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Explaining Japan’s Shift to Foreign Policy Activism: Security Challenges and Perverse Political Accountability*

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The paper examines the root causes of Japan’s rapid shift to foreign policy activism. To explain the causes, I develop the so-called “perverse political accountability” approach. Specifically, the approach claims that a growing security challenge from China and North Korea, and US policy favoring Japan’s foreign policy activism structure. Japan’s domestic political condition that the majority of Japanese people become more conservative and nationalistic. Such shift in the Japanese people’s preference has been both creating and reinforcing a perverse accountability by which the leaders or parties willing to adopt hard-line foreign policies are better off electorally while the leaders or parties remaining soft-line on foreign affairs are worse off. The perverse accountability not only leads to a severe partisan imbalance between the conservative parties and the leftist parties, but also gives the most conservative party, e.g., the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), a greater chance of coming to office and of pursuing assertive foreign policy they favor. Thus, the perverse accountability is at the center of current Japan’s turn to foreign policy activism. This finding contributes to an enhanced understanding for Japan’s shift to assertive foreign policy.

Keywords: Japan, foreign policy activism, China, North Korea, the US, perverse political accountability

Puzzle

The world has wondered why Japan is moving so rapidly into foreign policy activism. Japan, whose foreign policy was quite peaceful and generous in development aid, disaster relief and peacekeeping, has grown increasingly hawkish in recent decades. Japan’s foreign policy leaders, regardless of their partisan differences, have not hesitated to show their growing commitments to a series of assertive foreign policies, such as proactively responding to growing threats from China in the East and South China Sea, preventing North Korea’s missile threats, exercising the right of collective self-defense, making it easier for the Diet to propose revisions to the war-renouncing Article 9 of the Constitution, increasing a more proactive role for the Self-Defense Force (SDF) overseas, and downplaying its World-War II (WWII) era crimes.1

Japan’s shift to foreign policy activism raises grave security concerns not only to neighboring countries,

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1 Japan’s foreign policy activism is defined as a set of assertive foreign policies distinguished from its postwar pacifist posture. It includes the policy of: (1) proactively containing China and North Korea; (2) revising the Peace Constitution; (3) exercising the right of collective self-defense; (4) increasing pro-active role of the Self-Defense Force (SDF) overseas; and (5) downplaying the atrocities of its WWII-era crimes.
such as China and North Korea, but also to the world at large. Given that the enmity and antipathy, which Japan’s colonial expansionism generated and consolidated during WWII, sill remain vivid in Asian people’s mind, its recent turn to foreign policy activism is provoking fears of renewed Japanese militarism in the world. Thus, the relationships between Japan and its neighbors are increasingly strained, with dangerous implications for international security.

Despite the growing concerns on Japan’s foreign policy activism, however, the existing studies on the postwar Japanese politics have a great trouble in accounting for the causes of the activism. Realist theories, for example, have some difficulty in explaining why Japan is rapidly shifting to foreign policy activism in spite of the US unwavering security commitment. Both liberal and constructivist theories, which emphasizes the pacifying effect of democratic institutions and norm in Japan, also are puzzled as to why Japan, which has been the one of the oldest democracies in Asia, is suddenly shifting to assertive foreign policy.

To explain the reasons why Japan is rapidly turning to assertive foreign policy, this paper develops the so-called “perverse political accountability” approach. The approach claims that the structural change symbolized by the growing security challenge from adjacent rivals, notably China and North Korea, and US policy for proactive Japan structures Japan’s domestic political condition such that the majority of Japanese people become more conservative and nationalistic. Such shift in Japanese people’s preference is creating a “perverse accountability” by which the leaders or parties willing to adopt hard-line foreign policies are better off electorally while the leaders or parties remaining soft-line on foreign affairs are worse off. The perverse accountability contributes to Japan’s rapid turn to foreign policy activism in two ways: (1) it leads to a severe partisan imbalance between the conservative parties, e.g., the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), and two leftist parties, e.g., the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDP) and the Japan’s Communist Party (CP); (2) it helps a more hawkish player, i.e., the LDP, to come to office more often than the DPJ does and to have a greater chance of adopting the hard-line policy that it favors. Thus, I argue that the perverse accountability is the center of current Japan’s turn to foreign policy activism.

The remainder of this article is divided into four sections. In the first section, I review critically existing studies of Japan’s foreign policy. The second section develops a theoretical framework, e.g., perverse political accountability approach. The third section provides evidence showing that the accountability leads to Japan’s rapid shift to foreign policy activism. In the concluding section, I discuss the results of the analysis and its implications for further research on Japan’s foreign policy.

Prior Studies of Japan’s Foreign Policy

The scholars of various stripes of realism argue that the current Japan’s turn to foreign policy activism is the result of growing security challenge from the rising China and wayward North Korea (Mastanduno, 2002; Christensen, 1999; Calder, 2006; Arase, 2007; Hughes, 2004; 2007; 2009; Twomey, 2000). The challenge is worsening Japan’s threat perception and, as a result, it is moving toward foreign policy activism to hedge against the threat. But such realist view has some difficulty explaining why Japan, which is still under the US strong security guarantee, is moving into the hawkish direction. Despite some controversies about the role of the US as a stabilizer in East Asia, it still provides a strong military commitment to protecting Japan from outside threats. Given the heavy presence of the US military in Japan, therefore, realists have little to say about why Japan under a strong US security guarantee shifts to foreign policy activism.
Japan’s rapid right turn is more puzzling to neo-liberal scholars. Since their theoretical argument is firmly built upon the logic of Kantian triangle, there is no strong reason to doubt that Japan, which has long been constrained by the three axes of the Kantian triangle, e.g., democracy, economic interdependence, and inter-governmental organization, is moving toward more hawkish direction (Acharya, 2003/2004; Wu, 2008; Koo, 2009). From the neo-liberals’ perspective, therefore, the current move toward foreign policy activism is a just passing trend and Japan will remain committed to the pacifism in the future.

Constructivists have remained largely optimistic about Japan’s pacifist posture in foreign policy. They’ve argued that the institutional legacy of Hiroshima and defeat in World War II led to the consolidation of anti-militarist norm and democratic institutions. Stressing the tightened civilian control of civilian leadership on military and the culture of anti-militarism, the scholars also have predicted that there should be no dramatic changes in Japan’s pacifist stance (Berger, 1993; Katzenstien, 1993; Katzenstein & Okawara, 2001-2002; Katzenstein, 1996). But the approach dismisses the possibility that a radical shift in security environment may lead to the switch of Japanese public’s preference from passive pacifism to foreign policy activism, and that the switch may propel the Japan’s civilian politicians and public not only to break away from the postwar antimilitarist norm, but also to move toward foreign policy activism.

