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Society, Politics and Ideologies in the Modern Arab East

A Trans-Asian Academic Roundtable

Edited by
Ayaka KURODA and Shun WATANABE

Asia-Japan Research Institute
Ritsumeikan University

AJI BOOKS

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Editors' Preface

This volume is a record of the workshop series entitled, "International Workshop for Trans-Asian Academic Communication," held in January and February 2021, organized by Asia-Japan Research Institute, Ritsumeikan University.

The Covid-19 pandemic, which spread rapidly across the world in the spring of 2020, put many researchers in a challenging situation. In the area of field science, many researchers had to cancel their field surveys, and were unable to travel to participate in academic conferences overseas. From the very early stage of the pandemic, the Asia-Japan Research Institute has been seeking ways to continue research activities and have academic exchanges with researchers abroad, even when overseas travel is impossible. The international workshops held in January and February 2021 are some of the fruits of such efforts.

In this workshop, early-career scholars in Middle Eastern studies gave their presentations and engaged in lively discussions on how to understand politics, society, and ideologies in the Arab East. Coming ten years after the Arab Uprising, it was the perfect time to discuss the political, social, and cultural transformations in the region. Although not all the presenters mention the Uprising directly, all the presentations included in the booklet deal with the transformations that have happened in this region in the last decade. As a valuable record of our attempt to seek academic exchange under the pandemic, we decided to publish the contents of the selected presentations.

We organized two workshops under the series of "International Workshop for Trans-Asian Academic Communication." The first

workshop, “Understanding Political Quandaries in the Modern Arab East” was held on January 26 and the second one, “Ideologies and Social Movements in the Modern Arab East” was held on February 2.

Although we cannot list all their names here, we received tremendous support from many people in organizing the workshop and publishing the booklet. First of all, we would like to show our deepest gratitude for those who all participated and engaged actively in the workshop, especially Dr. Susann Kassem from the University of Oxford, Dr. Nate George from SOAS University of London, and Prof. Takuro Kikkawa from Ritsumeikan Asia-Pacific University, Japan.

The first workshop was held with the cooperation of Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Japan. We would like to show our deepest gratitude to the Director of the Foundation, Ms. Junko Chano. Thanks to the fellowship program provided by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Shun Watanabe, one of the editors, had an opportunity to engage in research at the University of Oxford for two years, which later became the basis of this workshop. Our sincere gratitude also goes to Prof. Eugene Rogan from the University of Oxford, who supported his research life while in the UK and assisted in organizing this event.

This series of workshops was also supported by the research grant of Asia-Japan Research Institute to organize international academic gatherings. Prof. Yasushi Kosugi, the director of Asia-Japan Research Institute has been extremely supportive in organizing this workshop. Prof. Anthony Brewer, Dr. Toshiyuki Takeda, and Mr. Tahei Okamoto have made enormous efforts to edit and publish this volume. Dr. Ammar Khashan provided technical support for organizing the workshop online.

At the time of the workshop, we did not know when this difficult health emergency would end. We have tried to continue exploring new forms of research as building new friendships was essential in our research activities, even under the circumstances in which people rarely

meet face to face and have difficulty in traveling.

After two years, the situation has improved markedly. However, we are not back in the pre-Covid era but seem to have started living in the post-Covid one. We must carry the lessons of those pandemic years, when we tried to establish a new style of research life, into the next period. We hope that the fruits of our efforts in that era remain meaningful in the post-Covid era as well.

March 2023
Ayaka KURODA
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Contributors

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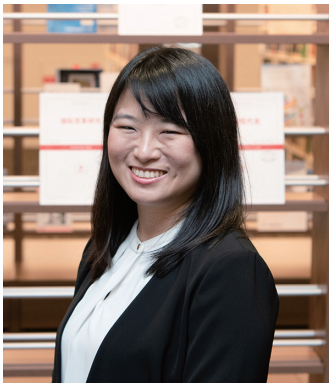
Dr. Ayaka KURODA



Chapter 4: Questioning Secular Modernity: The Political Visions of Islamic Intellectuals in Egypt and their Quest for the Civil Society

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Chapter 1
Transformation of the Ruling Coalition in Contemporary Jordan: Implications from the Process of Decentralization

Shun WATANABE

1. Introduction

The question of the Jordanian monarchy's stability has gathered academic attention for several decades. This question is becoming more important today: political and economic liberal reforms are prevalent in the Arab world but authoritarian rulers in the region have been holding on to their rule. The liberal reforms will apparently lead to democratization, but it seems not to be the case in the Arab region. Jordan is one of the first countries among Arab monarchies that started liberal reforms, which means that the Hashimite monarchy is one of the best examples in addressing this issue.

This chapter focuses on the case study of decentralization in Jordan, one of the most recent political reforms in the country. This research is based on the author's fieldwork in Jordan in the summer of 2019, under the fellowship of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

This chapter consists of four parts. The first section will address the contemporary politics of Jordan. The second section will describe the social and political backgrounds that decentralization emerges from. In part three, the author is going to look into the case studies of decentralization. After a brief introduction of the case of decentralization, two issues are examined. One is the function of a newly

created local council named governmental Council, *Majlis al-Muḥāfaẓa* in Arabic. The other is the discussion about the amendment to the decentralization law. The final part will conclusion and implications for the stability of the Jordanian monarchy in this era.

Figure 1. The Monastery of Ad Deir in Petra
Source: Getty Images

2. Contemporary Politics in Jordan

Jordan is a monarchy whose king has significant political power at the center of the regional regime. Despite its poor racist conditions, the monarchy has maintained its rule since its birth in the 1920s. It is widely argued that the monarchy's durability is supported by its indigenous, Trans-Jordanian or sometimes called Jordanian-Jordanian population.

In Jordan today, people of Palestinian origin, Palestinian Jordanians, outnumber the indigenous Trans-Jordanians. Such Palestinian Jordanians may live in urban areas whereas Trans-Jordanians dominate the rural areas. Then why is such a minority group, Trans-Jordanians the key to regional maintenance? Their importance is due to the

historically created divide and rule attitude between Trans-Jordanian and Palestinian-Jordanians, especially after the clash between the Jordanian government and the Palestinian militia in 1970, the so-called Black September Organization. Palestinian Jordanians came to be regarded as a potential opposition to the regime, and under this social distrust among the population the regime formalized a kind of division of labor, where Trans-Jordanians dominated the public sector and were provided with a range of public resources including preferential social welfare, employment opportunities, especially joining the military, and other forms of social services.

On the other hand, Palestinian Jordanians dominated the private sector, but they did not have well granted access to public resources. Besides, this division of labor presupposed the population's acceptance of the reigning regime, which meant that such a political economic contract was accompanied by authoritarian repression of the opposition. As such the Jordanian regime relied on Trans-Jordanians as a royal supporting base under the country's social ethnological divisions in exchange for the public resources.

However, such a ruling formula reached a turning point at the end of the 1980s. The country's economic downfall made it impossible for the regime to sustain the Trans-Jordanian favoring governance. Such governance put high pressures on the state budget. With international financial institutions support, mainly the IMF and World Bank. The country started to introduce a series of neoliberal market reforms, including reducing subsidies to fuels, privatizing the nationally owned companies and trade liberalization. This precedent was accelerated in the era of the new King Abdullah II from 1999, and a free trade agreement with the US that was signed in 2000, just a short period after the new king's succession, is the most prominent example of this liberalization. It was the first FTA between the US and the Arab countries.

Figure 2. King Abdullah II of Jordan
Source: Getty Images

In pursuing such economic liberalization policies, the king has recruited business oriented technocratic elites to the region. This policy inevitably undermined the dominance of the ruling coalition and neoliberal elites in the ruling regime.

Based on these political and economic developments, students of Jordanian politics have started to question the country's stability under Trans-Jordanians' support for the regime. For example, Curtis Ryan (2011) mentioned a conflict between Trans-Jordanian old guards and neoliberal elites in the ruling regime. However, this research field is still under development, and thus we need more detailed analysis on this topic, and this study aims at filling this gap and deepening our understanding of Jordanian politics and Arab monarchies.

Based on this understanding, this chapter aims to address this question: What effect does the transformation of the ruling coalition of the Jordanian regime from the Trans-Jordanian elites dominated coalition to a coalition with newly rising neoliberal elites, have in

Jordanian politics? Here the words "ruling coalition" derive from the theory of authoritarianism, which is defined as those individuals who support the government and jointly with the dictator hold enough power to be necessary and sufficient for its survival (Svolik, 2009, 478).

The point here is that that ruling coalition is considered as the focal point of power sharing in the authoritarian regime. The authoritarian regime's maintenance depends on the region's ability to keep the ruling coalition united and prevent an organized revolt against the existing regime. Here you can see the importance of this study of the course of Jordanian politics, which not only reflects the characteristics of the authoritarian rule in Jordan today, but lies at the center of the stability of the Jordanian monarchy.

Based on this situation, this study examines the decentralization reform as a case study. This reform is one of Jordan's most recent political reforms starting from 2007. The Jordanian state has historically been centralized, but the country is attempting to transfer authority and responsibility to intermediate and local governments. Dedecentralization is defined by Litvack and Seddon (1999) as the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to intermediate and local governments or quasi-independent government organizations and/or the private sector. As this definition implies, the process of decentralization covers various dimensions in society. However, this study concentrates its focus on the decentralization reform's political and administrative dimensions and attempts to grasp its influence on the country's ruling coalition.

Why do the decentralization reforms matter to the ruling coalition? Because the decentralization process includes the transfer of authority from the central government to the sub-national governments, it inevitably concerns elites at the center of the government and other trans-Jordanian elites in the rural areas. This decentralization could

affect the stability of the ruling coalition.

