Kamal S. Shehadi. "Middle East." In *The New Security Agenda: A Global Survey*, edited by Paul B. Stares. Tokyo and New York: Japan Center for International Exchange, August 1998, 134–151.

5
MIDDLE EAST

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WHILE THE REST OF THE WORLD worries about new and nontraditional threats to national security, most countries in the Middle East are still poised to counter the same old, traditional threats. In the Middle East, to use Thomas Hobbes's famous line, "there is continuall feare, and danger of violent death" and "the life of man" (and woman) is still "poore, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes 1982, part 1, chap. 13). The cold war has had a revolutionary impact on the security agenda of most states in the world, with the exception of the Middle East. The field of security studies in the United States is driven by the cold realities of academic "product differentiation," by the effort of philanthropic foundations to be "on the leading edge of research," and by the political agenda. It is addressing new issues and widening the conceptual lenses with which it has traditionally looked at the world. No such change is occurring in the Middle East, although there are some trends pushing in that direction.

The Middle East, with a few and modest exceptions, has missed out on the democratic revolution of the late 1980s and early 1990s. It may very well miss out on the "revolution" in security affairs (RSA), both at the policy level and the conceptual level. Whereas there is little doubt that the Middle East is worse off because it has missed the "third wave of democratization" (Huntington 1991), the same cannot be said of the RSA. In fact, it remains to be proven that the RSA is, indeed, a revolution.

This chapter begins with a review of the RSA literature and places itself in the ongoing debate. It argues that the RSA has set up a straw

man, a caricature of Realism, which is easy to knock off. The RSA is neither a revolution in approaching these issue areas nor has it earned a secure place in security studies. The second section discusses the defining characteristics of security studies in the Middle East. The third section shows that the Middle East anticipated the RSA. Some issue areas such as water, refugees, and terrorism, which are described by the RSA as nontraditional threats to national security, have been at the heart of the various conflicts in the Middle East and have been included in some countries' threat perceptions and strategies. The third section of the chapter also reviews the current national security strategies of the countries of the Middle East and the ongoing debate around these strategies. It argues that the Arab-Israeli peace process and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership initiative are two trends that may, if they reach their intended conclusion, push the region toward a redefinition of its security agenda. This would be only a partial vindication of the claims of the RSA.

THE REVOLUTION IN SECURITY AFFAIRS: DOES THE EMPEROR HAVE ANY CLOTHES?

Four criteria define the school of thought that can be labeled as the RSA. These four can be summarized as the issues, the actors, the process, and the "rules of the game." The first criterion is an attempt to redefine the agenda of national security policy and, through it, the broader national and international political agenda. The RSA claims that there are certain issues that should be considered as security issues because they constitute a threat to national values and national policies. Viewed from this angle, the RSA is almost a *cri de coeur*, a reminder that certain issues such as environmental degradation and water scarcity should be given a higher priority. By declaring an issue a national or international security issue, the RSA hopes to reshuffle political priorities and raise its issues to the top of the agenda. Identifying a threat facilitates mobilization that can be followed by a certain policy.

A threat to national security has been defined as "an action or sequence of events that (1) threatens drastically and over a relatively brief span of time to degrade the quality of life for the inhabitants of a state, or (2) threatens significantly to narrow the range of policy choices available to the government of a state or to private, non-governmental entities

(persons, groups, corporations) within the state" (Ullman 1983, 133). One more condition, however, should be added to separate threats to national security from threats in general. Threats to national security alone are the domain of national security strategy. For an action or sequence of events to be a threat to national security, it has to be caused or used by one or more states or substate actors to exercise power over the target state. In other words, a threat to national security is the actions or sequence of events that are taken to force the target state or society to do what they would otherwise not do. Threats that do not involve an exercise of power by another state or a substate actor, such as global warming, should not, therefore, be placed in the domain of national security studies. Their urgency and importance is intrinsic to the problem itself and not a function of whether they are classified as threats to national security. As Ullman says, earthquakes and floods "have no minds" and "cannot be deterred." They are not initiated "to affect the adversary's calculations of cost and benefit, of risks and rewards" (138).

