, http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/.
10. Heather Sharkey, *A History of Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 277.
11. Dougherty and Ghareeb, *Historical Dictionary of Iraq*, 263.
12. Bashkin, "Religious Hatred Shall Disappear from the Land," 315-321.
13. Sharkey, *Muslims, Christians, and Jews,* 282 and 288.
14. Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Redwood: Stanford University Press, 2012), 17.
15. Treaty of Versailles art. 22, Jun. 28, 1919. http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/versa/versa1.html.
16. Noel Walter Spencer, Jr., "The Diplomatic History of Iraq," Ph.D. diss., (University of Utah, 1979), 32-46.
17. Gertrude Bell to Hugh Bell, November 1, 1920, in *Gertrude Bell Archive,* http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/.
18. Sciarcon, *Educational Oases in the Desert,* 4.
19. Bashkin and Sciarcon note that a few Christians and Muslims also attended the school because of the strength of its education.
20. Bashkin, "Religious Hatred Shall Disappear from the Land," 308-309.
21. Gat, "Jewish-Arab Relations in Iraq," 302.
22. Emine Evered, *Empire and Education Under the Ottomans: Politics, Reform and Resistance from the Tanzimat to the Young Turks* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 159-173.
23. Bashkin, *New Babylonians,* 63.
24. Ibid., 69-83.
25. Gat, "Jewish-Arab Relations in Iraq," 307.
26. Schlaepfer, "Defining Minorities," 770.
27. Bashkin, "Religious Hatred Shall Disappear from the Land," 318-319.
28. Bashkin, New Babylonians, 28.
29. Ibid., 38.
30. Gat, "Jewish-Arab Relations in Iraq," 306.
31. Ibid.
32. Jonathan Sciarcon, "Unfulfilled Promises: Ottomanism, the 1908 Revolution and Baghdadi Jews," *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 3, no. 2 (Nov. 2009): 155.
33. *Constitution of the Kingdom of Iraq* art. 13, March 21, 1925, Constitution Society, https://www.constitution.org/cons/iraq/iraqiconst19250321.html.
34. Bashkin, "Religious Hatred Shall Disappear from the Land," 321.
35. Bashkin, *New Babylonians,* 41.
36. Gat, "Jewish-Arab Relations in Iraq," 308.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., 310.
39. Gat, "Jewish-Arab Relations in Iraq," 311.

Depictions and Narratives of Religious Women in Post-Revolution Iranian Propaganda

Annaliese Gould

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Following the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Ruhollah Khomeini, the first Supreme Leader of post-revolutionary Iran, began the process of completely rebranding society, starting with women. Gone were the miniskirts and working women of the Shah's era; instead, posters of women in hijabs raising children or holding guns were placed in cemeteries or made into murals or stamps, creating a backdrop that continuously emphasized who was acceptable within the new Iran, and who was not. Fueling this campaign was the Iran-Iraq War, which created the need for willing soldiers; mothers became the perfect target, and the regime made raising pious martyrs a social and a religious expectation, promising glory in heaven for those who obeyed. Women were also the perfect motivation for these young soldiers. Placing the honor and traditions of society on women not only creates the burden of performance but also gives the men a clear

and immediate reason to fight: everyone has a mother, sister, or wife to protect. By inundating society with images asserting and supporting these narratives and expectations, the regime controlled the image of women and their place in society.

Within conflict, certain narratives emerge that focus on women as victims, active participants, and civilians, often utilizing visual language and imagery to communicate or promote particular behaviors or expectations. State governments, dissident groups, media sources, and foreign entities may emphasize the role of women as caretakers, nurturers, and victims in order to encourage the participation of men in militaristic groups or communicate the importance of women's work raising children. Nationalistic campaigns have often used religious female role models to justify these expectations and provide a symbolic focal point. Analyzing post-revolution Iranian state propaganda raises questions about how expectations are created and maintained by those in power, and how similar propaganda efforts in other countries utilize images of women in order to encourage nationalistic, religious, or militaristic actions and behaviors.

After examining common narratives and analyzing how societal expectations and norms changed during the revolution and after, I will discuss the impact of such state propaganda on society itself. After analyzing the widespread distribution of visual media below, including stories centering well-known women from the Battle of Karbala, I conclude that these propaganda efforts did result in widespread change. The image of the "ideal woman" changed significantly during this period, and the roles and opportunities available to women shifted to encompass more traditional roles, focusing particularly on raising children and staying in the house.