Furthermore, this research adopts the perspective of multi-level governance. The point here is twofold. Firstly, this study attempts to examine the case of decentralization not solely as the issue of lawmaking at the central government level, nor of local politics independent of the politics of the center, but that of the interaction between the center and local politics. This is a gap in the current scholarship of Jordanian studies, which addresses central and local politics separately.

Secondly, the study takes the decision-making power as the power able to determine the distribution of state resources. This applies to almost all political entities in the world, but it significantly applies to the case of Jordan, where the distribution of state resources has been extensively employed to gain support from the constituencies, especially from Trans-Jordanians as mentioned before. Therefore, this chapter will show an attempt to examine the effect of decentralization on the mechanism of state resource distribution in Jordan from the perspective of multi-level governance. Before going into details about the case of decentralization, the following section briefly looks at the current situation of the ruling coalition Jordan.

3. Ruling Coalition in Jordan: Social and Political Backgrounds of Decentralization

As was mentioned earlier, there is a political cleavage between indigenous Trans-Jordanians, for short TJ and Palestinian-Jordanians, for short PJ. This cleavage was politicized and created a division of labor, upon which the Hashemite regime kept its stability. However, such a formula has been under pressure since the beginning of neoliberal policies.

Faced with the challenge, the regime had to create a new ruling strategy to maintain support from the TJ population instead of depending on generous state resource distributions. The regime subsequently created a new ruling strategy: competitive clientelism.

This is a term coined by Ellen Lust (2009). The regime maintains support for TJ deputies and provides the constituencies with a certain degree of access to state resources. This system is supported by the TJ favored or rural favored election system, which grants more value to the votes of rural constituencies than those in the urban areas.

The political development we have seen thus far shows how the Jordanian regime succeeded in transforming their ruling strategy to maintain the status quo under the changing conditions that the region rests upon. However, the regime also introduced a new strategy, different from the previous formula. It was the active, incremental appointment of business oriented technical elites to the government or newly created advisory organizations through royal appointments.

The recruitment reflects technological technocratic considerations but was viewed as a potential threat to the TJ elites vested interests. This rise of business elites created political competition between them and traditional TJ elites in the ruling coalition, both in the form of conflict and compromise. The rights of business elites in the Jordanian regime are reflected in the appointment of prime ministers as can be seen in this figure. In a democratic Parliament system such as we can see in the UK or Japan, the prime minister is chosen by the majority in the parliament. However, in the case of Jordan, the appointment is made at the King's discretion.

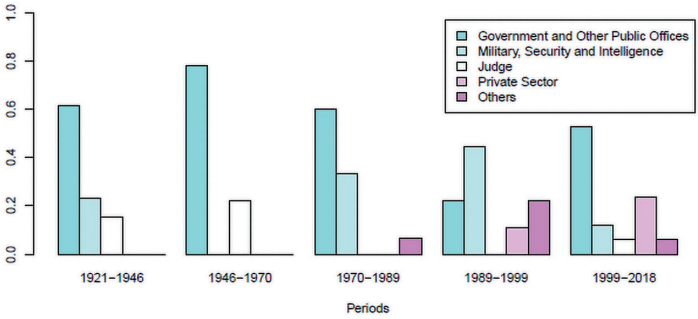

Figure 3. Pattern of Career Background of the Appointed Prime Ministers
Source: The Author

The Figure 3 illustrates the trends in the appointment of the prime minister in Jordanian history classified by the appointee's background. Though this tells us that the government and other public offices are the prime route to the Prime Ministership, when we have a closer look at the recent trends since 1989, we can find a significant increase of prime ministers from the private sector.

4. Case Studies: Decentralization in Jordan

In the following section, I will analyze the case of decentralization in Jordan, focusing on the conflict and compromise between the two groups in the ruling coalition namely Trans-Jordanian elites and business-oriented technocrats.

Jordan has a two-tier local administration system with ninety-nine municipalities (*baladiyya*) and twelve governorates (*muḥāfaẓa*), and three special districts. Roughly speaking, the government is the same as a county in the UK and prefecture in Japan.

The difference between these two types of local administration

lies in the degree of autonomy and jurisdiction they are subjected to. The municipality has some degree of autonomy, having its budget and elected mayor, and it is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of local administration.

There exists some discussion on the degree of substantial autonomy in the municipality, but mostly the ministry has enjoyed some degree of autonomy since the formulation of municipal law in 1954.

Conversely, the governorates have been under substantial control of the Ministry of Interior, which decides the budget and appoints the administrator, or *muḥāfiẓ* in Arabic.

The centrally appointed *muḥāfiẓ* enjoys his discretion in the decision making at the governate by utilizing his firm grip on the security apparatus, which is also governed by the Ministry of Interior.

Figure 4. Parliamentary Elections in Jordan
Source: Getty Images

The decentralized election reform challenges this centralized local administration in Jordan. Ten years after King Abdullah II announced the district's decentralization plan, the decentralization law was formulated in 2015.

It strengthened the local autonomy of the municipalities and governorates by establishing an elected council for the first time in Jordanian history at the level of governorate. Its first election was conducted in 2017, as well as the council's election at the municipality level of the mayor and newly elected figures hold office for four years.

The following sections examine the situations of the first term since the decentralization law was enacted and the election was held and the discussions over amending the decentralization law. These studies focus on the multi-level governance and not solely on the politics of center nor on the local politics.

(1) First Term of Decentralization in Jordan

This is an analysis of the first term of decentralization in Jordan since 2017. Under the decentralization law, there are three levels of local elections in Jordan: governorate council, mayor, and municipal and local councils. Despite the difference in the type of elections, the elections' overall results were the same, that is, the dominance of tribal figures. One of the most prominent independent newspapers in Jordan *al-Ghad*, reported that 85% of the seats are dominated by tribal, regional and independent candidates. This is no surprise because the election rules are created in the tribal figures favor, as is the case of the national parliament. In fact, in the parliamentary elections in 2016, it is reported that independents won 73% of the seats. In the context of the Jordanian election, independents are generally composed of conservative pro regime and tribal figures.

Some opposition figures choose to run as independents, but the number of such candidates is limited. Similarly, those candidates who are party affiliated are oppositional in general. There are some pro-regime conservative parties, but most of them are small, poorly organized and prone to dissolution soon after the election.

To grasp the challenges of Jordan's decentralization reform further, this section also examines the situation of the governorate council. The governorate council has two main challenges. The first is the council's legal framework. As explained earlier, the governate council is a newly created advisory council of the governorate. This reflects the decentralization law's aim to strengthen the representation of the population's will in the governorate level policies. However, there are significant legal limitations in the role of the council. All the council can do is to provide advice to the governorate administration, and it does not make policy decisions at the governorate. It seems to reflect a compromise between the old-school and the reform initiative. On the one hand, the establishment of the governorate council reflects the idea of decentralization to strengthen the input from the local populations, and the idea of planning development projects at the governorate level itself is a landmark for the local administration in Jordan. However historically, historically, the governorate has been tightly controlled by the governor, who is appointed by the Minister of Interior and is routinely shuffled to another Governorate.

Reflecting the Ministry of Interior's jurisdiction, one of the government's prominent roles has been the maintenance of public order. In the interviews with members of the various governorates' councils, the author found that almost all of them internalize the official explanations of the Council's role as an administrative advisory body rather than autonomous political decision maker. This sounds as if the council members are conservative and prone to maintaining the status quo and pro-regime figures, but they also share their views with the reformers, the neoliberal technocratic elites. They acknowledge the historical state dominance of resource distribution and the prevalence of clientelistic distribution in the country and argue that the country needs another mechanism that will promote the balanced distribution of

the resources to the citizens. However, as previously mentioned, their authority in decision making is restricted by the law which prevents them from pursuing this goal.

In addition to the legal challenges, they face practical and political challenges, as they lack negotiation power against the central government. Because the authority to give licenses and permissions is under the central ministries, the government has to negotiate with the ministers in implementing a project after decisions are made.

If the governorate were to be granted permissions in implementing a project, they could realize the project smoothly, which would be beneficial to the local population as the representative of the local population, and as a driver of decentralization. Decentralized governance negotiations with the central ministry have a lot to do with the governorate council's raison d'être and policy decisions. However, the problem is that the governor council members do not have enough experience or expertise, connections or resources, to smoothly negotiate with the ministers.

Furthermore, legislative power could be beneficial in the negotiations with the ministry, and this is a case for the members of the Parliament. In exchange for the cooperation on a specific issue of a ministry's administration concern, they could win concessions from them. However, in the case of governorate council members, they do not have such an authority that would be useful in negotiation with the ministry, which makes the negotiation harder than the case of parliamentarians.

The struggle for the governorate council members is not only limited to such administrative dimensions, as they are facing political challenges as well. Although they constitute what is officially considered as an administrative body, as I have mentioned, it represents the local population as well. The council members have an incentive to provide benefits to the constituencies to gain votes from them in the upcoming elections.

A member of a Governor's Council showed me a long list of the call history on his cell phone and told me that his phone number is open to anybody, and people do make phone calls to him at any time to ask him for help. He went on to say that responding to such requests for help is an essential part of his work as a member of the Governorate Council.

This means that structure of competitive clientelism, which was initially discussed at the level of national politics, has also been applied to sub-national politics. This predicts that the governing council members have both administrative and political functions, and, more importantly what people expect from the governorate council member is the distribution of state resources, as is the case of parliamentarians. Parliamentarians and local elected politicians are competing with each other in providing services to the constituencies.

Moreover, it seems that tribes or political parties do not function as a forum for cooperation among them, but are just competing with each other to provide resources. Accordingly, the Governorate Council is in a difficult situation both administratively and politically.