In what follows, I develop a more nuanced approach to Japan’s shift to foreign policy activism. The approach makes it clear that Japan’s nationalist turn in foreign policy is not a just passing trend but a reality that a radical change in security landscape is creating, and that a perverse political accountability, which the change has both created and consolidated at home, is at the center of Japan’s turn to foreign policy activism.

**Theoretical Framework: “Perverse” Political Accountability**

To construct a theoretical framework for understanding Japan’s rapid shift to foreign policy activism, I synthesize and twist key theoretical insights from the literature on international rivalries and democratic peace. The rich literature in international rivalries has claimed that rivalry dyads, compared to non-rivalry ones, maintain much more hostile relationships. Traumatic war, colonial experience, and territorial dispute all push rivals to be caught up in enduring hostility for decades (Goertz & Diehl, 1993, 1995; Diehl & Goertz, 2000; Bennett, 1997, 1998). Applied to Japan’s foreign relations, it seems clear that Japan’s active foreign policy exclusively targets such enduring rivals as China and North Korea rather than the world at large.

Although Japan’s current turn to the right is primarily driven by the worsening relationships with these rivals, a question still remains to be answered. Japan have allegedly been one of the oldest democracies in Asia and served as a cornerstone of the postwar pacifism in the region (Katzenstein & Okawara, 2001-2002). Thus, many scholars of Japanese politics have argued that democratic institutions and the norm of anti-militarism have pervaded Japan and played a pivotal role in preventing Japan from returning to assertive prewar posture (Berger, 1993; Katzenstein, 1998; Katzenstein & Okawara, 2001-2002). What we are witnessing right now, however, is that Japan is rapidly backsliding into assertive foreign policy whose ideological background is highly nationalist and conservative (Matthews, 2003; Fukuyama, 2005; Nye, 2012; Takahashi, 2010). Why is Japan, which has long been remained peaceful in its foreign policy posture, rapidly turning aggressive?

To explain democratic Japan’s shift to assertive foreign policy, I develop a “perverse political accountability” approach partly by twisting the insight from democratic peace theory and partly by applying it to the rivalry relationship between Japan (allied with the US) and two major adversaries—i.e., China and North
Korea. The rich literature in democratic peace has consistently argued that ex post political accountability embedded in democratic regimes makes foreign policy leaders highly peace-prone by allowing risk-averse public to punish the leaders if they adopt costly hard-line policies such as military conflict and war (Kinsella & Russett, 2002; Oneal & Russett, 1997; Russell & Oneal, 2002).

Contrary to this conventional account, however, I make a counter-argument that in the context of international rivalries, the ex post accountability in democracies can be “distorted” such that the leaders willing to adopt more conflictual policies are better off while the leaders adopting soft-line policies are worse off (Colaresi, 2004, 2005; Vasquez, 1993; Nincic, 1989; Huth & Allee, 2002b; McGinnis & Williams, 2001). This is because public’s preferences in the rivalries tend to be skewed in favor of confrontation over cooperation. The public in the rivalries has long been influenced by “rivalry-as-prison effect”. They have systematically been educated and brainwashed so as to consider their perceived rivals as real enemies and threats. Under this circumstance, domestic politics in the rivalries produces a biased structure of political rewards that favors confrontation over conciliation and cooperation (Nincic, 1989). Such biased political rewards are more likely to be activated and strengthened when the public experiences aggressive behaviors from the rivals (Colaresi, 2004, 2005).

The threats from rivals may take various kinds of forms from expansive use of military power, verbal threats and threats to use military force by the rivals (Colaresi, 2004). Built upon the entrenched hostilities consolidated over an extended period of time, the public in rivalries may consolidate its hard-line belief and preference towards the rivals if the threats materialize into real military actions. Consequently, the domestic political setting in the rivalries is structured such that though diplomatic and military policies would be politically popular and quite defensible against soft-line opponents of the government. This is what I call “perverse political accountability”.

Once the accountability set in motion, the relationships between rivals may be hostage to a biased structure of political reward favoring confrontation. Keenly aware of the reward system structured in favor of confrontation, the hard-line leaders in democratic rivals become more willing to inflate the threats from the rivals and to use them for shoring up their legitimacy (Mansfield & Snyder, 2005; Nincic, 1989; Colaresi, 2004). So democratic leaders may be much more hawkish than democratic peace theorists might have expected and become a major driver of hard-line foreign policies (Huth, 1996; Huth & Allee, 2002b).

In what follows, I test my argument that perverse accountability is a major cause of Japan’s shift to foreign policy activism. First, the paper identifies kinds of security challenges that might contribute to worsening threat perception of Japanese public. Second, the paper examines the process by which the challenges lead to the emergence and consolidation of perverse political accountability in Japan. Finally, the paper demonstrates the accountability prompts Japanese leaders’ hawkish turn in foreign policies.

Security Challenge and Japanese People’s Turn to the Right

Many scholars in international rivalries have argued that external conflict and threats affect the domestic political alignment within a rival state. Hostility from a rival, in the form of verbal threats or military actions,

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2 Rivalry as prison effect can occur if a significant proportion of the attentive public in the states engaged in international rivalries perceives its rival states as a severe threat to national security. Under this circumstance, any policy that leaves the states vulnerable to the rivals would be resisted by significant segments of the populations as would policies that seem dangerously bellicose. For the details on the effect (McGinnis & Williams, 2001).
increases the insecurity of the population of the threatened state (Vasquez, 1993, Colaresi, 2004, 2005; Thompson, 2006). As the level of hostility increases from a foreign rival, the population in the threatened state is more likely to feel insecure and to become hostile toward the rival.

**Rising China and Increased Security Awareness of Japanese People**

In the context of Japan, it is the rise of China and its ever-growing assertive foreign policy that are prompting the Japanese people’s support of active foreign policies (Hughes, 2009; Matthews, 2003; Calder, 2006; Fukuyama, 2005; He, 2007). Since the Cold War ended, China has rapidly been rising in both economic and military realms. China has already passed Japan as the second-largest economy (Nye, 2012). Based on the dazzling economic growth, China has not only modernized its nuclear capabilities, but also increased military budget by double-digit rates for 17 consecutive years (Calder, 2006).