The Importance of Imagery in Conflict

Images and videos can serve as propaganda tools, evoking a more emotional response than an article would alone.[1] They are also less restricted by cultural, linguistic, or literacy barriers, which various groups take advantage of during conflict in order to appeal not only to their constituents, but also to a wider international audience.[2] Even though they may be retouched, staged, or taken out of context, photos are generally seen as truthful and authentic, and therefore are often viewed as more genuine or valid forms of proof than text-based evidence.[3] Photos are even more likely to be trusted when they are supported or distributed by a reliable authority.[4]

Different actors, whether states, organizations, or independent agents, can use visual language as a tool to create and maintain heroes, martyrs, or popular narratives that support their goals.[5] For example, governments or organizations can frame civilians who died during attacks as soldiers who died for their country, organization, orbeliefs, even if those civilians had little military or political involvement while they were alive.[6] For example, Israeli and Palestinian forces both make use of social media in order to further promote and support their causes. Photos of children often appear accompanied by captions supporting a narrative of protection, and both sides encourage resistance and unity.[7] Sometimes, the same clips will be shared by each side with different captions, framing narratives of strength versus destruction in a way that supports each side's respective goals.[8] In sum, visual language is a powerful tool that actors can use to frame conflicts or groups in their favor, affecting viewer interpretations and swaying attitudes toward specific issues.

Representations of Women in Conflict

Representations of women during war or conflict in the Middle East vary widely, ranging from active participants to passive victims. One such variation is the notion that women are "mothers of the nation,"[9] and therefore are responsible for maintaining and passing on the traditional domestic and familial roles, which are also heavily tied to ethnic identity.[10] The narrative of women as cultural reproducers is especially important as we consider the impacts of specific codes or traits indicated by clothing, customs, behavior, and knowledge.[11] Not only are mothers responsible for raising the future of the nation, but they are also the bearers of the people's identity and tradition.[12] During times of conflict, an added stipulation is that women are expected to raise their sons to become soldiers, and eventually martyrs.[13]

Putting women at the center of the community, especially during times of conflict, also links the honor of the nation with the honor of women.[14] The "purity" of the women in the community becomes a general issue, and it is an indicator of a strong community, especially since the women of the enemy are often portrayed as promiscuous.[15] By tying the honor of the nation to the honor of women, "[p]easants did not have to understand the idea of a nation-state to be motivated to protect their own soil if it was understood as their mother who was being raped and sold into captivity."[16] Likewise, discourse surrounding the Palestinian conflict is highly gendered, with official documents and speeches referring to the "rape of the mother" country and the need to protect (feminized) Palestine from (masculinized) Zionism.[17] As Irving mentions, while this narrative may confer a certain value on women, it does not give them agency and limits them to stereotypical gender roles.

"Putting women at the center of the community, especially during times of conflict, also links the honor of the nation wth the honor of women."

Examples of women in conflict – from suicide bombers to protesters – provide context for how these gendered expectations may clash with reality. While there is a certain amount of respect for some of the women who choose to assume more violent or combatant roles, like Leila Khaled, many of the women involved in the Palestinian struggle face social resistance.[18] While there was a level of respect and idolization of these women, there was also recognition at the community level that they were not "good Arab women."[19] Different organizations have made efforts to include discussions of gender issues and incorporate a variety of viewpoints, although women still face more protest when joining resistance groups than men.[20] Once inducted, they are treated differently by the media and society, with articles and commentary often focusing more on their sexuality and appearance than on their actions.[21] Even as they fight or resist, they are stripped of their characteristics, motivations, and intellect, reduced to sexist stereotypes or passive pawns.

Alternatively, during the Arab Spring beginning in 2010, female organizers and activists led many of the protests and online propaganda movements.[22] During the movement, *Al-Jazeera* featured many photos of women in their news reports, and when there were both men and women in the photos, women were the focal point the majority of the time.[23] Furthermore, not only were they the focal point, but they were portrayed as active participants instead of passive observers.[24] Tawakkul Karman, for example, became known as "mother of the revolution," a symbol for the women who participated in the protests in many Arab nations and a very public face for the movement.[25]

Utilizing Images of Religious Women during Conflict in Iran

Thus far I have established that women are generally characterized as mothers and bearers of the community honor and identity, occasionally bearing an active role in conflict but more often cast as passive participants or victims. In this section, I discuss the literature surrounding depictions specifically of religious women in Iran. Religion is often a marker used to indicate a "good" woman vs. a "bad" woman, or to indicate certain values or behaviors encouraged by the state or society more broadly. Additionally, religious and political authorities often view women as central to the process of regulating society, and therefore by regulating images of women, they are able to emphasize certain narratives important to preserving their power.[26] In many countries, especially those where religious authorities and structures are highly visible in the social sphere, the manipulated representations of religious female figures as role models is a common theme.