(2) Amendment to the Decentralization Law

The latter part of the analytical section looks at the discussion of the amendment to the decentralization law. At the same time as the implementation of the decentralization as per the law of 2015, people had already started to consider reforming it based on their experiences in the first phase of the project. The discussion has shown us how people consider the differences of decentralization and how people view relations between the center and local administrations and politics in this era.

The decentralization project in Jordan is implemented under the support of multiple international aid organizations. They provide active reviews and recommendations to the Jordanian government. In the

case of discussion of the amendment, a governmental advisory council named "Economic and Social Council (al-Majlis al-Iqtisadi wa-l-Ijtimaʿi al-Urdunni)," and a domestic research institute named "Al-Quds Center for Political Studies (Markaz al-Quds lil-Dirasat al-Siyasiyya)," as well as international agencies, like the USAID and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung have provided recommendations.

In this chapter, I focus on the recommendations by the USAID CITIES project, which is working widely across the country, and has a significant influence on the government through their close cooperation with the ministries. "USAID CITIES" is a USAID-funded five-year project from 2016 for cities, and the name "CITIES" is the acronym of "cities implementing transparent, innovative, and effective solutions."

It works with the Ministry of Parliament and Political affairs, the Minister of the Interior, and the Ministry of Local Administration, covering 33 municipalities and all of the 12 governorates. The project covers different sizes and locations of municipalities. According to their official document, their task is to support the development of more inclusive government operations.

In a report named "The National Dialogue for Decentralization," a summary of the issues was prepared on May 23, 2019. The CITIES project provides an analysis of the current development of the decentralization project in Jordan and proposes recommendations for the amendment of the law (USAID CITIES, 2019).

According to the recommendations, what struck me the most was the proposal for reorganizing the Governorate Council. Instead of direct elections, the plan calls an indirect one when creating the governorate Council. Specifically, they propose that the governorate council be reorganized as an arena that gathers municipalities and local civil societies representatives.

The aim of this proposal is in their view, to reduce conflict in

elections and promote cooperation in the local administrations. This view makes sense, but this proposal seems to reflect two additional issues.

The first is the prevalence of the deep-seated distrust for elections in the country. Generally speaking, abandoning the election process is a costly proposal because it denies the population the opportunity to show their potential will. Because this proposal was made at such a cost, it should be fair to expect the people's frustration at their inability in a conflict with the administration of the governorate council could exceed the prohibitive cost of losing their votes.

Secondly, that recommendation seems to reflect an adherence to the decentralization reforms facet of administrative reform. The proposal presupposed that the Governorate Council's had only a limited authority in policymaking and attempts to strengthen coordination in the Council within that framework.

Furthermore, two challenges are seen in the amendment proposal. First, the proposal does not touch upon the central control of local governments, including the central ministries supremacy on the government administration. I would argue that this reflects the structural hierarchy in the center-local regions in Jordan.

Secondly, the proposal does not consider the inherently political nature of policy making. The proposal regards the governance council as an administrative body, and its decision making is expected to be made in a fully technocratic way under the direction of the governorate. However, it is impossible to avoid any policy advisory judgment in policy discussions. Instead, it might be possible that people could perceive a policy under the governorates as potentially biased and begin to see the governorate as illegitimate for the population. In other words, a fundamental but direct election could deepen the cleavage between the local administration and the population. This could significantly reduce the ideal of decentralization.

Figure 5. Downtown Amman
Source: Getty Images

5. Conclusion

To summarize the discussion, let me revisit the research question: What effect does the transformation of the ruling coalition of the Jordanian regime from conservative to neoliberal one have on Jordanian politics?

This study examined the cases of decentralization from the perspective of multi-level governance. That is the interaction between the central and local administration and politics. The findings of this study are twofold. Firstly, the case of decentralization is an outcome of a successful compromise between the two groups within the ruling coalition.

TJ elites maintain their supremacy in access to the state through their dominance in the national and local equity councils. Besides, they hindered substantial transformation in the process of resource distribution at the local level. But at the same time, reformers are

happy, because the proposal for the reform was materialized as an internationally regarded reform without damaging the interest of the conservatives.

Simultaneously, the project of decentralization is well acknowledged in the international arena, which is vividly illustrated by the fact that various international aid organizations are committing to the project. Secondly, the process of decentralization reaffirms central control over the local society.

This is exemplified by the legal status and actual situation of the governmental council and the discussion over the amendment of the decentralization law. However, it would be too optimistic to say that the Jordanian government or general regime has successfully resolved the dilemmas of decentralization between the traditional conservative elites and neoliberal technocratic trends. It could be that such a defensive response has been achieved at the expense of local autonomy and local voices, and the substance of the idea of decentralization itself. This means that the legitimacy of the reform in the eyes of local population is fundamentally weak. We have yet to witness serious dissent from the local population to the development of decentralization reform at this time, but it could still happen considering the continuous demonstrations and riots in the rural areas since the beginning of labor reforms, which seem to be gaining strength in recent years.

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Chapter 2
The Struggle for Power in Southern Lebanon: Israel, Hizbullah, and the UN Peacekeeping Forces

Susann KASSEM

1. Introduction

My work in this chapter is a critique of international peacekeeping. Following the Cold War peacekeeping was increasingly militarized, and the budget for United Nations peacekeeping missions has been increased from a total of US $3.6 billion in the year 1994 to US $8.27 billion in the year 2016. Furthermore, peacekeeping practices are increasingly merged with more comprehensive state building and civilian activities, such as peace negotiation and dispute resolution, community development, and providing humanitarian assistance and aid in post conflict zones. These practices are implemented with the goal of winning the trust of the local population, in order to facilitate the military goals of the mission. Linking multinational aid with a multinational army is a new form of external domination highly reminiscent of colonialism. Despite using military force, the attempt is to rely on soft power and implementing peacekeeping. Along the lines of similar studies in the field of anthropology, such as the anthropology of development, law, and human rights, my research views the most recent changes to the United Nations peacekeeping in a neocolonial context.

My research analyzes the conceptualization and practices of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), one of the oldest

and largest peacekeeping forces active today, positioned in the South Lebanese border zone since the Israeli invasion of 1978. It is based on ethnographic research that I undertook in the last ten years in rural South Lebanon. I tracked how UN peacekeeping merges military activities with civilian practices of economic, civic and cultural engagement in an attempt to implement an idealized political order in the former colonial world. I especially analyze the role of UNIFIL's mission under the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701, which followed the 2006 war between Lebanon and Israel, after which UNIFIL was much expanded, moving from about 2,000 soldiers to a maximum of 15,000. At this time, the mission was largely staffed by European countries, Italy, France and Spain, which are also leading the mission.

UNIFIL after 2006 aimed to eliminate Hizbullah's political and military activities. Additionally, UNIFIL was much more heavily armed than the previous force. UNIFIL's most recent force is aimed at delimiting the power of Hizbullah, which is largely blamed for the conflict. In contrast, UNIFIL's previous mandate was initially deployed to ensure the withdrawal of Israel's foreign occupying force, which had occupied South Lebanon between 1978 and 2000. Hizbullah, however, is a locally recognized, democratically elected powerful political party that has several members of Parliament and held government ministries in past coalition governments. It is made up of South Lebanese themselves. UNIFIL is largely led by the more general and comprehensive peacekeeping approach that I mentioned before, that combines state building and civilian activities. UNIFIL's mandate omits the historical context of Hizbullah's creation: Hizbullah's resistance was largely aimed against the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon.

Geographically my field is mostly encompassing the area of South

Lebanon that lies south of the Litani River, which also defines UNIFIL's area of operations. During my fieldwork I lived in Blida, a small Shia village on the southeastern border with Israel. I stayed there several times for a duration of several months each time, mostly between 2009–2015.

For a long time, South Lebanon was rather peripheral, abandoned and neglected by the Lebanese state. The same cannot be said today, as South Lebanon after 2006 has emerged as a geostrategic center and hub for flows of soldiers and experts, and as a place to which humanitarian and development aid are directed. Figure 1 shows the entrance to the village of Blida. You can see the standard blue welcoming signs that every municipality has, but then in the front you also see one that has been erected by UN peacekeepers with a Nepalese flag. Then, in the background, there's a welcoming poster from the village, showing Hassan Nasrallah, Hizbullah's Secretary-General.

Figure 1. The Entrance to Blida
Source: Author

Figure 2 shows a large Hizbullah flag, on top of the hill in Blida overlooking the village. Blida is one of UNIFIL's hotspots where

UNIFIL often clashes with the local population, which supports Hizbullah, and which I will talk more about in this chapter.

Figure 2. Hizbullah Flag
Source: Author

South Lebanon, as you maybe have already learned, is the main operating area of the strongest single political force and movement in Lebanon, Hizbullah. Additionally, it hosts UN institutions, international government and development institutions, and a whole range of national and international NGOs.

2. Historical Overview

To give a brief historical overview, large parts of South Lebanon were occupied by Israel in the past. Israel first took up positions within Lebanon during their invasion in 1978, as I already mentioned, and between 1982 and 1985, the Israeli army occupied about half of the country reaching up to Beirut and laying siege to the capital in the

summer of 1982. In that year alone it is estimated to have killed 20,000 people. The population of South Lebanon inside the occupied area lived under the arbitrary rule of a hostile foreign military occupation for 22 years. This is also what is largely now UNIFIL's area of operations, where Blida is also located. Hizbullah emerged in the mid-1980s, to resist this occupation, as I already mentioned, while advancing a Shia Islamic revolutionary ideology inspired by Iran. (The evolution of Hizbullah's ideology policies and objectives are beyond the scope of this chapter, so I am not going to focus on them.)