A simple military growth of China, however, has not led to an increased awareness of security among Japanese people. Against the backdrop of its enhanced military standing, China has intentionally created a number of military conflicts with Japan over contested territories, notably the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. Table 1 provides a thumbnail sketch on the militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) between the two rivals and the levels of hostility in the disputes over the past five decades.

![Figure 1. Militarized dispute and its hostility between Japan and China, 1960-2012. Source: COW MID data set (v 4.0.) and author’s calculation.](image)

As Figure 1 shows, the relationships between two rivals were relatively calm and peaceful during the Cold War. From the mid-1990s onward, however, the two rivals’ relations have turned sour. The militarized disputes between China and Japan made a comeback around the mid-1990s and have been recurring until very recently. The levels of hostility in the disputes have grown increasingly severe such that the two rivals have become
more willing to resort to military threats against each other.³

At the center of the disputes is the two rivals’ contested territorial claims on the Senkau/Diaoyu islands. Based upon its rapidly growing military capabilities, China has grown bolder in asserting its claims by making unilateral declarations about control of airspace and sending fishing boats and other vessels into the waters around islands to test Japan’s resolve to defend the islands. Responding to Japan’s complaint about Chinese vessels’ intrusion into the waters, China has infuriated Japan by simply reiterating that the “islands are historically an integral part of China” (Hughes, 2009).

China’s military activities have also been very aggressive in the South China Sea. Under their claim of “nine-dotted lines”, China declared almost 90% of the South China Sea as their own. But the South China Sea is vital to the security of Japan. The South China Sea is not only key sea lanes Japan needs to import crude oil but also key sea line of communications between the Middle East and Northeast Asia (Nagao, 2013). But current China’s assertiveness in the South China Sea provokes Japanese fear that it may undermine a stability in the Sea such that Japanese access to the Sea is denied by China. All these China’ assertiveness thus are giving the Japan’s public a strong reason to become more conservative and nationalistic by increasing its security awareness (Hornung, 2012).

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³ According to the coding rule of MIDs data set, a value “0” indicates that no militarized action occurred; (2) a value of “1” indicates that no militarized response to an initiation by another state occurred; (3) a value of “2” indicates that the states in a dispute threatened to use force; (4) a value of “3” indicates that the states in a dispute displayed force; (5) a value of “4” indicates that the states in a dispute used force; (6) a value of “5” indicates that the states in a dispute went to war.
a defense guideline in which Japan’s new military roles constitutes a key part of a revitalized alliance between two states (Christensen, 1999). The guideline in which US has consistently supported for Japan’s pro-active role in East Asia specifically targeted rising China (Christensen, 2006). Keenly aware of the security implications of rising China in East Asia, the US has made determined efforts to increase Japanese assertiveness in its foreign policy. Chinese threat, coupled with the US effort to counter it by consolidating US-Japan alliance, thus provides a fertile ground for Japanese people to voice nationalist sentiment against China.

**Nuclear North Korea and Japanese Paranoia**

The growing security challenge from wayward North Korea is another factor that is rapidly worsening the threat perception of the Japan’s public. From the mid 1990s onward, North Korea has been taking a highly aggressive stance towards Japan, as symbolized by multiple long-range missile launches into the East Sea/the Sea of Japan and secret nuclear tests. Figure 2 illustrates how the relationships between Japan and North Korea have systematically been worsening by a series of militarized disputes mediated by missile launches and nuclear tests since the mid-1990s.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the two rivals had engaged in almost eight militarized disputes since the mid-1990s and most disputes were associated with North Korea’s long-range missile launches into the East Sea/the Sea of Japan. The May 1993 test launch of a Nodong-1 in the Sea of Japan, for example, encouraged Japanese people to realize that a significant part of Japanese territory may be exposed to missile attack from North Korea. The Japanese people’s paranoia about the possible missile attack by North Korea reached its peak when it launched Taepodong-I missile in August 1998 over Japanese airspace (Matthews, 2003). The Japan’s public also feels more insecure by the North’s constant bid for nuclear weapons. In particular, the public fears that North Korea will use its enhanced nuclear positions to exert nuclear blackmail on Japan (Hughes, 2009).

The US also played a critical role in increased awareness of security among Japanese people. Faced with the North’s missile launches and surprising nuclear tests, for instance, the US pushed Japan to demonstrate considerable alliance solidarity in their UN diplomacy. The two allies not only defined North Korea as a major security threat in East Asia, but also worked together to pass the 2006 resolutions 1695 and 1718 condemning the missile and nuclear tests and imposing economic sanctions (Hughes, 2009). Backed by the US strong commitment to non-proliferation, Japan was able to take an increasing assertive attitude toward North Korea, thereby creating a broad domestic political condition in which Japanese population has considered North Korea as an “Axis of Evil”.

**Rise of Conservative Japanese Constituencies**

The security challenge presented by both China and DPRK have played a crucial role in heightening the levels of threat perception among the Japanese people. The heightened threat perceptions in turn encourage the people to turn to patriotism and nationalism (Hironori, 2006; Izumikawa, 2010; Hornung, 2012). Specifically, the expansive use of military power by rising China and its assertive territorial claims, combined with North Korea’s highly provocative foreign and security policies have paved the way for the rise of conservative constituencies in Japan (Hughes, 2009). The US also played a key role in the consolidation of such conservative preference among Japanese people by exaggerating hostile intentions from the two rivals
A poll, which was conducted by the Asahi Shimbun in 2010, for example, reports that 29% of respondents pointed out that the biggest military threat to Japan is from North Korea while 55% of respondents said that the biggest military threat to Japan is from China. In total, the two rivals were identified a major security threat to Japan by 84% of the respondents. Regarding the factors that the respondents are concerned about in threatening the peace in East Asia, 38% of the respondents pointed out the Korean peninsula while 48% of the respondent were worried about Chinese military power.

The Japanese perception of the risk of war involving Japan also has been gradually increasing. The Cabinet Office poll shows that the percentage of survey respondents who said that Japan faces a risk of war has increased from 21% in 1997 to 45% in 2006. The number of respondents worrying about the risk of war involving Japan has nearly doubled in ten years.