Due to these dynamics, Iran presents an interesting case study. During the Pahlavi regime, the ideal Iranian woman was very similar to the image of the ideal Western woman as the regime pushed a narrative of liberalization and secularization.[27] In fact, at one point the Shah banned veils in public spaces

"Religious and political figures often view women as central to the process of regulating society, and therefore by regulating images of women, they are able to emphasize certain narratives important to preserving their power."

as a way to signal a shift in social values toward "modernity," while Khomeini emphasized a return to more traditional values using the image and honor of women as a signifier for that of the community.[28] During this time, the story and characters of the Battle of Karbala became important reference points for political, ethical, and cultural values.[29] While women (even pious women) were generally ignored in these stories, there are two women who came to symbolize the ideal Muslim woman during the revolution: Fatima, daughter of the Prophet Mohammad, and her daughter, Zaynab, both of whom were present at the Battle of Karbala.

The most common narratives of the Battle of Karbala focus on the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, Hoseyn, and his battle against the tyrannical Umayyad caliph, Yazid. Hoseyn and his supporters sought to free the caliph's subjects and challenged Yazid's army, which slaughtered Hoseyn's men and captured the women and children who had accompanied them, selling them or delivering them to Yazid. This story also functions as a narrative of strength opposing Sunni criticism and has played a supporting role in many revolutions and political movements.[30] Among the most important themes was that of martyrdom, exemplified both by Hoseyn and his men and by the women like Fatima and Zaynab who survived and continued to carry the Prophet's message.[31] As a religious historical narrative, the Battle of Karbala holds considerable significance for Shi'i Muslims and resulted in the development of several popular mourning rituals and cultural traditions.[32]

Initially, Fatima became the focus for the new model of the ideal Muslim woman opposite the Western model.[33] She was the model of "chastity, piety, and submission as mother, daughter, and wife,"[34] and therefore was a powerful image to hold up as an example of what to strive for, especially as she was the mother of Imam Hoseyn.[35] Fatima opposed the corrupt elites of her time and was willing to sacrifice whatever it took in order to achieve her goals.[36] However, as the revolution developed, the narrative shifted focus from Fatima to her daughter, Zaynab.

The regime downplayed Zaynab's role as a more active revolutionary and focused on her place as a loyal supporter. She was held up as a model of sacrifice, bravery, and martyrdom, and while women were not permitted to participate in the fighting, she supported the troops from the sidelines.[37] Wearing her hijab, Zaynab willingly martyred her brother and two sons during the battle while criticizing other women who tried to accompany the troops in battle.[38] She even criticized Yazid for allowing the women to be seen by strange men without the presence of brothers or fathers during their capture, emphasizing the social expectations of proper religious dress and behavior. Zaynab is also renowned for her healing powers, further supporting the idea of women as caretakers, especially for those who have returned from conflict.[39] Calling on the imagery and characters from the Battle of Karbala reminds men and women that their duty is to martyr themselves or their children for God–and for Khomeini.[40]

After the revolution in Iran, religious depictions of women continued to play an important role in society. A female commando unit called the Sisters of Zaynab patrolled the streets, targeting women who were dressed "immodestly" and going so far as to beat them or burn them with acid if they were not dressed appropriately.[41] The expectation that women would willingly send their sons, husbands, fathers, and brothers off to war, thereby becoming the "quintessential martyrs,"[42] became both a social and religious duty.[43] Beginning in 1980, government actors distributed posters throughout the country featuring women modeling the proper style of hijab while promoting the war with Iraq.[44] The image of the chador itself carried symbolic meaning, conveying a dedication to the community and overshadowing differences in class, ethnicity, and religion.[45] The regime also made efforts to fuse or link the hijab with the concept of jihad, with the word hejab (a combination of the two) appearing on stamps depicting drawings of women in hijabs mourning or carrying guns; this was supported by images of Fatima, emphasizing the historical "compatible nature of militancy and the hijab."[46]