3. UNIFIL in South Lebanon

In stark contrast to UNIFIL's mission, the majority of the South Lebanese population emphasizes Hizbullah's legitimacy as a resistance force that both liberated South Lebanon from Israeli occupation in the past, and regards Hizbullah as the only force that stands ready to defend it when facing Israeli military power in Lebanon. While the last war between Lebanon and Israel was 15 years ago, the last 15 years did not pass without confrontations. Israel's nearly daily reconnaissance overflights and frequent smaller confrontations between Israel in Lebanon create a constant threatening presence in the life of the villages in this border zone. UNIFIL's mission requires it to delimit the power of Hizbullah in a region highly supportive of the organization and where it functions as a military force, political party, social movement and provider of essential services. Figure 3 shows a Hizbullah poster and a UNIFIL vehicle side by side, which depicts the environment I am describing. These two politically opposing camps demonstrate the contrast of the two different social and political orientations, inhabiting a rather a small area of about 1000 square kilometers in South Lebanon. Based on this discrepancy regarding Hizbullah's role,

UNIFIL is generally rejected and distrusted by the majority of the South Lebanese population. The distrust of the UNIFIL mission also results from the fact that UNIFIL is only stationed on the Lebanese side of the border, thereby subjecting the South Lebanese population to surveillance by foreign military troops of up to 15,000 peacekeepers, an international mission highly reminiscent of colonial supervision. There is no equivalent to UNIFIL's mission on the Israeli side of the border from which the most violent attacks have been launched, which adds to people's suspicions towards UNIFIL. So how is UNIFIL able to implement a mission that is largely opposed by the local population? This is where my research looked at the role of UNIFIL's civic engagement activities and public relations campaigns. My research analyzes how UNIFIL's implementation is negotiated daily on the ground among a population, which regards UNIFIL with suspicion and is unsupportive of its mission.

Figure 3. UNIFIL Vehicle and Hezbollah Poster
Source: Photo by Reuters/Aflo

(1) UNIFIL's Public and Private Transcripts

In its public performance, UNIFIL presents itself as a successful

peacekeeping operation valued by the local population that has been responsible for the relative peace between Israel and Lebanon since 2006. On UNIFIL's website, and in the public outlets in local TV and radio stations, it advertises its work and good relationship with the local population. Pictures and videos of UNIFIL peacekeepers helping the local population in various undertakings such as assisting during the olive harvest and teaching children in schools. My research reveals a different political reality. UNIFIL's public performance — how the peacekeepers presented their work to me and in public — was quite different from what I was able to observe on the ground.

During my research, confrontations between the local population and the international peacekeeping forces happened very frequently. Confrontations did not only happen when UNIFIL was actively searching for Hizbullah weapon depots, but especially in more day to day occurrences, such as when UNIFIL drove through villages, entered local school buildings, observed the border, or tried to meet villagers outside of an official setting within the municipality. The cause of conflicts was rooted in UNIFIL's goal to contain Hizbullah's movement and its power. The majority of the South Lebanese population highly supports Hizbullah as indicated and opposes UNIFIL's attempts to contain it. The population is suspicious of UNIFIL's behavior, and they often view it to be taking Israel's side in the conflict.

(2) Blue Line Border Confrontations

The borderline between Israel and Lebanon at several places such as in Blida, has never been fully delineated or enforced. One of UNIFIL's goals is to demarcate the border in order to seek to ease tensions between the two states. UNIFIL began the ongoing demarcation of the border in 2000, after Israel withdrew from Lebanon, in order to confirm the withdrawal. UNIFIL refers to the temporary line as the "Blue Line,"

which is supposed to serve as an unofficial and temporary solution in the absence of mutual recognition and a peace agreement between Lebanon and Israel. The Blue Line is still disputed, and at places such as in Blida, highly contested, as it cuts through olive groves and an ancient well.

In opposition to UNIFIL's view, many villagers in Blida regard the Blue Line as yet another effort in a series of western attempts to control their land, dating back to the fall of the Ottoman Empire and competing French, British and Zionist claims over Lebanon, Syria and Palestine.

After having discussed the confrontations between UNIFIL and the local inhabitants, I want to now focus on the question, how is UNIFIL able to establish a basic amount of acceptance among the local population and present its mission as successful, as we have seen earlier, despite these confrontations? This is where I argue the role of UNIFIL's "Quick Impact Projects" is important and deserves attention.

4. UNIFIL's "Quick Impact Projects"

In order to improve support for the UN peacekeeping effort, the so called "Quick Impact Projects"(QIP) became a major subject of my analysis. QIPs are small scale and quickly implementable short-term development projects. They cost usually up to US $25,000 each and can consist of anything from teaching language lessons, yoga courses, to providing electricity generators to the villages and other infrastructure improvements. My research examines UNIFIL's QIPs as one of United Nations peacekeeping's key institutionalizations. UNIFIL and its troop of contributing countries' budget for QIP amounts to approximately US $5 million yearly, which constitutes a considerable amount on a small territory like South Lebanon.

For example, in Blida, as I briefly mentioned, the villagers were against UNIFIL's Blue Line demarcation as it cuts through locally

owned olive groves and cuts access to an ancient well, that, if the boundary were to be strictly demarcated, would become off limits for the villagers and would lie in the Israeli territory. Villagers from Blida protested this Blue Line demarcation over several months. When UNIFIL tried to hinder the people visiting the well they would make their protest larger and louder.

In order to avoid people's protest against the Blue Line in Blida, UNIFIL funded several water-related projects in the village: It improved the water distribution system by pipelines, built a water tower, where water can be connected and stored, and devoted a lot of time and money, much more than the usual US $25,000 per village towards this project, about at least three times this amount. Yet villagers kept visiting the well and protesting the Blue Line demarcation in this area ignoring UNIFIL's attempt to demarcate a new borderline. UNIFIL's approach fails to address the historic value and meaning of the border demarcation for people in this area. The demarcation should be seen in a context of previous border demarcations and appropriations of land that I mentioned before.

While the villagers ignored UNIFIL's efforts, and kept on visiting the well, UNIFIL was still able to present this mission as a successful one, precisely through the funding of the QIPs. When funding projects, UNIFIL celebrates inaugurations with the local population, invites the local mayor and leader to inaugurate a project, and takes nice pictures showing them working happily hand in hand with the local population.

QIP projects primarily serve two essential functions: to institutionalize and legitimize UNIFIL's mission among the local population, and then as tangible evidence to present the mission as a success to international stakeholders. UN peacekeeping practices merge development practices with military activities to reach political goals that fundamentally alter the sovereignty of the host state in the

furtherance of foreign-directed political goals. In UNIFIL's case, this essentially presents political roles of the European powers leading the mission.

The objective of UNIFIL's CIMIC (Civilian Military Coordination) and Civil Affairs department is to convince the local population that UNIFIL's presence and projects for the region are beneficial for them. I argue this comprehensive scope of the UN peacekeeping framework, which includes military practices as well as peace negotiations, dispute resolution, and community development shows typical characteristics of a neocolonial government project, on par with a state. My research shows that while municipalities accept the funding of the QIP, they resist the implementation of the political goals of the mission, such as implementing the Blue Line, or letting UNIFIL search houses and enter villages freely or have contact with the local population outside of formal events organized through municipalities.

5. Conclusion

As we have seen, in reality, the tensions and the conflict still exist. UNIFIL, which is supposed to be an "interim" peacekeeping force has not been able to make itself redundant in over 40 years of its presence in South Lebanon. UNIFIL's mission portrays the conflict as a Lebanese problem that is due to the presence of Hizbullah and the unstable economic situation. This, however, excludes the long history of conflict from the Israeli occupation, as well as land appropriation. The majority of the South Lebanese population does not support Hizbullah because of economic underdevelopment, but due to the long-term Israeli occupation and ongoing Israeli violence that the border communities face.

By excluding the regional context, especially any consideration of Israeli agency in producing the situation, while attempting to contain a

social and political movement that is concerned with addressing Israeli intervention in Lebanon, UNIFIL's deployment lacks parity. It favors one side of the conflict — Israel — while subjecting South Lebanon to an international mission, highly reminiscent of colonial supervision. For this reason, the local population does not support the aim of UNIFIL's mission. They likely never will, as long as disarming Hizbullah along the border with a historic adversary with one of the most powerful militaries in the world remains the aim of the mission.

Unlike UNIFIL's mission, which isolates Hizbullah's role in South Lebanon and presents it as primarily responsible for the Lebanon-Israeli conflict, my descriptions of the research environment and the political situation indicate peace and war in South Lebanon do not exist in a vacuum, but are a products of regional and international development and contestations over political power. My research depicts Hizbullah as only one of the multiple forces in the field, both internal and external, that are vying for power and influence in the region, including UNIFIL itself. Without a political solution for the Arab-Israeli conflict, any peacekeeping mission will be able only to survive, but not to solve the root issue of the conflict, namely the Israeli occupation and the Palestinian refugee question. UNIFIL's Blue Line initiatives and other activities signify the emphasis on a security approach, which is limited to its own established boundaries. Two decades after the end of Israeli occupation, and 15 years after the war of 2006, southern Lebanon remains a stronghold of social, political and military support for Hizbullah. Little else could more clearly indicate the frustrations or even failure of UNIFIL's mission, or more precisely that of its main Western Security Council sponsors in the aftermath of the 2006 war.