With the rapid deterioration of its threat perception, the Japan’s public has begun to raise a voice that Japan must develop active foreign policies that help better defend Japan from outside threats (Hornung, 2012). The evidence showing that the preference of the Japan’s public is shifting from the postwar pacifism to new foreign policy activism abounds. In regards to the revision of the “Peace Constitution”, for example, the 2013 survey by the Asahi Shimbun and University of Tokyo research team showed that 50% of voters were in favor of revising the constitution, up from 41% in 2009 (Sieg, 2013). According to the Cabinet Office’s poll, the Japanese people’s support for an increase in defense capabilities of the SDF has increased 15.5% in 1997 to 24.8% in 2012 (Public Relations Office, Cabinet Office, 2012). In regards to the SDF’s effort to support overseas operation, the people’s approval rating has increased 43.6% in 2009 to 48.8% in 2012 (Public Relations Office, Cabinet Office, 2012).

It is also interesting to notice that the public’s support for active foreign policy is synchronized with the change in its understandings of the past War crime. The 2013 Asahi Shimbun’s poll showed that with regard to visits to the Yaskuni Shrine, in which many WWII criminals are enshrined, by three Cabinet ministers on August 25 when WWII ended, 41% of those polled approved the visit. This result stands in a contrast to the results in the 2004 poll conducted by the Asahi Shimbun in which only 38% of those polled endorsed Koizumi cabinet’s’ visit to the shrine. The poll also showed that concerning both China’s and ROK’s criticism that Prime Minister Abe, unlike the past 20 years, did not mention that Japan has done harm to the Asian countries, 52% of the respondents said that the Abe administration doesn’t need to pay special attention to the criticism while 34% said that it should take criticism seriously.

In short, the growing security challenge from both China and North Korea towards Japan and US exaggeration of the challenge have been leading to an increased awareness of security among the Japanese people. Such an increased awareness has prompted the rise of hard-line constituencies in Japan’s politics.

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which might be led to both the rise and the consolidation of a biased structure of political rewards that favors conservative foreign and security policies. That is, the conservative public has served as the “backbone” of Japan’s shift to foreign policy activism.

“Perverse” Political Accountability in Democratic Japan

In the context of international rivalries, the conservative public tends both to create and to consolidate the so-called “perverse” political accountability. The perverse accountability refers to the political reward mechanism through which conservative domestic audience rewards the political leaders willing to adopt tough foreign policy action toward foreign enemies while punishing the leaders, who appear to be conciliatory and weak in dealing with them. Many studies in international rivalries have shown that such distorted accountability prevails in the rivalries (Nincic, 1989; Vasquez, 1993; Colaresi, 2004, 2005; McGinnis & Williams, 2001; Hensel, 1999). The paper claims that the accountability has already been activated and in place in Japan.

Figure 3. Change in the electoral fortunes of Japan’s major parties.

Source: Asahi Shimbun, the Lower House election results, various years; each line represents the share of seats the parties obtain against a total seat in the House; percentage is based on author’s calculations.

Democratic Japan and a Biased Structure of Political Rewards

The states in international rivalries often become a hostage of a biased structure of political rewards that favor confrontation over conciliation. Democratic countries cannot be an exception. When a democratic country faces a threat from international rival who in past conflicts has demonstrated the willingness to use military force and to oppose a negotiated solution, this rival is likely to be portrayed as a dangerous adversary or far enemy at home. More important, foreign relations with the rival will have a higher level of domestic
political saliency within the democratic polity than within the authoritarian polity. In this context of heightened domestic political attention, the *ex post* political accountability in democratic polity tends to become “perverse” such that the leaders adopting hard-line policies toward the rival are better off electorally while the leaders remaining soft-line on the rivals are worse off (Huth, 1996; Huth & Allee, 2002a).

Such perverse accountability has come into full play in Japan as its public has become more conservative and nationalistic with the rise of the security challenges from China and North Korea. From the mid-1990s onward, therefore, Japanese constituencies have begun to favor conservative parties and to punish the leftist-and pacifist parties. Since the 1996 general election, for instance, the conservative parties, such as the LDP and DPJ, which have shown strong commitments to acting tough in dealing with the threats from the two adversaries, have been systematically better off in elections. By contrast, two major leftist parties, e.g., the SDP and Japanese CP, which have consistently been soft-line in dealing with the threats, have suffered severe setbacks in the elections (Hiwatari, 2005; Fukuyama, 2005; Calder, 2006; Arase, 2007). Figure 3 vividly shows how the perverse accountability has been rewarding the conservative parties while punishing the leftist parties in Japan since the mid-1990s.

Several points are immediately apparent in Figure 3. From the mid 1990s on, the two conservative parties, e.g., the LDP and DPJ, have increased their vote share and acted as dominant parties in Japanese politics. The DPJ, a relatively new political force, for example, has garnered constant support from the Japanese people since the mid-1990s and prevailed in the 2009 election, which allowed it to rule Japan until 2012 when it experienced a severe setback. The LDP, which had monopolized its control of Japan’s politics since 1946, lost its hold on power in 1993, but has gradually regained its influence until it was defeated by the DPJ in the 2009 election. In the 2012 election, however, the LDP achieved a landslide victory and came back to power.

Compared to the two conservative parties, the Japan’s leftist parties have suffered significant losses in a series of the elections. The pacifist SDP, for example, served a part of the ruling coalition in 1995, 1996, and 2009 respectively but its veto power was highly limited because of the rapid decline of its share of seats in the Lower House. It experienced a great debacle in the 1996 general election in which its portion of the seats in the Lower House decreased from “13.7%” to just “3%”. Since then, its electoral fortune has never been reversed. The Japanese CP, another key pacifist veto player, has constantly failed to obtain sizable support from the Japan’s public since the early 1990s. Its portion of the seats in the Lower House decreased from “5.2%” in 1996 to just “1.67%” in 2012. Like the SDP, therefore, the CP has been systematically marginalized in Japan’s electoral politics.