Other factors impact the image and myth of who constitutes a "good woman." After the revolution, capitalists and upper-class business owners found themselves under attack as the government nationalized large businesses and seized property, and as rural peasants took over land,[47] aligning with anti-Western and anti-liberal sentiments. Afghan immigrants were also subject to a level of discrimination and suspicion that other minority groups, like Kurdish or Azerbaijani Iranians, were not.[48] Sunni Muslims suffered during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1989) as Sunni-majority Iraq became the enemy, exacerbated by historic religious divisions.[49] The regime also particularly targeted lower-income families who needed the income and whose sons were hoping to escape domestic (feminine) spaces;[50] mothers in these families would have pressured their sons to join the military, while wealthier families would be less likely to encourage their sons to leave. Thus, the archetype of the myth of the "good woman" was not simply Muslim. It would have included Shi'ite and anti-West/anti-capitalist women from the right ethnic background. The regime was not asking for children from all women, but rather children raised "correctly" in the right families with the right values, therefore awarding women who fit this archetype with a certain amount of power or privilege. Participation in the Iranian Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War was not solely motivated by religious beliefs, but also by social expectations, financial pressures, and familial needs.

In sum, images of religious women can be powerful tools used by different states and organizations to promote certain gender roles and expectations. Visual language is a particularly effective medium for transmitting ideas and promoting narratives, and those focused on women during conflict generally highlight certain themes. Images of religious women often refer to approved historical religious role models and their relation to the martyred soldiers. Utilizing blood/red or Quranic script invokes the Battle of Karbala and the associated narratives and emotions.[51] Not only do these depictions support nationalist and militaristic narratives, but they also convey societal and religious expectations of women. As such, this case study informs our understanding of the images and narratives used to convey government expectations for women during this time, and whether these efforts were effective and resulted in widespread change.

Methodology

In order to more closely study some of the common myths and depictions of religious women in the Middle East, I analyze a collection of Iranian posters from the 1980s issued by the Iranian government's Center for Islamic Thought and Art. I analyze how depictions of women differ from those of men and how religion factors into the posters and their impact, tying these themes to those discussed in the literature review. While there are 29 total posters in this collection (nine of which are duplicates of other posters in the collection), I have chosen to focus only on the nine posters that include women in some form. All include the caption "On the Occasion of the Week of the War," which most likely refers to the yearly ceremonies commemorating the Iran-Iraq War, known also as the "Week of Holy Defense."[52] I refer to each of these posters by their poster number, title, and period from the Special Collections Research Center at the University of Chicago.[53] Some of them include additional descriptions, including translations of depicted graffiti, which I may refer to and indicate in my analysis. It is also important to recognize that I am approaching these posters as an American unfamiliar with Persian and am examining these topics as an outsider. This limits aspects of my analysis as there are cultural connotations I am unfamiliar with, and this unfamiliarity may affect how I interpret various

aspects of these posters. Nonetheless, my theoretical framework and the broader scholarship support the analysis I provide, and given the long-lasting effects of Khomeini's efforts during this period, my findings remain relevant.

As I discuss these posters in greater detail, I draw on communication theory and semiotics to identify signifiers, messages, and themes. I focus on the work of Roland Barthes, who expanded on Saussere's analysis of denotation, including a consideration of connotation as well.[54] For our purposes, denotation refers to what is present in the photograph or poster (a woman, a street, a particular leader, etc.). Connotation refers to how the context, the framing, and the colors used affect viewer interpretations of the message.[55] Words, posters, and music all present connotations that are dependent or vary based on cultural or class background.[56] For example, many posters include Arabic and Persian scripts, both of which are immediately recognizable, and one of which, Arabic, has deeply religious and sacred ties. This invokes an association of truth, religiosity, and obedience that affects how viewers consider and relate to the message of the poster.[57]

Connotations may also be used to promote what Barthes referred to as "myths," or a society or culture's way of looking at things and understanding them.[58] Myths develop within societies and are influenced by and influence norms and social structures. They also naturalize meanings or norms, just as men's more muscular bodies are used to naturalize their political power and women's ability to carry children naturalizes their nurturing capacity.[59] When examining political propaganda, it is important to consider how it appeals to the social norms and traditional values and structures present in society, and how these messages benefit those producing the media.