One can hardly dispute the importance of the issues that make up the RSA. The argument that these issues should be given a higher priority on national political agendas carries a lot of weight in most cases. However, the RSA has to make a case for why these issues are threats to national security. The burden of proof rests on the RSA, and it requires more than establishing that "the environment matters" or that "transnational crime matters" (Levy 1995). These things do matter, of course. The question that needs to be answered is elsewhere: Whether these are threats to national security and, if they are, how things will change if they are considered as such—beyond moving up on the list of priorities of policymakers and getting more money.

The second criterion which defines the RSA is the proposition that there are new actors on the international scene and their strategies, actions, and intentions should be taken into consideration in deciding the nation's defense and security policy. On this point, the RSA defines itself as the antithesis of Realism. The basis of this claim is nothing more than a misreading of Realism. The defining characteristic of Realism is that power is the *ultima ratio* of international politics. States became the principal actors of international politics, according to the Realist paradigm, for two reasons. First, states had a monopoly over the legitimate use of coercive power (force) and, second, states had an advantage over other forms of political organization in that, over time, they were able to

mobilize more resources to finance or wage war. Nothing in the Realist paradigm demands the exclusion of other forms of political organization if such organizations emerge on the international scene. It is only much later that critics of Realism have—unfairly, in my opinion—limited this school of thought to a "state as only actor" or the "state as black-box model" (Keohane 1986). Their criticisms apply only to one variant of the Realist school known as "Structural Realism" (Waltz 1979), which assumed that states are the only actors in international politics that matter and, as a consequence of this assumption, domestic politics is not important to understand international behavior. But it would be unfair to identify this truncated version of Realism with what is a much richer tradition.

The third criterion of the RSA is the proposition that the new or nontraditional security concerns differ from traditional security concerns in one very important way. Countering these (nontraditional) threats is best done through the cooperation of all the parties involved. In fact, it is often argued that unilateral measures will only worsen the situation and may even lead to war. In other words, the RSA distinguishes its research and policy agenda from others' agendas by covering issues that cannot be described as a zero-sum game. On that basis, the RSA argues that cooperation between states makes everyone better off.

This proposition, however, is neither new nor unique to RSA. John Herz first developed the concept of the security dilemma that was later elaborated by Robert Jervis (1978). The argument is that the means by which state A makes itself more secure—e.g., by building up its military capabilities—makes other states less secure. They are prompted to take measures of their own to become more secure, thus making others, including state A, less secure than they were before. The corollary to this argument is that cooperation in the pursuit of security will lessen the security dilemma. If states cooperate in making themselves and their citizens more secure, they will all be much better off than had they tried to make themselves more secure by unilateral means.

The new security agenda has little to say to the security debate in the Middle East. The RSA advocates' most powerful claim is that there are new issues that should be put on the security agenda by policymakers. Yet some of these same issues have been at the heart of the security concerns of states in the region for decades. Water, for example, has been a defining element of the security of Israel and neighboring Arab states.

Population movements have also been considered sources of potential threats by all sides: Arabs feared—and still do fear—Jewish immigration to Israel; Israelis fear the return of displaced Palestinians; and neighboring Arab states have been fearful of Palestinian refugee populations in their midst. As for other issues such as the environment and transnational crime, the burden of proof that these issues are security concerns rests on the shoulders of the RSA advocates.

The second claim made by the RSA is that there are new, non-state and substate actors in international security. Middle East experts answer this claim with a shrug of the shoulders and, possibly, a sigh of boredom. For decades, Middle East scholars have cut their intellectual teeth on guerrilla movements and militias from the Haganah to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

The third claim to newness made by the RSA is that the new and nontraditional threats to national security can only be countered by multilateral, cooperative action. This claim by itself, however, does not amount to revolution. This is *déjà vu*. In the 1970s, there was a schism within the security studies community along the same lines. There were those who argued that threats and unilateral actions would be enough to deter the Soviet Union and those, especially prominent during the détente years, who argued that the Soviet Union could be enticed to participate in international and multilateral forums such as the Helsinki process.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MIDDLE EAST SECURITY STUDIES