To be sure, there are many other factors that might have affected the electoral fortunes of these competing parties in Japan. What seems the most clear from the above-mentioned evidence, however, is that the parties willing to adjust themselves to new security challenge have been better off while parties remaining passive in dealing with the challenge have been worse off. The Japan’s constituencies, which becomes more conservative

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9 Although not clearly addressed here, it is of note that the Japan’s electoral rule change in 1994 also has exerted strong effects on the rise of a dominant two-party system. The electoral rule change not only promoted more efficient inter-party competition for single member district or party list seats to take a stance on policies, domestic and international, but also pushed the parties to woo voters on a basis of issues to a great extent, such as economic recovery and national security. As a result, the two major conservative parties, e.g., the LDP and the DPJ, which successfully wooed the Japan’s voters by taking a clear stance on national issues such as economic reform and active foreign policy, have become dominant forces in Japan and alternated in power. For the details on the effect of the change in electoral rule on the rise of a two-party system in Japan (Rosenbluth, Saito, & Zinn, 2007, pp. 1-28; Lipscy & Schneider, 2012)
and nationalist due to their increased awareness of security have both created and consolidated the perverse accountability such that only the parties willing to respond proactively to the challenge have been better off electorally.

**Fallen Leftists, Rising Hawks and Japan’s Shift to Foreign Policy Activism**

The perverse accountability has structured the domestic political condition in Japan such that the two conservative parties, e.g., the LDP and the DPJ, to thrive while the two leftist parties, e.g., the SDP and CP, to shrink. The dominance of the two conservative parties deprived Japan of the chance that its foreign policy may be the result of the compromise between the conservative and leftist parties. As widely discussed, the two leftist parties, e.g., the SDP and the CP, have consistently represented the most pacifist voice in the postwar Japan. They played a key role in both the consolidation of anti-militarist opinion and were the dogged opponents to the revision of the peace constitution. The parties also consistently supported for “unarmed neutrality” in Japan’s foreign policy by leading massive anti-war campaigns (Sasada, 2006; Calder, 2006).

Unfortunately, however, the parties have constantly failed to adjust themselves to trying international conditions symbolized by the security challenge from China and North Korea. They have continued to show a blind sympathy towards the communist parties of the two adversaries and even argued that the Japanese government had fabricated its allegations of Japanese nationals being abducted by North Koreans (Sasada, 2006). The two parties have not only opposed the Japanese government’s effort to contain rising China, but also undermined its effort to impose economic sanctions on North Korea (Hiwatari, 2005). Such naïve pacifist attitude encouraged the conservative public to turn their back on the parties, which resulted in the rapid decline of the parties’ influence in Japanese politics.

The decline of the leftist parties has made pacifist voice disappear in most foreign policy debates in the Diet. The LDP and DPJ have monopolized the debates and converged in their willingness to actively respond to the security challenge by bypassing constitutional restraints. An overwhelming majority of the two parties feel that Tokyo’s response thus far to the challenge has been too passive and that it’s time to develop more active foreign policy before the challenge materializes into a real security threat (Hughes, 2007). Despite some disagreement on the details, therefore, the LDP and DPJ reached a broad consensus that Japan should not only break away from past behavior, e.g., over-dependence on the US, but also restore its autonomy in foreign policy by interpreting the Peace Constitution in a more flexible way (Hagström, 2010). The consensus has materialized into a number of active foreign policies, such as the dispatch of the SDF to Iraq, the campaign to revise the Peace Constitution, the nationalization of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, a close security cooperation with India to deter China in the South China Sea and the consolidation of the right of collective self-defense.

Most important, the perverse accountability has contributed to Japan’s right turn by allowing the LDP, which is the most conservative political force in Japan, both to come to office more often than the DPJ does and to adopt the hard-line policies it favors in a consistent manner. With the systematic consolidation of the perverse accountability, the LDP has prevailed in five general elections (1996, 2000, 2003, 2005, and 2012). That is, the LDP won almost every general election since 1996 except for period of 2009 and has monopolized control of Japan’s foreign policy during each time period. While in office, the LDP has produced five prime ministers, which are the member of the ultra-nationalist factions such as the Machimura faction, the Ibuki faction, and the Aso faction.
Allegedly, these factions have a highly hawkish preference with a particular emphasis on “national pride”. They not only place the highest priority both on the elimination of the old shackles, which is characterized by the war-renouncing constitution, but also persistently seek Japan’s return to “Futsu no kuni”, e.g., normal state. Built upon a simple black-and-white conception of “idealized pre-war Japan” and “denounced post-war Japan”, the leaders in the factions have aggressively sought Japan’s shift to foreign policy activism (Takahashi, 2010). Specifically, the leaders have portrayed China and North Korea as “trying to denying Japan’s idealized past” and used the threats from the two rivals for the justification of their assertive foreign policy (Hughes, 2009).

**Power Play of Hard-Liners**

The example that the hard-line LDP leaders, which came to office due to the perverse accountability, have been driving Japan’s shift to foreign policy activism against growing threats from China and North Korea abounds. Prime Minister Koizumi, who came to office in 2000, for example, constantly portrayed himself as a “kizen” or “fearless leader” in the elections and pledged a series of hard-line policies, such as “standing tall against China”, “making annual visit the Yaskuni Shrine”, and “engaging North Korea”, which eventually helped him to take power. While serving as Prime Minister, he persistently carried out the pledged hard-line policies. He visited the Yaskuni Shrine five times in four years, which incensed both China and South Korea (Hiwatari, 2005). He also approved the revision of controversival school history textbook in which Japan’s culpability for the war-time crimes are significantly downplayed, thereby provoking major anti-Japanese demonstrations in Beijing and Shanghai (Calder, 2006). Faced with the issue of the abductees, Koizumi imposed harsh economic sanctions on North Korea partly by stopping cash transfers from Japan to the North and partly by setting up an embargo on North Korean ships (Hiwatari, 2005). He also took increasingly assertive attitude in dealing with the nuclear threats from the North, which resulted in Japan’s involvement in the US-led missile defense system. Koizumi finally dispatched the SDP to Iraq. This was the first time that the SDF had been dispatched to a war zone since the end of WWII (Izumikawa, 2010).

Koizumi’s successors like Yasuo Fukuda and Taro Aso both continued and even strengthen such hard-line approach in foreign policies. Prime Minister Taro Aso in particular reinforced Japan’s hawkish position towards China and North Korea. As foreign minister from 2005 to 2007, Mr. Aso soured relations with China and raised tensions throughout the region, praising the achievements of prewar Japanese colonialism, justifying wartime atrocities and portraying China as a dangerous military threat (Masters, 2008). While serving as Prime Minister, he also unduly magnified the threat from North Korea. Despite the deep skepticism on the North’s nuclear capabilities, Aso reiterated that “it will eventually look to combine its long-range missile capabilities with its newly acquired nuclear weapons technology”, thereby provoking the fear of the North’s attack on Japan. Aso also took a staunch approach to the abduction issue against North Korea and sought US pledges not to abandon Japan on the issue (Hughes, 2009).