Poster #77, "Painting of a mother helping her son with his homework, 1981" (Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library)

Background Information

Before beginning my analysis, I first provide some general information on the Iranian Revolution and how gender dynamics shifted throughout this period. During the Safavid dynasty (1501 – 1736), Shi'a Islam became the country's official religion, and the clergy were established as a powerful religious institution.[60] This religious authority was sustained until the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, after which began a secular period, which was marked by the privatization of Islam and an increasing Western influence.[61] The Pahlavi dynasty (1925 – 1979) continued this trend until the revolution. The Shah began a campaign of modernization and Westernization, positioning traditionalism opposite the modern; to be modern, one had to reject tradition and religion.[62] During this period, women gradually became more actively involved in politics and the public sphere.[63] Reforms also took place in the realm of personal status and rights, giving women more freedom. However, the only women who experienced any real benefit were generally those in the upper classes.[64] Even where the Pahlavi regime presented these rights, they served to modernize patriarchy rather than support gender equality.[65]

Poster #71, "Painting of a family at war, 1980s" (Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library)

Through the 1970s, the regime's focus on Westernization and modernization contributed to a spike in severe unrest, during which Khomeini gained a large following promoting Islamism and criticizing the regime.[66] After the revolution succeeded, he re-institutionalized Shi'a Islam as the state religion and the clergy as the leading religious authority. Post-revolution, the opportunities available to women in the public sphere decreased, and the state began to emphasize the importance of raising children and remaining in the home. Khomeini created what Herdt refers to as a "sexual panic," which capitalizes on social fears and a call for moral regulation in order to strip rights or opportunities away from a particular population.[67] Khomeini focused on the plight of the Westernized Iranian woman and her moral and sexual failures as an opportunity not only to regenerate a sense of protective masculinity, but also to insert his own expectations for women and the wider community. These developments provide some context for the posters, which the Iranian government produced during a time of shifting social norms and expectations.

Poster #72, "Painting of determined society at war in a Maoist social realist style, 1981" (Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library)

Dominant Myths from the "Week of the War" Collection

In my analysis of the nine posters below, I identify three main themes: women as martyrs, women as active participants, and the roles of women as supporting actors within the community. I discuss how each of these themes is implied within the content of the posters, and how the roles of women differ from those of men (if men are portrayed in the poster). Additionally, I connect these themes and representations to the broader scholarship on representations of women in conflict in order to situate them within the broader context of the revolution and beyond Iran.

Myth 1: Women as the "Quintessential Martyrs"

The first main myth present in this collection is that of women as the ultimate martyrs, willing to sacrifice their husbands and sons. Khomeini instilled the expectation that women would raise their children to become martyrs and educate them in religion, politics, and culture in order for them to be ready and willing to sacrifice themselves for the cause. The first poster, #77 in the collection, is a drawing of a

Poster #67, "Painting glorifying martyrdom for the cause of God, 1980s" (Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library)

mother wearing a hijab and helping her son study. A picture of a man, presumably her husband, sits on a shelf behind her, and a rifle leans against the wall. Her son is reading a book titled Anecdotes of Pious Men, written by Morteza Motahhari, which examines the lives of various Muslim leaders.[68] She is wearing a hijab and clothing that covers most of her body, leaving only her hands and face uncovered. This is the ideal woman that Khomeini is promoting; she is a pious and married mother, indicated both by her son and the marriage band on her left hand. She is involved in her son's education, with a strong focus on religion. Here, they are working through stories of the lives of religious Shi'i men, a direct reference to the affiliations of the government. We are also reminded of the conflict by the picture of her absent husband on the mantel and the rifle in the corner. She presents an image of the ultimate martyr, one who has lost or will lose her husband, and yet is a believer in the cause as she raises her son to do the same.
Poster #71 similarly depicts a mother (again wearing a headscarf and long coat) encouraging her son to become a soldier and martyr. Accompanied by a wounded man holding a rifle (presumably her husband), she pushes her son forward toward a perceived enemy as he holds a Molotov cocktail and possibly a grenade. The red, hazy coloring has connotations of an apocalyptic warzone, and is also symbolically tied to the Battle of Karbala. Ayatollah Khomeini is present in the background, larger than life, indicating his position as the leader and as the main reference point in the conflict. On the one hand, he gazes toward the sky, leading the viewer to associate his cause with God, giving further justification and legitimacy to his orders. On the other hand, the woman is gazing down, perhaps at her son, and perhaps in grief. We see that while she is willing to sacrifice her family, she is also mourning her own loss while standing tall, evoking Fatima and Zaynab.
Poster #72 depicts several figures, including soldiers, a cleric, and a mother holding a child all pointing forward. Here, the mother is dressed in a chador, a garment that was linked to the concept of jihad and militancy by Khomeini.[69] She stands behind the men, indicating that she is holding a supporting role in the conflict, especially as she is caring for her child. This also conveys the expectation that the men must protect her as they take the front line in the fight. Here, she metaphorically represents both the women in their lives and the motherland that they are fighting to protect. In addition, she holds a red rose, which is the national flower of Iran, demonstrating her support for the state cause. This presents a more "feminine" image; she does not hold a rifle, but rather a flower and a child, further supporting the myth of women as nurturers and caretakers. At the bottom, her chador fades into a depiction of a landscape, symbolizing the motherland and reminding the viewer what the various martyrs and supporters depicted on this poster are fighting for.