Many types of conflict have dominated the Middle East landscape. The most important of these conflicts has been the Arab-Israeli conflict. There have been other conflicts as well: conflicts between Arab states and neighboring countries on the periphery of the Arab world, such as Iran and Turkey, and conflicts within Arab states, such as Lebanon, Sudan, and Iraq. And in many of these conflicts, water, oil, refugees, and ethnic identities, all considered nontraditional security concerns by the RSA school, have played an important role. The nature and intensity of that role has been, and will continue to be, a matter of dispute. Few studies, however, show that this role was critical in shaping the conflicts.

The field of security studies both on the Middle East and in the Middle East has been relatively poor. Few studies on or from the Middle East

have had a rigorous and interesting theoretical contribution to make, a prerequisite for any pronouncement on the role of nontraditional security issues in the shaping either of strategic policy or of strategic studies. Indeed, with few exceptions, the field of Middle East studies has been aloof and uninterested in addressing questions that go beyond the region. It is rare to see references to work done on the Middle East (whether in comparative politics or international relations) being cited elsewhere either for its theoretical import or because of the relevance of the work to other regions. There are some exceptions to this rule. Some of the noteworthy exceptions are Lisa Anderson's work on state formation in North Africa (1986), Stephen Walt's work on alliances (1987), and Volker Perthes's work on the stability and power structure of the Syrian regime (1995).

Security studies in the Arab world have four characteristics. First, most of the institutes currently engaged in research and writing on strategic matters are either state organizations or closely connected to, yet legally separate from, the state. One could even say that, with a few exceptions, the study of security is a state-owned and controlled enterprise. Second, until recently, the field was dominated by work on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Inter-Arab conflicts did not really get much attention from academics. The Arab-Israeli peace process began to change all that and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait finished the job. Arab strategic thinkers analyzed the causes of conflict among Arab states and the management (or mismanagement) of crises (Abd el Salam 1994).

The third characteristic of strategic analysis in Arab countries is the journalistic style and its publication in the daily or weekly media. The most interesting debates by the most respected scholars take place on the pages of newspapers rather than in academic journals. The reliance on newspapers allows for quick reactions to current events and the wide dissemination of ideas. The best of these articles tend to be long on thoughtful analysis but short on research. Another drawback is that newspapers, because of the audience they target, tend to give short shrift to policy recommendations and to favor description over prescription.

The fourth characteristic of Middle East security studies is the peculiar nature of the state and its definition of security. For most Arab countries, as in other countries ruled by authoritarian regimes, national security and state security become one and the same. The state faces real or imagined enemies within its borders more threatening than those

beyond. In some cases, the imagined enemy within its borders is the creation of the state itself. It is fabricated to justify the crushing of domestic political opponents and to stifle political freedoms. The declaration by Arab interior ministers in the fall of 1996 that "enemies of the state" operate under the cover of human rights organizations and that the real agenda of most of these organizations is to undermine state security is but one example among many of such efforts.

THE MIDDLE EAST SECURITY AGENDA IN THE 1990S

The Middle East security agenda in the 1990s does not differ from the security agenda of previous decades except in one important respect. The upsurge of violence directed against the state has placed terrorism on the security agenda of many Arab countries. Terrorism is a serious problem in Algeria. It is also a cause for concern to the governments in the Gulf States, in Jordan, in Egypt, and to the Palestinian National Authority.

Middle East security studies prior to the peace process addressed a number of issues which, today, are on the RSA agenda. These issues have become part of the national security debate in the countries of the Middle East. They have not been linked—directly or indirectly—to wars or the outbreak of violence, except in vague and nonrigorous ways. Yet they remain important factors in the strategic calculations of countries in the region. The most important of these have been water, refugees and population movements, and economic development.