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Chapter 3
Defending Islamic Jerusalem: The Debate over the Muslims' Sacred Journey and Arab-Israeli Normalization

Kensuke YAMAMOTO

1. Introduction

In the wake of the Arab-Israeli normalization in 2020, many analysts have made a huge effort to find out the immediate factors for that move. However, there has been a tendency to ignore what seems to be indirect or irrelevant in a quest for a lean description about the transformation in the Arab-Israeli relationship. In this presentation I would like to discuss the case of the debate on Muslims' visits to Israeli-occupied Jerusalem.

Since 1967, when Israel occupied the eastern part of Jerusalem, whether Arab Muslims would be allowed to visit their holy sites there has been a topic of debate. The majority of Arab Muslims believed that they should avoid such visits, which might be misinterpreted as their acceptance of the Israeli authority over occupied Jerusalem. However, in the 2010s, some Muslim thinkers and politicians began initiatives to urge Arab Muslims to visit Jerusalem's holy sites in order to give assistance to the local Palestinians who were oppressed by the Israeli occupation policies. While initially such callings were heavily criticized, in the middle of the 2010s, the idea of visiting Jerusalem under the Israeli rule gained status as one legitimate option. By reviewing the debate of the 2010s, I intend to reveal an overlooked dimension of the

Arab-Israeli rapprochement and attempt to describe the changes in their relationship in a broader sense.

Figure 1. Al-Aqsa Mosque
Source: Author

As many of you know, in September 2020, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Israel inked a peace treaty at a ceremony held at the White House in Washington. Following this two more countries, Sudan and Morocco decided to make peace with Israel too, and it seems more countries will join. Such moves have been explained by the common factors like the necessity of security cooperation, or an interest in building a better relationship with the US government, and even further the need for economic and commercial ties, which have been developed covertly since the 1980s.

These are certainly the direct factors toward Arab-Israeli rapprochement, but on the other hand, these immediate elements to explain the causes of Arab-Israeli rapprochement may not be sufficient to understand the changes in the Arab-Israeli relationship in a comprehensive way. So in other words, there is a risk of narrowing our perspective and a tendency to ignore the topics that are not evidently relevant to diplomatic rapprochement. For instance, prior to

the governmental rapprochement seen in 2020, Arab-Israeli contacts in sporting events, for example, started to be seen sporadically such as in the competitions of judo or bicycle racing. So such a cultural phenomenon would not be directly linked to or directly related to the governmental rapprochement, but it should not be overlooked in order to identify the transformation in the Arab-Israeli relationship.

Then what is required is not only to find the immediate causes of Arab-Israeli normalization in a sophisticated way, but also to reexamine that move broadly like a crustal movement or a crustal change of the earth.

In this context, this chapter deals with the debate on whether Muslims are allowed to visit Jerusalem under occupation. First of all, in Islamic tradition, visiting Jerusalem has been highly recommended throughout history. But since 1967, when the Israeli Forces occupied the eastern part of Jerusalem, visiting there has long been avoided. because such visits by the Muslims would amount to their recognition of the Israeli authority.

Nevertheless, the opposition to visiting Jerusalem under Israeli occupation has diluted or waned in Arab Islamic discourses since the 2010s. I will attempt to explain how the opinion about Muslims visiting Jerusalem was changed, and how such a taboo was broken in the 2010s. Such a transformation in the Muslims' way of thinking did not reach to the Arab-Israeli diplomatic rapprochement directly, but it would deserve attention as a part of the intra-Arab dynamics. These dynamics indicate the changes in the Arab-Muslim view or attitude towards Israel, or their views about the relationship with Israel. So, through this change in the debate, the dilution of the boycott can be seen as one symptom of Arab-Israeli rapprochement. This is the main thesis or main argument of this presentation.

2. Logic of Opponents: Boycott and Anti-Normalization

In this section, I will use the term "opponents" for those who stand against the Muslims' visit to Israeli occupied Jerusalem, and I will call those who stand for the visit to Jerusalem "advocators."

Historically, some Azhari scholars expressed their opposition to visiting Jerusalem under the occupation. The first example is ʿAbd al-Halim Mahmud (1910–1978) who served as Grand Shaykh of al-Azhar from 1973 to 1978. When Anwar Sadat, the president of Egypt, visited Jerusalem to make peace with Israel in 1977, Shaykh Mahmud declined to accompany him. The details of this anecdote are not clear, but many people today regard Shaykh Mahmud as a forerunner of the opponents to visiting Jerusalem under the occupation.

Additionally, Jadd al-Haqq (1917–1996), who served as Grand Shaykh of al-Azhar from 1982 to 1996, articulated his opposition to Muslims visiting Jerusalem under the occupation. He said, "The Muslim who goes to Jerusalem is guilty," and a priority for Muslims is to refrain from visiting Jerusalem until it is returned to its native people, the Palestinians. This remark came on the occasion of the Oslo Accords in 1993, between Israel and the PLO, when some Muslims began to think about visiting Jerusalem in a peaceful mood. However, Shaykh Jadd al-Haqq refuted such an idea.

Further, al-Azhar has repeatedly issued its official statement as an institution that opposes the visit to Occupied Jerusalem. For example, Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi (1928–2010), who was Grand Shaykh of al-Azhar from 1996 to 2010, declared that visiting Jerusalem will not take place as long as it remains under Israeli occupation, and he said this applied to all Azhari scholars. Sayyid Tantawi considered visiting would amount to a recognition of the legitimacy of the Israeli occupation of

Jerusalem. In this way, al-Azhar has persistently been against visiting Occupied Jerusalem, and this fact seems to have had a huge significance in the Sunni world until today.

The next case is that of Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1926-2022), who was one of the most famous scholars of this time. He opposed visiting Occupied Jerusalem more harshly than the shaykhs of al-Azhar, and it was al-Qaradawi who was seen as a staunch enemy by the advocators.

Figure 2. Yusuf al-Qaradawi
Source: Getty Images

In 1997, in the al-Jazeera television program "Shariah and Life," al-Qaradawi expressed his opposition to visiting Jerusalem under the Israeli occupation. He stated, "As long as Jerusalem remains under the spears of the Israelis and under its control, the one who visits it must take permission from Israel. So from the perspective of shariʿa this is

not permissible, because al-Qaradawi said this visit would mean our recognition of the Israeli rule."

And also in his book concerning the question of Muslims visiting Jerusalem, al-Qaradawi begins his fatwa by stating that it is required for Muslims to reclaim their usurped lands by sacrificing their fortune and themselves, and he added that if the Muslims cannot take them back, then Allah imposes on the believers to boycott their enemy. Following this he finally stated, "the visit to Jerusalem is clearly illegal, even if it is called religious tourism."

Here we can see, despite the question being about visiting Jerusalem, al-Qaradawi started his fatwa by explaining the legal rules on usurped Muslim lands. This is because he sees it as a political issue related to war and occupation, rather than a religious issue related to the pilgrimage. This is al-Qaradawi's understanding which is similar to the understanding of all the opponents.

3. Birth of the Advocators: Individual Callings and Dawn of Heated Controversy

Already since the 1990s, though sporadically, some figures have called for visiting Jerusalem, but these were pushed to the margins in the past. However, since the 2010s, the longstanding stance in opposition to visiting Jerusalem has been reexamined in the Arab-Islamic world. The debate over the permissibility for Muslims to visit Jerusalem began with the remarks made by Mahmud ʿAbbas (1935–), the President of the Palestinian Authority since 2004, and Mahmud al-Habbash (1963–) who was their religious advisor. In February 2012, in an international conference about Jerusalem, ʿAbbas urged Arabs and Muslims worldwide to visit Jerusalem in order to support the resistance of the local Palestinians. He expressed, "Visiting the prisoner is a

support for him, it does not mean normalization with the prison guard." So he compared Occupied Jerusalem to the prisoner and Israel to the prison guard.

ʿAbbas made these claims based on his own religious and historical understanding. He stated that it's not forbidden to visit Jerusalem. He said there is no word either in the Quran or the Hadith today to prohibit the visit, so no one prohibited the visit throughout history, even when Jerusalem had fallen under foreign occupation, such as to the Crusaders. On this point, he issued a quasi-fatwa and this received much criticism.

Also, totally agreeing with ʿAbbas, Mahmud al-Habbash played a major role in building a rationale for advocating the visit to Jerusalem even under the Israeli Occupation, and he explained his stance from both religious and political points of view.

Concerning the religious basis, al-Habbash considered the visit to Jerusalem as a command by the Prophet and expressed it as a legitimate religious right. So, in his understanding, no one can prevent the visit to Jerusalem except an oppressor.

Regarding the political context, al-Habbash claimed that the Muslim visit would confirm Arab Islamic rights over Jerusalem and contribute to reviving the local Palestinian economy through the visitors' purchasing activities. In order to justify the visit to Jerusalem under the occupation, al-Habbash referred to some historical evidence. He used the example of the Hadith about when Prophet Muhammad asked to visit Jerusalem. At that time Jerusalem was under the authority of the Roman Empire, but the Prophet did not impose any condition on Muslims visiting Jerusalem. So al-Habbash confirmed it by such an example, and his thesis is that visiting Jerusalem is permitted or remains permitted, even under the Israeli occupation today.

Appeals to visit Jerusalem by ʿAbbas and al-Habbash in 2012 received a great deal of attention, chiefly because, coinciding with

their appeals, two internationally renowned religious figures visited Jerusalem. In April 2012, a famous Sufi leader, al-Habib ʿAli al-Jifri (1971–), visited Jerusalem, and two weeks later ʿAli Jumʿa, the Grand Mufti of Egypt at that time, followed him. Their visits had a major impact on the Arab Islamic world, which brought about a heated controversy.