The perverse accountability eventually allowed Shinzo Abe, the most hard-line of the hard-liners, to return to power in 2012. The Abe’s campaign pledge was full of nationalist commitments such as “proactively responding to dangers from China and North Korea, “exercising the right of collective self-defense”, “making it easier for the Diet to propose revisions to the war-renouncing Article 9 of the Constitution”, and “re-branding the Self-Defense Forces as the National Defense Force” (Yoshida & Ayako, 2012).

With a strong mandate gained through a strong election victory in 2012, Abe and his LDP have
determined efforts to accomplish those pledges. Abe’s LDP, for instance, becomes more willing to contain China. Capitalizing on China’s increasing military spending, Abe decided to increase Japan’s defense budget for the first time in 11 years (Abe, 2013). He also is worsening the tension in the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands by approving a plan to shoot down Chinese surveillance planes flying above the islands.

To deter China’s assertiveness, Abe is trying to expand security and defense cooperation with India (AFP-Jiji, 2014). Regarding North Korea, Abe defines himself as a “staunch” anti-Pyongyang hard-liner and vowed to keep up pressure over the abduction issue. He also refused to join other participants in the six-party talks on North Korea’s nuclear weapon program.

Based on the exaggeration of the threats from China and North Korea, Abe has taken a big step forward toward a strong Japan-building effort. He has never hidden his intention that the Peace Constitution, which limits Japan’s military to self-defense, could be revised in the foreseeable future (Hayashi, 2014). Abe also has hinted that his cabinet would ease long-standing restrictions on military activities outside Japanese territory, which means Japan’s Self-Defense Force could come to the aid of allies such as the US even if Japan itself isn’t attacked (Martin & Toko, 2014).

In short, Japan’s nationalist turn in foreign policy is the result of the perverse political accountability that the Japan’s public, which becomes more conservative and nationalistic across time, has been consolidating. The radical changes in the security environment featured by the growing security challenge from rising China, wayward North Korea and US policy for proactive Japan, have both created and reinforced such distorted accountability by which the political party, which appears to be the most hard-line in dealing with the challenge, has been systemically better off electorally. Accordingly, the LDP has come to office most of the time and hawkish LDP leaders have been given a chance to use the threats from the two foreign rivals as a cover for justifying their shift to foreign policy activism.

**Conclusion and Avenue for Future Research**

My paper examines the causes of Japan’s shift to foreign policy activism. Japan, which has long been a symbol of post-war pacifism in Asia, is rapidly backsliding into nationalistic foreign and security policies. To explain the causes, I develop the so-called “perverse political accountability” approach. The approach claims that the growing security challenge from China, threats from North Korea and US policy for proactive Japan create a domestic condition under which the majority of Japanese people, which have lived in a democracy, become more conservative and nationalistic. Such shift in Japanese people’s preference is creating a perverse or distorted political accountability in which the leaders or parties remaining soft-line on them are worse off. Consequently, the accountability allows only the conservative parties such as the LDP and the DPJ to come to office and to pursue assertive foreign policies in a consistent manner. Empirical findings from a detailed case study on current Japanese politics provide a strong support for my argument of perverse accountability.

The major contribution of this study to extant scholarship on Japanese politics is two-fold. First, I develop a novel approach to the causes of Japan’s shift to assertive foreign policy. The prior studies of Japan’s foreign policy, across the schools of thought, provide overly optimistic accounts of Japan’s foreign policy behavior partly by focusing on the US security guarantee and partly by focusing on democratic institutions and
EXPLAINING JAPAN’S SHIFT TO FOREIGN POLICY ACTIVISM

anti-militarist norm, which have been assumed to be embedded in postwar Japanese society. But the studies tend to ignore the fact that a radical alternation in security environment, which is characterized by the rising China, wayward North Korea and interventionist US, might make the preference of Japanese voters realigned in ways consistent with assertive foreign policy and prompts Japan’s nationalist turn. My study develops a new argument that such structure-induce preference change in the Japanese public is already underway and it is at the center of Japan’s shift to foreign policy activism by reinforcing a perverse political accountability rewarding hard-line political groups.

Second, I provide strong evidence fully commensurate with the perverse accountability approach. The thumbnail sketch on the change in Japan’s security environment is striking. A series of militarized disputes between Japan and China and between Japan and North Korea have occurred since the mid-1990s. In response to the disputes, the US has encouraged Japan to play a proactive role in foreign and security policy. Such change in security environment has both created and reinforced the perverse political accountability in which hard-line political parties, compared to their soft-line counterparts, have systematically been better off. A close examination on the electoral performance of competing political parties confirms that with the radical change in the security landscape, Japanese constituencies have continued rewarding two conservative parties-i.e., the LDP and DPJ while punishing the two pacifist parties, notably SDP and the CP. It also reveals that compared to the DPJ, the LDP, which is the most hawkish component in Japan, has came to office most of the time and has been given a greater chance to adopt the hard-line policies that they favor.

The results of this study, however, provide only a partial answer to the problem of Japan’s shift to foreign policy activism. In particular, the study says little about the impact of Japan’s decades-long economic stagnation on its turn to right-wing foreign policies. Several experts and scholars have already hinted that Japan’s prolonged economic slump might have exerted a strong influence on its shift to foreign policy activism (Matthews, 2003; Nye, 2012; Inoguchi, 2014). So a useful line of future inquiry may involving test how the economic stagnation might affect Japan’s foreign policy activism and how the stagnation may be intertwined with the changes in security landscape to prompt Japan’s shift to foreign policy activism.