Poster #65, "Portrait of a woman in full hijab holding a rifle, 1980s" (Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library)

Poster #68, "Painting of a giant hand crushing an Iraqi fighter jet emblazoned with the American and Soviet flags, emerging from a crowd of men and women pumping their fists in the air, 1980s" (Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library)

Poster #67 is one of the more obviously religiously coded posters from the collection. A woman is the focal point of the poster, wearing a chador that drapes over the body of a martyr in her arms. Above her, we see a faint white hand pointing with one finger upwards, toward God, signifying not only his presence but also his oneness (evoking "There is no god but God"). Behind her, we see Imam Hoseyn riding a horse while holding a sword and a Quran, flanked by the headless martyrs of Karbala. The reference to the Karbala narrative evokes very strong emotions and expectations, both for men and women. As we move down the length of the poster, the coloring transitions from white, which was used for the religious figures, to red (symbolic of Karbala) as we see men hanging, presumably martyrs executed for participating in the revolution. Below them on the left, fetuses encased in red tulips form a long line, and opposite them, on the other side of the woman, are soldiers marching. The positioning of each of these subjects connotes a woman's womb in the way the chador hangs down and as the fetuses seem to lead into the soldiers marching out of frame. Her chador also forms a red tulip, which became a popular symbol during the revolution for the blood of martyrs and their rebirth.[70]
Here, the woman is both in mourning for the faceless martyr she is carrying, literally, and for those that she (as a mother) will carry. The importance of her supporting role is emphasized by her placement in the center of the poster, and the black of her chador (which is in itself an important symbol) stands out against the dominant white and red present in the rest of the depiction. Below her, in between the two lines, lies a prayer mat, and inscribed around the border of the poster is the Surah al-Saff, which focuses on the importance of action in faith and the obligation of jihad, and is focused on the ranks in battle (al-Saff in Arabic literally translates to "line").[71] Not only is the conflict justified by the Quran and God, but sacrifice and martyrdom are portrayed as expected by religion. While the (pious) woman is the focal point of the poster, she is portrayed as more passive, mourning and supporting from the sidelines. The men, on the other hand, hold guns or swords or are hanged, indicating active participation and establishing a contrast between men and women. Within all of these posters, we have clear expectations laid out for what a "good" woman looks like and how she behaves, both privately and publicly.

Poster #73, "Painting of neighborhood militia gathered in a bakery, 1980" (Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library)

Myth 2: Women as Active Participants

Another theme in two of the posters portrays women in a more active role as they hold guns or participate in protests. Poster #65 features a woman wearing a hijab in the foreground, drawn from the shoulders up, staring to the right as she holds a rifle. Behind her stand destroyed buildings, and the whole poster is in black and white, with the darkest section being that of

Poster #69, "Painting of national unity, cooperation, and sacrifice in time of war, 1981" (Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library)

the rifle, bringing focus to the weapon. While women were not expected to take up arms and actively participate in conflict, it was not unprecedented. Even Zaynab at one point joined the battle (although she was rebuked),[72] and she is associated with fearlessness in similar posters.[73] In these posters, the women are not Zaynab herself, but her "progeny," and therefore are symbolic women used to represent those following Zaynab's example as she supported men on the sidelines of conflict, close enough to see it. Rather than emphasizing their motherhood or role as mourners, these women are more active participants and supporters, embodying a fearless commitment to serve. If it comes down to it, women are expected to be willing to sacrifice themselves as well in service of the country.