Water

Water has been part of the security debate for decades in the Middle East for two reasons. Water is a scarce resource in the Middle East, and governments have, as a result, long worried about water availability and "water security" (*al-amn al-ma'i*). Indeed, few countries in the Middle East do not suffer from severe water shortages. The exceptions are Lebanon, Turkey, and Iraq. All the other countries in the region, including Israel, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf States, have placed a high priority on water availability.

Water is also on the security agenda because of the geographic location of most important waterways. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers go through

Turkey, Iraq, and Syria, creating problems over the distribution of these resources. The Jordan River is an international river that separates Jordan and Israel. The Nile River goes through eight states, with the main beneficiary being Egypt. The geography of water resources has forced it on the security debate.

The story of water as a security concern is not new to the Middle East. The Fashoda incident between Britain and France at the end of the nineteenth century was part of a larger struggle for control of the whole Nile River basin. The creation of the state of Israel, starting with the flow of Jewish refugees to Palestine, exacerbated the conflict over water resources in the Jordan River basin. Agriculture, and the water that makes it possible, was the backbone of the Jewish settlers' and later of Israel's economy. Only recently, as part of a bilateral peace treaty, have water conflicts between the Jordanians and Israelis been resolved. To this day, Palestinians and Israelis cannot agree on the partition of water resources in the West Bank. The Israelis are reluctant to return Palestinian land, but they are just as reluctant to give up control of access to subterranean water resources. Israel wants access to West Bank aquifers while denying access to the same aquifers to the Palestinian National Authority.

Arab analysts have focused much of their writing on Israel's designs on Arab water. There is a near consensus among Arab strategic analysts and policymakers that Zionists have equated the viability of the state of Israel with control of important water resources in the area. The Litani River, which is entirely in Lebanese territory, is presumed to be the object of Zionist ambitions. References are made to Theodore Herzl's address to the First Zionist Congress meeting in Basle in 1897 and to Zionist lobbying at the post–World War I Versailles peace conference (Khalil 1994). Israeli ambitions to control the Litani and Jordan river basins, not the alleged goal of securing Israel's northern and eastern borders, are also said to be behind Israel's occupation of the West Bank (al-Hut 1995b) and south Lebanon (Abu Melhem 1996a).

There is a sense that Arab water resources are under siege. In support of this impression, Arab analysts point to an interesting statistic: that between 67 percent (Sa'id 1994) and 85 percent (Ali 1994) of the water which flows through Arab states originates outside the Arab region. The Arab states have no military options to address this situation, but the threat of water conflicts exists in large part because of Israel's imputed

propensity to use force (Ali 1994). Water was and continues to be an important dimension of national security in the Middle East.

Refugees and Population Movements

Involuntary population movements are part of the history of the Middle East and of the collective memory of the peoples of the region. The gradual collapse of the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century destroyed the ethnic mosaic that coexisted uneasily under its suzerainty. Greeks, Romanians, Serbians, and Bulgarians succeeded each other in breaking away from the Ottoman Empire and forming independent states during the nineteenth century. The latter part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century witnessed massive population movements, sometimes voluntary but more often involuntary and forced. The population movements often followed massacres, looting, and pillaging. Whether these massacres were carried out for revenge or to drive away "undesirable" groups, they resulted in a redrawing of the demographic map to fit the new political map of Southeast Europe (the Balkans, principally). In some cases, the states of the region, under the supervision of European powers, negotiated treaties to regulate population movements, to promote "population exchange," and to provide for some compensation to the victims (Shehadi 1994).

Although the Middle East did not witness similar population movements until much later, the massacre of Armenians at the hands of the Turks and their displacement to Syria and Lebanon were an early warning of things to come. Shortly after, Kurds and Christians from Turkey (e.g., Smyrna) and Iraq (e.g., Iraqi Kurdistan and the Mosul region) were the victims of organized persecution, and many of them were forced to leave their ancestral homelands. So, when Jewish refugees starting coming in droves to settle Palestine, the residents of the area had already heard about the large-scale demographic and boundary changes that had taken place in other parts of the former Ottoman Empire. Their fears that large-scale Jewish immigration would later lead to a redrawing of borders turned out to be justified.