The main policy implication that the study provides is that analysts must pay greater attention to Japan’s changing domestic political condition for the understanding of its rapid shift to foreign policy activism. The study makes it clear that external pressures characterized by rising China, threatening North Korea and interventionist US are restructuring Japan’s domestic politics so that it becomes more willing to break away from the postwar pacifist constraints. Specifically, the study illustrates that the so-called perverse accountability operates in a democratic Japan and it continues to allow Japan’s conservative parties to come to office and to consistently pursue hard-line policies. So, the neighboring states, which have grown increasingly worried about Japan’s return to foreign policy assertiveness, need to devise ways to assuage the tension with Japan. As for North Korea, it is highly required that it restrain itself from testing more long-range missile in the East Sea/the Sea of Japan. China also needs to be devise a bilateral forum in which the solution to the disputes in the East and South China Sea are discussed with Japan in an open-ended manner. Finally, the US has to be restrained from using the security challenges from China and North Korea as a cover for bolstering Japan’s proactive foreign policies.
References

EXPLAINING JAPAN’S SHIFT TO FOREIGN POLICY ACTIVISM

Israel and the Arab World: In the Shadow of Regional Upheaval—from the “Arab Spring” to the Summer of ISIS

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In the winter of 2010, the “Spring of the Arab Nations” suddenly erupted, leading to the collapse of the Arab old order and the fall of many Arab regimes that up until then were perceived as strong and solid. In many of the Arab states, the “Arab Spring”, which began as a popular protest degenerated into a bloody civil war, and in the case of Syria it led in the summer of 2014 to the emergence onto the regional stage of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The earthquake in the Arab world was perceived by many Israelis as presenting a possible threat, not only to the regional stability and quiet that had reigned along Israel’s borders with its Arab neighbors, but also to the very existence of the peace agreements that had been a most important element in Israel’s national security conception for four decades. In the face of this challenge, Israel chose a passive approach and to allow events to work themselves out and drag it along with them. In some of the arenas matters worked themselves out favorably, for example, in Egypt. In some of the arenas, like Syria and Lebanon, Israel remained a worried observer from the sidelines. In Syria chaos and Islamic extremism spread all over, and in Lebanon Hizballah continued to grow stronger. Meanwhile, the Palestinian arena with all its problems remained on ice, lingering in a state of waiting. Only time will tell whether Israel’s policy was prudent or simply evasive. Was Israel behaving like the ostrich, burying its head in the sand and avoiding like fire any policy initiative? Or was Israel’s policy prudent, sound, and necessary given the limitations on Israel’s power?

Keywords: Israel, the Arab Spring, Syria, Egypt, the Middle East, the Arab-Israeli conflict

Introduction

The Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the longest and bloodiest clashes the world has witnessed since the end of World War II. At the heart of the conflict, of course, lies the Israeli-Palestinian struggle over mandatory Palestine/Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel). However, it would be more precise to describe the conflict as a conglomerate or a cluster of a number of primary and secondary conflicts which originated as a dispute between Arabs and Jews, then in time became what is today’s struggle between the Palestinians and Israelis over Palestine/Israel. However, the localized conflict boiled over into disputes, mainly territorial, between Israel and its Arab neighbors. These clashes developed a dynamic of their own, with their own depths and complexities, thus making it difficult to find any solution. The original bases of the Palestinian-Israeli and Arab-Israeli conflicts were mainly nationalistic and territorial in character. However, over the years other issues surfaced, the main one being religion, and so the clash became one of Islam versus Judaism (Shamir, 1976).

Thus, several different conflicts accumulated around the State of Israel. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict
stood at the center, with the Egyptian-Israeli, Jordanian-Israeli, Syrian-Israeli, and others revolving around it. The fact that what cohered here was in actuality a cluster of conflicts found clear expression in the fact that several of the secondary conflicts—which were connected with the core conflict, but not necessarily or inescapably so—were able over the years to be resolved. Thus, a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt was signed in March 1979 and between Israel and Jordan in October 1994. Furthermore, Israel and Syria held lengthy negotiations, marked by numerous ups and downs, and they almost reached the stage where a peace agreement could be signed. Notably, all this took place without a solution to the core Palestinian-Israeli conflict having been found (Rabinovich, 2004).

Despite the fact that in theory the Arab-Israeli conflict encompassed all the Arabs, in most of Israel’s wars it had to confront only one or two Arab states, while the others remained on the sidelines as onlookers. Thus, in 1967 Israel fought Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, while Lebanon and the other Arab states remained quiet. In 1973 Israel had to fight on the Egyptian and Syrian fronts, while the Jordanian and Lebanese arenas remained quiet. It may be noted in passing that the October 1973 war was the last conventional war in which the regular armies of Arab states were involved. Since then Israel’s battles have had a limited character, with the fighting being carried out against organizations or militias, for example, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and later, the Palestinian Hamas and the Lebanese Hizballah organizations (Elran & Brom, 2007).

The Middle East peace process that began in 1991 gave expression to the desire of the international community, led by the United States, to reach a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and thus bring it to an end. Thus, the process was based upon the effort to bring about talks between Israel and all the Arab states, and if possible, even with a united Arab grouping in which all the states in conflict with Israel would take part. It was the Arab states, or at least some of them, who insisted upon appearing in the framework of a united front. In practice, the comprehensive peace process collapsed and disintegrated into subsidiary processes, some of which achieved complete success, for example, the Jordanian-Israeli peace agreement signed in October 1994. Other subsidiary processes achieved partial success. For example, partial agreements were reached with the Palestinians, beginning with the Oslo Agreements of September 1993 and the Hebron Agreement of 1998. The peace talks between Israel and Syria and Lebanon, however, failed to reach any agreements (Rabinovich, 1999).

In the year 2000, as the first decade of the peace process drew to an end, the Palestinian intifada broke out, and since then the peace process has been in a deep freeze. Various efforts were made to get the process moving again, vis-à-vis both the Palestinians and the Syrians, but these undertakings failed. The Arab side showed no determination or political will to advance toward peace with Israel, but it became evident that Israel was also hesitant to rush forward toward a peace agreement, due to its security concerns, but mainly, because of the political price being demanded domestically from Israel’s leaders in return for such an agreement (a possible threat to the survival of the government). All that Israel’s leaders could do in these circumstances was to try to manage the conflict on the various fronts and keep them stable. This management included: preserving the channels of negotiation insofar as possible; keeping the peace with Jordan and Egypt; conducting relations with the Palestinian Authority (PA) in such a way as to maintain relative stability on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip; and finally, handling matters on the northern front, along the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese borders, in a way to ensure continued calm.