Figure 3. ʿAli Jumʿa, the Grand Mufti of Egypt
Source: Getty Images

First, ʿAli al-Jifri visited Jerusalem escorted by a Jordanian Prince, and according to his statement, al-Jifri visited Jerusalem with longing for the Holy City. He explained, "I asked Allah for guidance whether or not to visit al-Aqsa mosque and my heart became delighted for this decision." Against the critics, he justified his visit by citing the historical evidence similar that of al-Habbash, and further, he emphasized the need to show solidarity with the Palestinians, and espoused the political and economic benefits for them by visiting Jerusalem.

Then, two weeks later, ʿAli Jumʿa visited Jerusalem, and this time he was invited and accompanied by the Jordanian Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, the religious advisor of King Abdullah II. His visit sparked

a controversy widely. Al-Qaradawi once again issued a statement banning the visit to occupied Jerusalem, while on the other hand, al-Habbash and ʿAli al-Jifri praised the visit of ʿAli Jumʿa, and after he came back from Jerusalem, Jumʿa recounted that his visit was an informal one and did not represent his official position as a Grand Mufti. He stated that he did not consider his visit to be an act of normalization because he said, Jordanian authorities arranged all his visit and there was no Israeli hand involved in his visit.

Further, he justified his visit by saying that by our failure to visit Jerusalem and by leaving it to the Israelis, the Israelis consider the city is theirs. So such are the claims by ʿAli al-Jifri and ʿAli Jumʿa, and also Mahmud al-Habbash and Mahmud ʿAbbas. These are the starting ideas of the advocators.

4. Growth of "Advocators": Consensus-Building and Endorsement of an Official Body

After these callings, there was a growth of advocators through consensus building sentiment and the endorsement of official bodies. The move to break the traditional taboo to visit occupied Jerusalem gained more force by the conference entitled "Road to Jerusalem" "al-Tariqa ila al-Quds" in Arabic, which was held in Amman in 2014. There were over 150 Islamic scholars and politicians, as well as lawyers from Jordan, and al-Habbash also participated, with most of the participants being from the advocators block, with only a few opponents present.

The final resolution of this conference was issued as a form of collective consensus building like a collective fatwa. Firstly, this resolution sets out some segments among the Muslims who are specifically encouraged to visit Jerusalem. The resolution said that there

is no difficulty for the following people to visit al-Aqsa mosque. The first segment is Palestinians, regardless of their nationalities, and the second is Muslims with passports from countries outside the Islamic world. There is no further explanation about these words, but it may mean Muslims living in the US or Western countries. So this resolution did not necessarily encourage the Muslims to visit on a full scale. Such an idea of segmentation was unprecedented in the previous individual campaigns.

Secondly, this conference made some conditions to be followed when visiting Jerusalem. For instance, the resolution urged the Muslims to go shopping and stay in hotels sponsored by Palestinian or Jordanian tour groups, and the underlying idea was that visiting Jerusalem can be permitted insofar as it serves the public interest of the local Palestinian society and thus clarified by this point, the visit will not become a form of normalization from their perspective.

Therefore, it was a remarkable breakthrough, in that a fatwa to permit Muslims visit to Jerusalem was issued in the form of a collective consensus by an academic conference, making this a huge accomplishment by the advocators. Such consensus building on the permission to visit Jerusalem was eventually developed into an official endorsement and Islamic tourism promotions by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Firstly, in November 2014, Iyad Madani, the Secretary General of OIC declared that Jerusalem was selected as the Islamic tourism capital for 2015. Then, as early as January 2015, he himself visited Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque. There, Madani called for cooperation between the tourism ministers in Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Palestine, in order to connect the Umrah, the minor pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, with the visit to Jerusalem. Madani wanted to connect Muslim travelers through religious package tours; he also famously stated in Jerusalem,

"Coming to al-Aqsa Mosque is a right for me as well as every Muslim."

Madani's controversial visit was followed by a fatwa in 2015, issued by the International Islamic Fiqh Academy affiliated to OIC, which declared that a legal verdict on the visit to Jerusalem is recommended and desirable, but it also stated that there was a debate on the interests and disadvantages that would be incurred by the Muslims' visits, and that the academy would leave such evaluation to the politicians of Muslim countries.

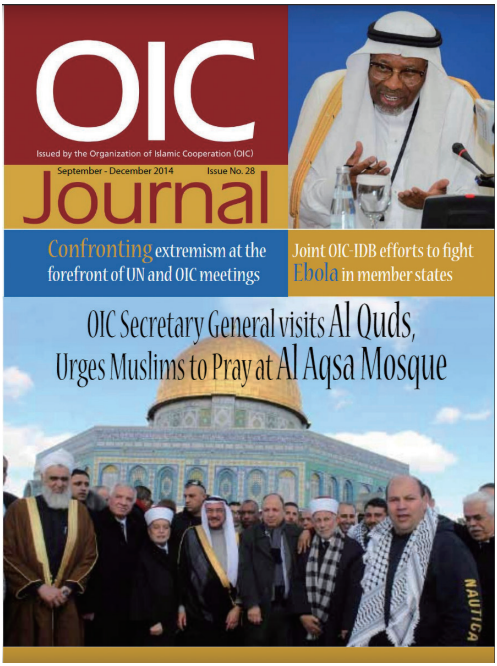

Figure 4. OIC Journal
Source: OIC Website <https://issuu.com/oic-journal/docs/oic_journal_issue_28_en>

So this fatwa did not prohibit the visit, but the statement in the fatwa was used as the advocators' fatwa for Muslims to visit Jerusalem under the occupation. We can see how binary the controversy is. There is no middle point stance in this debate, only "for" or "against."

Additionally, OIC held several promotional activities to encourage Muslims to visit Jerusalem in the framework of Islamic tourism. In November 2015, OIC organized a workshop on the religious tourism of Jerusalem, in which the main participants were the Palestinian and Jordanian ministers for tourism and religious affairs. The final recommendations based on the fatwa of the Fiqh Academy encouraged the Muslims to visit, especially those who had no visa problem when entering Palestine, such as European residents. Further, it was recommended to visit Jerusalem through Jordan as part of one's Hajj or Umrah, and to visit for the intention of benefitting the Palestinian economy. So these decisions are apparently similar to the fatwa of the Road to Jerusalem Conference in 2014.

Consequently, from the conference in Jordan and related activities, or from OIC, visiting Jerusalem, even under the Israeli occupation, suddenly obtained a position as one of the legitimate options, if not the mainstream, and so 2015 can be seen as a watershed for the advocators.

Here, I'd like to add a few words concerning the resistance towards Muslim tourism. The government of Israel did not state its specific opinion on this debate, but the government may welcome the advocators as far as they seem to remain just as tourists and not as political activists, because in many cases, this very government has tried to depict Israel as a religious tourism country. Additionally, the mayor of Jerusalem had once expressed his wish to have the city become a destination for religious tourism by members of the three Abrahamic faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, of course under the Israeli sovereignty.

In reality, there have not been many Muslim tourists coming to Israel

until today. Indeed, since the 2010s, the number of Muslims has gradually grown, but they are mainly coming from Indonesia or Malaysia, or some Western countries. The number of Arab tourists in particular still remains comparatively small, which implies that the idea of visiting Jerusalem has never taken root in the public domain, even after the advocators' bloc got some support in the sphere of Arab Islamic discourses.

5. Persistent Stance and Partial Compromise of "Opponents"

The advocators have enjoyed significant momentum since the 2010, and their ideas are no longer seen as strange nor heretical, so in this last section, I would like to discuss a sign of partial compromise among the opponents block.

One remarkable example is Ahmad al-Raysuni (1953–), who serves as the head of IUMS (International Union of Muslim Scholars), which was founded by Yusuf al-Qaradawi.

Figure 5. Ahmad al-Raysuni
Source: Official Website <https://raissouni.net/>

In 2019 Ahmad al-Raysuni suddenly called on Muslims around the world to visit Jerusalem and support the Palestinian Jerusalemites financially and morally. He stated that not everyone who visits Jerusalem is a normalizer, and he pointed out that the important thing is the intention and the objective of the Muslim visitor to Jerusalem.

Al-Raysuni thought that the visit to occupied Jerusalem itself was not equal to normalization, a way of thinking similar to the advocators and quite the opposite to the traditional understanding of IUMS and al-Qaradawi, so the callings made by al-Raysuni surprised his followers and caused a serious controversy among them.

However, his remarks did not appear out of nowhere. Already in 2016, among the scholars of IUMS, there had been a momentum to revise the fatwa. Some scholars are inclined to allow Muslims in general to visit Jerusalem and try to limit the ban to just public figures. The aim is to provide the Palestinians with economic support and make their lives sustainable. This move can be seen as a sign that the idea of the advocators was gaining support to some extent, even among the longest standing opponents.

And another example is the statement of ʿAbbas Shuman, the deputy Shaykh of al-Azhar, which showed a sign of changes in al-Azhar's long standing position of opposing the Muslims visiting Jerusalem. In 2018, there was an international conference on Jerusalem organized by al-Azhar, and Shuman confirmed that there is no dispute about the religious virtue of visiting Jerusalem, and he also clearly affirmed that the official stance of al-Azhar is to refuse the visit to Jerusalem under the occupation, because there is no benefit in that. However, following these remarks, interestingly, Shuman also stated the benefits and disadvantages that would be made by a Muslim's visit should be assessed by the local Palestinians and the political leaders of other Islamic countries. Further, he emphasized the need for more discussions and studies on the topic of

Muslims visiting occupied Jerusalem.