The first Arab-Israeli war in 1948 drove many Palestinians away from their homes and created a refugee crisis that persists to this day. Arab historians argue that Palestinians were driven away from their homes by Israel's armed forces and various Jewish militias. This view is backed by a few Israeli historians, but the official Israeli version of the history of

the period insists that Palestinians left of their own free will in response to calls by Arab leaders to evacuate Arab villages and regroup in order to counterattack. The indisputable fact is that Palestinians were made homeless and sought refuge in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt. Many, however, sought refuge in the West Bank and Gaza, which remained under Arab (Jordanian and Egyptian, respectively) control until 1967. The second wave of Arab refugees followed the 1967 war when Israel occupied the Sinai, the West Bank and Gaza, and the Golan Heights.

The Arabs have always considered Jewish immigration—a movement of population—as a threat. Until recently, Jewish immigration was considered a threat to the Arabs and to the Arab identity of Palestine. With the beginning of the Arab-Israeli peace process, continued Jewish immigration became a threat to peace. Immigration means more Jewish settlements and more settlements mean that more land is taken away from Palestinians. With this unfolding scenario in the background, it is difficult to imagine the Palestinians negotiating with the Israelis.

Jewish immigration to Israel has been an important factor in the evaluation of the balance of power in the region. For decades, Arab strategists and politicians had held up the hope of the Arabs' demographic growth balancing Israel's military might. Faster population growth among the Palestinian population in Israel and the occupied territories, coupled with a growing population in surrounding Arab countries, gave the Arabs the illusion that time was on their side. The Israelis had either accepted this scenario as plausible or exploited it to project an image to world public opinion of an Israel "drowning" in a sea of Arabs. The collapse of the Soviet Union opened the floodgates of immigration of Soviet (Russian) Jews. Hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants came to Israel and, according to the Israeli government, about a million more are expected before the end of the century. Suddenly, the Arab demographic option was postponed indefinitely and time turned to the disadvantage of the Arabs.

Population trends and movements are important in the strategic calculations and/or perceptions of both Arabs and Israelis. To Palestinians, the most immediate threat is the continued influx of Russian Jews to Israel and expansion of Jewish settlements on the West Bank and Gaza, especially in and around Jerusalem. To Israelis, the greatest threat is the return of Palestinian refugees from other Arab countries. Israel has

consistently refused to recognize the Palestinians' right of return that is recognized in UN resolutions. In 1995 and 1996, the Refugees Working Group of the Arab-Israeli Multilateral Talks tried to offer a functionalist approach to the Palestinian refugee problems but failed to make any significant headway.

Demographic shifts are also perceived to be a threat to the internal balance of some countries in the Middle East. Communities therefore see them as a security threat. For example, on the one hand, the Christians of Lebanon perceive the emigration of fellow Christians as a threat to the survival of the whole community. By 1990, many leaders of the Lebanese Christian community were convinced that the massive immigration caused by the ongoing war with Syria was more devastating to the community than the recognition of Syria's dominant role in Lebanon's internal politics. The Shi'a community in Lebanon, on the other hand, is more concerned about the possible permanent settlement of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. In the past ten years, the Shi'as have fought with the Palestinians repeatedly, and they continue to oppose any move that will facilitate the permanent settlement of the Palestinians in Lebanon.

Sudden demographic changes are recognized by many analysts to be one of the most common causes of internal conflicts. The Middle East is rife with conflicts where demographic shifts are seen as primary causes. In addition to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the conflicts in Lebanon, there are two other conflicts that ought to be mentioned: the civil war in Sudan and the ongoing conflict in the Western Sahara. Both of these conflicts are between an ethnic minority and a ruling majority and the adversaries in these conflicts view population movements and demographic shifts as threats to their security.