Poster #68 presents a much different image. The focal point is a massive fist crushing an Iraqi fighter jet with American and Soviet flags, rising from a group of men and women protesting against these powers. The men and women are separated by the fist, segregated by gender, but all of them have similar facial expressions, many of them raising their fists in the air. All of the women are covered, indicating religious piety, but there is nothing that differentiates their role in the protest from that of the men. As a whole, men and women seem to be standing on relatively equal footing here, united against Western powers and Iraq. "God is Great" is written on the arm, which may indicate that not only is this a social duty, but a religious one as well. Metaphorically, God is supporting the fight and the cause, legitimizing and justifying the resistance. The connotation, therefore, is that "good" women are those who are appropriately pious and answer God's call to action, indicating their willingness to sacrifice whatever is needed to accomplish their goals.

Poster #66, "Portrait in pencil of young boy holding a rifle and wearing an ammunition belt with two hand grenades attached, 1981" (Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library)

Myth 3: Roles of Women in the Community

The last set of posters are those that utilize a more community-centric theme. Poster #73 depicts a bakery where several members of the military or militia have gathered. They are reading a newspaper article featuring Khomeini, while graffiti on the table extolls the strength and readiness of the army and the revolution. At the same time, the bakery is open for business as a woman carries a rifle and a child receives a loaf of bread. She seems to be accompanied by two other small children, a boy and a girl. The other woman in the poster is standing in the corner holding a rifle and seems to be aligned with the militia rather than present as a consumer. All three (possibly four, if we include the baby) of the women and girls present are wearing hijabs, and the women seem to be assuming supporting roles in the fight as both are holding firearms. The man peering out of the window indicates that there is a certain level of risk present, and so these women are in the middle of the conflict. The role of the mother is especially interesting, as she is present not only as a caretaker but also as a protector, a role usually reserved for men.

This also implies that these women are active supporters in the conflict, and it introduces us to a community space that was used as a gathering place for revolutionaries. A bakery is not where one might imagine political gatherings, but here it seems that men and women can mingle, not only to shop, but also to exchange information and reaffirm support. In their roles as caretakers of the house, women are more likely to receive their information from places like bakeries. They will likely take home what they hear or discuss and pass it on to their children, husbands, and other women outside their household. She has also brought her children with her, inserting them into the revolutionary space as well. While women may not have been able to participate in discussions in cafes or mosques, more neutral spaces like bakeries provided an acceptable space for men and women to interact. A poster of the Ayatollah Khomeini on the wall watches both literally and metaphorically over the proceedings. The revolution and its fight affected all members of the community in every aspect of life, and this poster emphasizes that resistance is both a religious and a social duty.

Likewise, Poster #69 depicts a community setting with several men and women. In the foreground, two men, one with a rifle, the other in military green, sit breaking bread with four women in chadors and hijab, likely their wives and daughters. The women sit behind them, faces drawn downward possibly in deference to the men, possibly in examination of the papers or books in front of them. Behind them to the far right, a man passes under a Quran held by a woman leaning out of the window. On the wall is written, "There is and always will be a line of falsehood in opposition to the line of truth (taken from poster description)." In the center, a group of men who look to be lower- or middle-class carry boxes and blankets to, as the description notes, donate to soldiers at the front. To their left, a line of people, both men and women dressed in Western clothing, carry bags of groceries away from a store. They are drawn in such a way that they appear untrustworthy, with the women leaving their heads uncovered and their hair showing, the connotation being that they are more selfish, taking food for themselves as they hoard their money.

The juxtaposition of these two different groups of women, those wearing chadors and sitting with their husbands or fathers and the Westernized women taking groceries and ignoring the soldiers at the front, presents a clear connotation of right and wrong. The more religious women are the "good" women, taking care of their community and serving the soldiers as they can. The Westernized women, who are either not Muslim or are not "true" Muslims in the eyes of Khomeini, are selfish and do not support the soldiers. Here, religious dress is used to connote devotion to the revolution and to signal the importance of piety to the viewer. We also see the role that women play in embodying piety and religious devotion in the woman holding the Quran for the soldier to pass under. She is metaphorically holding the religious conscience of the community and passing it on to the soldier. Additionally, we can assume that the quotation written on the wall (translated above) refers metaphorically to these two lines of people, those who are donating and supporting the soldiers, and those who are not.