In other words, Shuman did not permit the Muslim visit to Jerusalem right away, but he indicated that al-Azhar's stance could be changed at some point after discussion. He did not see the opposition stance of al-Azhar as a fixed one and he left the final opinion open ended. This may be a slight but remarkable change in the position of al-Azhar that has long firmly and categorically opposed to Muslims visiting occupied Jerusalem.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, visiting Jerusalem under the Israel occupation, which was once taboo, gained a certain status as one of the legitimate options in just a few years during the 2010s. Among the circle of advocators, two things were emphasized. The first was the necessity of supporting the local Palestinians economically and morally, or politically, or by any means necessary, and the second point was the religious importance of visiting Jerusalem, which is very apparent from the arguments of Mahmud al-Habbash.

The process of the advocators gaining power was formed as shown in Figure 6. Firstly, it was initiated by individual campaigns or callings, and soon it became known around the world by the visits of internationally famous figures like ʿAli al-Jifri and ʿAli Jumʿa.

Figure 6. Advocators Gaining Power
Source: Author

Secondly, in the form of international conferences, these individual efforts were transformed into a collective consensus building, and eventually the idea to visit Jerusalem was endorsed and promoted by the official body, the OIC. While the opponents of this idea are still persistent, some of them have started to show a partial compromise or self-criticism.

Thus, while the idea of visiting Jerusalem has certainly never been popularized in the streets of Arab countries because there have not been so many Arab visitors coming to Israel, it has taken its own place in Arab Islamic discourses, and the long standing collective norm of the Arab boycott to visiting occupied Jerusalem has certainly waned since the 2010s.

In this author's opinion, this may show a tendency for Arab Muslims to be less hesitant to get involved with Israel, and such a dilution of the boycott can be seen as one symptom of Arab Israeli rapprochement in a broader sense, even if it has no direct relation to a move of governmental or diplomatic rapprochement.

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Chapter 4
Questioning Secular Modernity: The Political Visions of Islamic Intellectuals in Egypt and their Quest for the Civil Society

Ayaka KURODA

1. Introduction

After its defeat in the June/Six-day war in 1967, Egypt witnessed a drastic change in its intellectual landscape. In the process of examining the roots of the Arab's defeat by Israel, some intellectuals abandoned the socialism they had espoused. The theme of the relationship between the religion, society, and politics has been a heated point of contention since then.

Coupled with this point, today, the need for a reformist interpretation of Islam has been advocated by different actors: by religious bodies, by independent scholars, or by some governments. In the Egyptian context, such a trend became visible after the Nasserist era. Not limited to the religious or intellectual circle, the discourse of moderate Islam gained its influence in the political discourses in the Egyptian public sphere. Through the articulation of the idea concerning contemporary religious issues, the intellectuals espousing this idea tackled problems such as social inclusion, national unity, and democracy.

2. The Emergence of the Moderate Islamic Trend as a Visible Tide: The Compilation of *the Contemporary Islamic Vision*

In the early 1980s, Kamal Abu al-Majd, a constitutional lawyer, compiled a booklet entitled *Toward a New Islamic Trend*. The booklet was secretly circulated among about 150 Islamic intellectuals and edited in collaboration with some of them at that time, and then published formally in 1991, nearly 10 years after its compilation, under the new title, *the Contemporary Islamic Vision: Declaration of Principles*. This booklet gave political, social, and economic visions from the Islamic perspective which these intellectuals concurred with.

In the preface of the booklet, Abu al-Majd pointed out the failure of two major currents that had failed in the Arab world: First, liberal capitalism, which had caused economic injustice, disparities, social unrest, and second socialism, which suppressed many people and movements in order to achieve the revolution (Abu al-Majd, 1992, 37–40). Instead, he shed light on the growth of "the Islamic tide" those days and located it as an alternative to the two ideologies.

As the motive for compiling the booklet, he finds three elements: First, the need to criticize the ambiguous slogan of an "Islamic solution," which many Islamists chanted at that time (Abu al-Majd, 1992, 24–25). Clearly, it refers to the famous slogan used by the Muslim Brotherhood when it entered parliamentary elections in the 1980s. Second, the sense of crisis toward the rise of radical thought, which attempted to separate itself from "the general current in human history." Third, the spread of misunderstandings against Arabs and Muslims due to some Islamist movements raising the banner of Islam from the inappropriate political and social standpoints (Abu al-Majd, 1992, 25–30). Abu al-Majd pointed out that a "tide of anger" that ignored the social reality and paralyzed young people was growing in the society. Nevertheless, at the same time, he argued that the intellectual current that correctly understood the purpose of Islam was steadily gaining followers in the streets of the Arab and Islamic world day by day, and named it as the "moderate Islamic

trend (*tayyār al-wasaṭiyya al-Islāmiyya*)" (Abu al-Majd, 1992, 27).

For examples of the visions shown in the booklet, it stipulated the political principles from the Islamic perspective as follows: (1) the principle of Shura (consultation) concerning social issues; (2) accountability of the rulers; (3) the rule of law binding all powers, which is derived from the Islamic sources; and (4) respect for the rights and freedoms of the people. Abu al-Majd's writing not only contained Islamic tones but an aspiration for political freedom. The description of "the rule of law derived from Islamic sources" appears to be an appeal for the restraint of power rather than the enforcement of Islamic law.

The scholars and intellectuals of the moderate Islamic trend clearly recognize themselves as the inheritors of the reformist movement in the early twentieth century, represented by prominent scholars like Muhammad ʿAbduh and Rashid Rida. Although nationalism and socialism became prevalent in the mid-twentieth century, some scholars and activists continued to seek the reform of Islamic thought. For example: Muhammad al-Ghazali, who later strengthened his reformist attitude in his later years, Hasan al-Hudaybi, the second supreme guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, who had more progressive view in comparison with al-Banna in some issues and was against the idea of *takfīr* (accusing other Muslims of being infidels). Fathi Osman, who left the Brotherhood in the mid-1950s, showed a progressive view on women's political and economic freedom in the early 1960s. Jamal al-Din ʿAtiyya launched an academic magazine entitled with *the Contemporary Muslim Magazine* (*Majallat al-Muslim al-Muʿasir*), as soon as the restriction on the Muslim Brotherhood got loosened and called for the *Ijtihād* in contemporary issues. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who moved to Qatar in the 1960s, became a vocal voice of the moderate Islam and made the slogan of the moderatism (*al-wasaṭiyya*) renowned, relying on the method summarized as *tawāzun* (balance), *iʿtidāl* (moderation),

jamʿ (unison), *wāqiʿiyya* (realism), and *maydāniyya* (pragmatism) (Krämer, 2006, 198). And then, the intellectuals gradually came to the fore as a visible intellectual trend from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, under the expansion of the religious violence.

3. The Moderate Islamic Trend and the Egyptian Political Development in the Last Decades

The moderate Islamic trend itself is composed of intellectuals, academics, and political activists from different backgrounds; some of them enjoyed a traditional religious education, some were from a nationalist background, some belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood, and so on. They just form a loose platform and do not necessarily agree with the others on social matters or religious interpretations.

What is important is, although this trend connotes Islamists, it also contains a critical perspective to the conservative and ambiguous aspect of the Islamist ideologies, going beyond merely chanting "moderate Islamic understanding." The scholars and intellectuals of this intellectual trend contributed to the maturing of some significant political concepts such as "citizenship" or "civil state."

Figure 1. Salim al-ʿAwwa
Source: Author

Figure 2. Tariq al-Bishri
Source: Author

Over the last decade, I have been focusing on two intellectuals from the camp of the moderate Islamic trend. Salim al-ʿAwwa (1942–), an international attorney, and Tariq al-Bishri (1933–2021), a retired judge, the latter of whom I will focus on later. They are independent intellectuals who have never belonged to a religious body or political organizations. It is worth paying attention to the fact that they both enjoyed a modern secular education and are legal professionals. They do not speak with the language of traditional religious education but with modern vocabularies. Moreover, they maintain the familiarity with both western law and Islamic law through their profession.

Many younger members of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1990s and 2000s were heavily influenced by their ideas. In particular, some members who left the Muslim Brotherhood to launch a political party against the policies of the organization, heavily relied on their ideas when they drafted the party platform. Their party was entitled "the Center Party (Hizb al-Wasat)" from 1996, but its establishment was met with obstacles from the Mubarak regime as well as the Brotherhood. It was finally established after the January 25 revolution.

Then, how did the idea of these intellectuals contribute to the

refinement of the Islamist discourse?

One of their contributions is the idea of equal citizenship (*muwāṭana*). They believe that the state that their society seeks is not a Caliphate but a modern democratic state, based on the equality of all citizens regardless of their religion or biological sex. Although the Muslim Brotherhood was often divided over the availability of a higher position in a state for women and Christians, they have consistently claimed that equal citizenship should be the basis of the democratic state, based on their relatively modernist approach without abandoning their commitment to Islam. Al-ʿAwwa has been an advocate of the idea of an Islamic civil state based on democracy and constitutionalism, which does not enact laws contrary to the general principles of Shariʿa. Al-Bishri does not espouse the idea of the Islamization of the state or the overall enactment of Shariʿa. Rather, he pays special attention to the heritage of Islamic sentiment in the Egyptian nation and the influence of the culture of Islamic jurisprudence on the Egyptian legal mind, even though Western law was imported in the modern period. In his words, "Shariʿa exists in our lives."

At the same time, they and their followers in the Islamist movements cooperated with the intellectuals from the secular liberalist camp and have protested against the authoritarian rule in Egypt. They were involved in the Kefaya movement, a protest movement against the fifth term of Hosni Mubarak. They engaged in dialogue with secular liberalist camp as public intellectuals, monitored elections, worked in collaboration with NGOs, and so on.

The moderate Islamic trend in Egypt has developed into three dimensions: the criticism of the conservative or radical aspect of Islamist ideology, the pursuit of democracy and aspiration for bridging the secularism and Islamism in the nation. In the following part, I will focus on the idea of Tariq al-Bishri and explore such dimensions stated

above in his idea.