Economic Development

Economic development, or uneven economic development, has always been an important element in the assessment of the balance of power between states. The Middle East region is no different. Arab nationalism, which began to emerge in the nineteenth century, was, to a large extent, a response to European power. Arab intellectuals who studied in Paris or in schools set up by American Protestant missionaries in the Levant became convinced that "national patriotism was the secret of Europe's success" (Salem 1994, 31). These early reformers wanted to emulate the success of Europe, namely, its economic prosperity and

development. Europe's success at the time was not considered a threat except by the most conservative elements in the society eager to preserve the Ottoman Empire from Western influence. The threat the reformers feared the most was the backwardness, intolerance, and poverty that the Ottoman Empire had imposed on the whole region.

Economics has been and continues to be an important factor in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the heyday of the conflict, both sides realized that building up their economic power base was crucial. In the 1973 war, the Arabs used the oil weapon by embargoing oil deliveries to nations considered close to Israel. The use of the oil weapon prompted many in the West to rethink their own conception of security.

Since the beginning of the Arab-Israeli peace process, the nature of the economic threat has changed. To Arabs opposed to peace with Israel, the greatest danger was the integration of Israel's economy into the regional economy, i.e., with Arab countries. The threat, according to this line of argument, emanated from Israel's vastly superior economic might. More or less sophisticated arguments were presented about how Israel's technological and economic advantage will lead to its domination of the region's economy. Trade and other forms of economic relations were seen as just another tool by which Israel could assert its hegemony over the Arabs. Economic subjugation would simply follow the political defeat embodied in peace treaties that the proponents of this argument consider unfair to the Arabs. A more extreme version of this argument is the one that says that any form of normal intercourse with Israel would lead to the ultimate corruption of Arab and Islamic values and culture. Needless to say, this threat perception is not shared by Arabs who support the ongoing peace process and the results it yielded before the peace process broke down.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown that the Middle East is no stranger to the national security threats that the RSA has rediscovered. The security debate in the region has few new threats on its agenda. These threats, moreover, are of the traditional kind: terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction—nuclear, chemical, and biological.

The Arab states have long considered terrorism a problem that others had to confront. In the 1970s, Europe and Israel were the main targets

of terrorist activity. The Arabs, in turn, were victims of Israeli state-sponsored terrorism. But the problem was confined to the Palestinians, Lebanon, and Jordan. This all began to change in the 1990s. The rise of Jewish extremist terrorism in Israel has left violent marks on Palestinian society. The equally violent rise of Islamic radical terrorism brought the problem home to Algerians, Egyptians, Jordanians, Sudanese, and many others. For the first time in the history of the Arab League, the ministers of the interior of Arab states began to take the problem seriously and to demand greater Arab cooperation and coordination in fighting terrorism.

The second new threat in the region is the spread of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. All countries in the region agree that this threat is real and must be addressed. The debate that surrounded the extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1995 is evidence of the seriousness with which this threat is considered. Egypt led the Arab countries in their opposition to the signing of the NPT as long as Israel was not a signatory. The Arab countries' opposition dissipated, and they eventually signed the NPT extension. They realized that Israel would not even discuss its nuclear weapons before a permanent settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict was reached. The Arab fear of Israel's nuclear weapons is mirrored by Israel's concern over the spread of chemical and biological weapons as well as ballistic missiles in the Middle East.

There are two trends in the Middle East that may, if they continue, lead to a redefinition of national security threats. The first of these trends is the Arab-Israeli peace process. The peace process has put in place a framework for the discussion of some of the threats that exist between Arabs and Israelis. In the bilateral talks, conventional threats are addressed. In the multilateral talks, threats to national security such as refugees, economic underdevelopment, and water are being addressed in ways that are new to the region. Cooperative approaches to all these problems are being negotiated. What is new, therefore, is not the threat but the way in which the threat is being addressed.

The second trend is cooperation with Europe in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The Euro-Mediterranean initiative was itself a response to a perceived threat from Europe's southern flank. The Europeans feared a surge in illegal immigration spurred by civil violence and increasing poverty in North Africa. Morocco, Tunisia,

and Israel have signed Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements and a number of other countries are still negotiating such agreements. If the agreements are signed by more Arab countries, the Mediterranean states and Europe will be engaged in a debate about how best to approach common security concerns. The security concerns are of the conventional as well as the unconventional kind.

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