The last poster I will discuss here is not directly related to the theme of the community, but as it portrays how these social myths are ingrained in society and people from childhood, it remains relevant. Poster #66 depicts two children, one boy and one girl, standing in front of a wall covered in religious graffiti. The boy, standing in front of the girl, holds a rifle and has a belt with hand grenades attached to it. The girl, wearing a hijab, is crying as she holds a Quran in her arms. These depictions promote particular myths surrounding gender roles and the protection narrative. The young boy, despite his age, is already protecting the (pious) girl. The boy understands that it is his duty to participate in the conflict in order to protect his (assumed) sister, and more broadly the motherland and the future of the nation.

Discussion and Conclusion

As we saw in the poster analysis, most of the posters that included women fell into three main categories: women as the ultimate martyrs, women as active participants, and depictions of the community. As a whole, they reaffirm many social myths: women are simultaneously mourning the sons and husbands they have sent to war while educating and supporting the next generations of soldiers. Pious women are not only the ideal standard but are also symbolic of the honor and strength of the larger community and provide a justification for war. Religious imagery is often used, especially of the Battle of Karbala and the figures of Fatima and Zaynab. The hijab and chador, besides being worn by almost every woman depicted, are also part of the symbolism; they are linked to jihad, differentiate between "good" and "bad" women, or fall over the face of a martyr. Notably, some posters portray women in more active roles as they protest or hold rifles with other militia members. Overall, these posters portray the myths that Khomeini and his government found important in their bid to control and reform social norms and behaviors. They promote the raising of pious children ready to martyr

themselves and encourage women to take on this role. They also align the revolution with the goals of God, providing legitimacy and justification for the sacrifices made and for the conflict itself. Furthermore, they may also provide some insight into the various settings that were politicized by the conflict, like the bakery.

Propaganda like this was ultimately useful during Khomeini's establishment of a new government. During the revolution and after, Khomeini used propaganda efforts and campaigns in order to focus the attention on religious female actors and emphasized the importance of piety, opposing the Shah's approach of modernization and secularization. Activists, protesters, and government actors printed posters all over the country and placed them on cars in the streets or made them into painted murals on walls or billboards.[74] These posters also appeared in major protests and demonstrations, providing a striking backdrop to the revolution against the Shah. Some were made into stamps (like #67 above), which would have drastically increased their circulation and impact. The presence of these posters and images provided a constant reminder of these expectations, and physical reinforcement (see the discussion of the Sisters of Zaynab unit above) indicated to men and women that these were not gentle suggestions.

It also provides a clear vision of who the enemy is. By associating religion (Islam) with "good," coded visually through clothing, the Qu'ran, etc., it implies that those who do not present the same way are aligning themselves with the enemy. In Poster #69, this message is explicitly referring to the West (and Western influence in Iran), as discussed above, and so signaling piety is not only a religious action, but a matter of loyalty to Khomeini and the state. Given the research surrounding the impact of visual language and imagery, and the changes recorded in Iranian society, especially for women, the propaganda does seem to have affected social norms and gender roles in Iran after the revolution and during the Iran-Iraq War. These new expectations and norms would have afforded certain women, those who fit these archetypes, an amount of privilege and power. We can think of the Sisters of Zaynab, who patrolled the streets policing women's behaviors and clothing. Some women capitalized on the narrative of Zaynab as a healer to create and lead ritual healing groups devoted to her that came to replace national medical systems for many women.[75] They saw Zaynab as a friend and fellow martyr who would understand their private ailments or challenges and suffer with them or aid them. The government supported these healing groups, thus affording the women leading them a livelihood, a level of social prestige, and government approval. Not only have many of these expectations endured as Khomeini's regime has continued to maintain power (even with new leadership), but the narratives used to encourage conformity to these myths are still relevant and powerful.

In looking at some of the different themes, myths, and connotations present, we can see how state propaganda was used to promote certain values and ideas, and continued examination of other visual propaganda would provide a valuable analysis of both state-sponsored myths and their impact. Murals are still widespread throughout Iran, and investigating how imagery and symbolism may affect societal behaviors and expectations, especially for women, remains relevant if we are to understand the influence and reach of the regime. Incorporating gender into our examination of social myths and visual cues encourages a deeper and more complex understanding of how states or organizations can introduce and maintain dramatic social change, even as women capitalize on the same myths to take space and challenge norms.

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