Figure 3. Egypt Divided After First Round Referendum Vote
Source: Getty Images

4. The Case of Tariq al-Bishri: The Search for Cultural Authenticity and Advocation of the Basic Current

(1) An Intellectual Career

Tariq al-Bishri is a retired judge, and one of the most renowned Islamic thinkers in contemporary Egypt. Although he hardly uses the term "*al-wasaṭiyya*" or moderate Islam in his work, he is widely recognized as a representative figure of this trend in Egypt.

Born in 1933, when the influence of the British occupation remained in the society, he developed an interest in the independence of the nation. While he deepened his interest in Western philosophy and the episodes of western history such as the French revolution during his student days, he started to espouse socialism and secularism in the 1950s. He at that time believed that the independence of the nation was to be achieved through economic independence. He recalls himself at this period as "a pure secularist," although he maintained his familiarity

with Islamic jurisprudence as a judge in the Egyptian court and felt the blessing (*rizq*) of the God in his reason and heart in his daily life (Kuroda, 2017, 33). In his intellectual career, he was influenced by modernist scholars like ʿAbd al-Razzaq al-Sanhuri and ʿAbd al-Wahhab Khallaf as well as renowned scholars closer to the Islamist trend like Muhammad al-Ghazali.

Figure 4. World War Two North Africa 1940
Source: Getty Images

However, after the defeat of 1967 war, he started to consider that a nation's independence should be not only achieved through economic factors, but also through building a national identity concerning its own civilization. Thus, he realized the role of Islam as a fundamental identity in his society. Though he abandoned socialism and secularism, his main interest in national independence has never changed. Such intellectual transformation was a very common phenomenon among the Arab intellectuals at that time. In Egypt, Hasan Hanafi, a philosopher who advocated the "Islamic Left (*al-yasār al-Islāmī*)," ʿAdil Husayn, a representative voice of the socialist labor party, and Muhammad ʿImara are the typical cases of such intellectual transformation.

(2) Support for Democracy

Not only his unique idea of the state-religion relationship which I will explain later but his ardent support for democracy has located him in a distinguished position in the Egyptian society.

His professional background is very unique. While he served as a judge in the Egyptian administrative court until his retirement age, he sometimes issued a judgement against the government's will. In the latter half of 2000s, while the Egyptian government strengthened its authoritarian tendency, the country experienced the emergence of social movements across different actors such as opposition parties and human rights activists. He strengthened his commitment to the protest movements together with the other intellectuals.

Figure 5. Egyptian Voters Go To The Polls
Source: Getty Images

In October 2004, al-Bishri published an article entitled with "I call upon you for civil disobedience (Adʿukum ila al-ʿisyan)" and criticized the fragmentation of the state function under the Mubarak regime. Some analysts found the partial influence of this article on the formalization

of the Kefaya movement (El-Ghobashy, 2005; Hirschkind, 2012). Although participants of the Kefaya movement unanimously saw him as a potential presidential candidate according to some Egyptian sources, he seems to have refused this proposal (Howeidy, 2005; Shehab, 2005).

Furthermore, he became internationally known in the process of transition after the Arab Uprising. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which was in charge of the transition process after the resignation of Mubarak, appointed him as the head of the committee for the constitutional amendment. His appointment was seen as the result of the Egyptians army's consideration for both the Islamist and secular-liberal camp. While in charge of amending the constitution, he supported the idea of drafting a new constitution after the completion of the democratic transition, which hampered the Egyptian army's intention to maintain its power under the former constitution amended at a minimal level (Suzuki, 2013, 87–88). His remarks and activity during this period can be seen as an attempt to make the democratic transition substantial.

(3) Perspective for the Egyptian Modernization and its Political Future

Al-Bishri describes himself as "a person who advocates the importance of citizenship, who emphasizes the role of political groups with a religious base, and who stands at the intersection of all national currents, especially the Islamic current and the ethno-national current" (al-Bishri, 2012, 41). In such a manner, his idea inherits and integrates the three mainstream ideologies witnessed in the Egyptian nation: Egyptian nationalism, Arab nationalism, and Islamism (Kuroda, 2017, 34).

As an Islamic thinker, he has been seeking the establishment of a political community with cultural authenticity. Unlike typical Islamists, he does not necessarily seem to espouse the idea that "Islam is a religion

and a state" ardently and he has hardly used the term "Islamic state/government" in his writings. Instead, he finds a firm connection between culture, morals, and law in a society. He believes that every society has its own value system and a person should judge what is right and wrong according to it. Such ethical standards formulate the country's legal culture and give legitimacy to a set of laws to be enforced. Thus, he attaches importance to Islam as a culture inherited in the Egyptian society for centuries (Kuroda, 2019, 8–10).

It is worth noting that his recent political ideas aim at the settlement of the ideological and political conflicts in Egypt. In my personal communication with the Egyptian academics since the revolution, some of them pointed out the polarization of the Egyptian society. Before the revolution, activists and intellectuals with different ideological orientations could collaborate with each other in their resistance to the authoritarian rule. However, after the revolution, since the common goal had been achieved, they became polarized.

In his book in 2008, *Toward a Basic Current for the Community* (*Nahwa Tayyar Asasi li-l-Umma*), al-Bishri called for the formation of "a basic current" that devotes itself to the common goals among different social and political forces, based on his reflections on modern Egyptian history (al-Bishri, 2011).[1]

He seeks to solve two issues found at the root of every problem in the Egyptian society for the last 150 years up to the present: fear of the foreign enemy and of colonialism, and how to run the state and society in an effective way (al-Bishri, 2011, 18).

In connection with the latter issue, the centrally administered government takes on too many functions and does not realize the political will held by the public. He attaches importance to secondary

1 The introduction of al-Bishri's idea on "a basic current" in this section below is extensively based on the author's past article (Kuroda, 2017).

groups and forces in a society, consisting of journalists, parties, or private organizations, in order to put pressure on the state to get rid of this imbalance (al-Bishri, 2011, 26–27).

In this context, his evaluation of the modernization process in Egypt is notable. According to him, there were many social units people belonged to in the pre-modern Egyptian society. Some of them were based on blood relations such as tribes and clans, others on a shared vocational or territorial bond, and still others on religious affiliations, sects, Sufi orders or school of thoughts. He maintains that religion plays a significant role in the formation of many social units in the society (al-Bishri, 2011, 25–26, 45). However, Muhammad Ali's modernization reform toward the centrally governed state destroyed such traditional ways of organizing the society and the people's sense of belonging. For example, he criticizes the abolishment of Waqf and the control over Sufi Tariqas in the modern Egypt. The Egyptians still live under the legacy of unbalanced modernization and colonialism, and they are split over the inherited, indigenous values and imported alien values.

Based on such critical reflection, he supports the resurgence and unity of various socio-political movements and social groups, including ones with religious characteristics, in order to revive the Egyptian nation.

However, these political and social forces have to overcome the conflicts and differences among their opinions, which they inevitably face when they try to come together. According to him, such conflicts have to be reconciled through dialogue. The concept of dialogue in al-Bishri's ideas is much broader than an exchange of opinions in newspapers, symposiums and even in an assembly. He sees dialogue not only as the means to mutual understanding but as a negotiating process to integrate the claims brought up by different groups. Therefore, he finds a path to dialogue in the activities of social movements, looking for a point of consensus in the nation (al-Bishri, 2011, 32–33).

In the summer of 2014, he told me, "the stream of the middle ground (*tayyār al-wasaṭ*) is a comprehensive current, under which all the currents could come together. The Egyptian revolution brought polarization [to our society]. If there is no conversation among the people, intellectual wars (*ḥarb fikriyya*) occur. However, dialogue must be conducted before all the intellectual wars. We are always seeking the intersection between all the positions. This is the stream of the middle ground, which unites all the streams. As intellectual wars prohibit the uniting of different streams, they lead to the polarization … the tide which would be attacked first in this war is the middle road (*al-wasaṭ*). However, it is the idea which the Egyptians would finally join. I think this tide has a promising future."[2]

Al-Bishri passed away in February 2021, about seven years after this interview. Not only al-Bishri, but many intellectuals who were the advocates of this trend have passed away in recent years or have reached an advanced age. Therefore, some might wonder what role this trend plays in the Egyptian society today and how it will continue to evolve.

In my last fieldwork in January 2020, however, I found that a compilation of al-Bishri's interview had been published. This work of 500 pages had been compiled by the Egyptian academics in order to preserve and deliver his wisdom and admonition to the next generation (Ghanim and Mustafa, 2019).[3] In this way, the intellectual attempts to inherit his idea survive in the current Egyptian society. As is shown in his idea, the idea of the moderate Islamic trend became intertwined with

2 Interview conducted by the author, July 24, 2014, Cairo.

3 According to the information I obtained during my fieldwork, the editors asked al-Bishri to write an autobiography at first. As he declined their requests, however, they decided to conduct a series of interviews. The interviewer visited his house for around two years to listen to his life story and collect his opinions on the contemporary social, political, and cultural issues. For the detail of this voluminous work, see my book review (Kuroda, 2020).

the themes such as national unity combining the different intellectual camps and the need for democracy in accordance with the political and social development in the last decades. These intellectual projects remain as a challenge for the future generation in the coming decades.

Figure 6. The compilation of al-Bishri's interview, *Dialogues with Tariq al-Bishri* (Hiwarat maʿa Tariq al-Bishri), sold at Cairo International Bookfair in 2020. Some compilations of al-Bishri's past articles, which were newly published in the last few years, were also displayed on the lowest shelf along with the other new releases from the publisher.
Source: Author

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