In the winter of 2010, the Arab world experienced that major upheaval, if not to say, severe earthquake, which came to be called, the “Arab Spring”. Insofar as the Jewish state was concerned, the upheavals in the
Arab world made it necessary for Israel to reassess the way it looked at what was happening all around it. The nearby turmoil was changing the world order; consequently, the basic assumptions upon which Israel had acted in the region for many years needed to be revised. To make matters more acute, the “Arab Spring” quickly turned into an “Islamic Winter” as radical Islamic forces came to the fore. Thus, in June 2012 the Muslim Brotherhood’s Muhammad Mursi was elected president of Egypt. However, he survived in power for only about a year, until June 2013, when the Egyptian army overthrew him and returned the country to the path it had followed in the days of President Gamal Abd al-Nasir, Anwar al-Sadat, and Husni Mubarak. In other arenas the “Arab Spring” also dissipated, but in those places it was replaced by chaos and anarchy. These dangerous and devastating afflictions accompanied the disintegration of the Iraqi state, the revolution in Syria, which began as a popular protest but then degenerated into a bloody civil war, and the strident emergence onto the regional stage of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the summer of 2014 (Haas & Lesch, 2013).

These developments greatly changed the facing Israeli policy dilemmas. During the peace process period the questions were: Which channel should Israel advance in order to achieve, if at all possible, a general regional peace? Or, alternatively, in which arena should Israel invest its efforts in order to preserve the regional stability it felt was so vital to it? Now the dilemmas were of a much different character. How were the threatening new fronts to be handled? Which challenge was of greater significance and demanded attention with greater urgency: the Islamic forces (like the Muslim Brotherhood for a while in Egypt and Hamas in the Gaza Strip), or Israel’s long-time enemies (like Bashar al-Asad in Syria, Hizballah in Lebanon, and the Islamic Republic of Iran), or the chaos and anarchy that enabled radical groups like ISIS to spread their control over large swaths of territory not far from Israel? In addition, there was the question of the Palestinian arena: Under the present circumstances, was it a good idea to try to keep it on ice, if possible, or perhaps this was the time to try to advance a political process that would possibly make the achievement of a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which would, in its turn, bring about a change having significant implications for Israel’s status in the Arab world.

Israel and the Arab Spring: An Involved Observer from the Sidelines

In the winter of 2010, a new “Spring of Nations”—the “Spring of the Arab Nations”, suddenly erupted without any warning all over the Middle East. The preceding decades had been marked by economic and social stagnation, together with a surprising degree of long-term political stability under the shadow of dictatorial regimes. The Arab Spring now brought changes such as the Middle East had not known since the 1950s. Waves of protest swept the region, led by the younger generation calling for change, liberty, and justice. In their wake, several dictatorial regimes collapsed unexpectedly, even though they had seemed to outside observers to be firmly in control and immune to any serious threat to their power.

Many in Israel and the whole region, and especially in the West, went out of their way to greet this “Spring of the Arab Nations”. Many wanted to believe that it would convert the backward Middle East into a Garden of Eden enjoying economic prosperity, liberty, and freedom. In particular, these observers hoped that the region would become a fertile breeding ground for democratic regimes, replacing the authoritarian governments that had collapsed so suddenly and dramatically. To anyone viewing the live broadcasts from Tahrir Square in the heart of Egypt’s capital, Cairo, it must have seemed as if the young and determined demonstrators—the espresso, Internet, Facebook, YouTube, and cell phone generation—would bring about in Egypt, and in their wake, in other Arab states as well, a revolution such as brought down the communist
regimes in Eastern Europe. After all, there the revolution had turned the former Soviet satellites into democratic states capable of becoming members of the European Union and, in certain cases, even members of NATO. However, the momentum of the uprisings was impeded rather quickly, and the hopes held out for the “Spring of the Arab Nations” turned into frustration and disappointment. Indeed, the Arab revolutions reached a dead end. In Egypt, for example, the wheel was turned back and an authoritarian military regime was reestablished. In other states, like Libya and Syria, the protests lurched out of control, and in both countries the state and society descended into chaos and anarchy, creating a bloody Hell of civil war. With this it became clear that the establishment of a new order, and certainly a Western-style democratic system, was a task beyond the power of the young protest generation in the Arab world (Lynch, 2012; Massad, 2012).

In Israel the outbreak of the Arab Spring in the winter of 2010 was met with complete surprise, and mainly, with deep shock. Just days before the outbreak of the rioting in Tunis and Egypt, official Israel’s assessment was that the political stability in the Arab world was destined to be preserved for many years. In this spirit, on 25 January 2011, the day before the outbreak of the revolution in Egypt, Israel’s Director of Military Intelligence, General Aviv Kochavi, stated in testimony before the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee that “at the moment there is no concern over the stability of the Egyptian regime” (Inbar, 2013)^1.

In the years preceding the outbreak of the Arab Spring—based upon the assessment noted above, and perhaps also on the belief, or even hope, that the Arab state system surrounding Israel was strong and solid and a “partner” with Israel in the effort to preserve regional stability—Jerusalem focused its attention on the Iranian threat. To be more precise, Israel focused on Iran’s race to achieve nuclear capability and, closely connected with this, the threat presented by Iran’s political allies positioned next door to Israel, Hizballah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Teheran had supplied these movements with tens of thousands of advanced rockets capable of reaching most of Israel’s territory. Israel’s answer to the Iranian threat was to promote cooperation and a kind of undeclared political and security alliance with the moderate Sunni Arab axis that included Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and even Egypt. This axis had already begun to take shape toward the end of the 1970s, following the sharp strategic change of direction in foreign policy brought about by Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat. However, its importance for Israel increased in the decade just passed in face of Iran’s rise to the status of a regional power casting its shadow over broad expanses in the areas adjacent to it, beginning with the Persian Gulf and Iraq, passing on to Syria, and ending in Lebanon and Gaza.

However, in the winter of 2010 the Middle East order, or to be more precise, the Arab order—the “good old” order to which Israel had become accustomed—suddenly collapsed. Arab regimes that up until then were perceived as strong and solid, and certainly immune to any domestic threat, fell like houses of cards. At their head was the regime of Husni Mubarak, Israel’s reliable partner in the effort to maintain regional stability and preserve the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty. The latter had served as the cornerstone—even if generally forgotten and repressed—of Israel’s security policy during the previous four decades. Thus, the outbreak of the Arab Spring aroused serious concerns in Israel about where the “storm” accompanying the Spring would lead. The violence in the Arab streets was perceived as presenting a possible threat, not only to the regional stability and quiet that had reigned along Israel’s borders with its Arab neighbors, but also to the very existence of the peace agreements that had been a most important element in Israel’s national security conception for four decades. Israeli officials did not hide their worry that regimes led by radical Islamic movements would rise in place of

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^1 Ha’aretz (Tel Aviv), January 26, 2011.
the regimes of Husni Mubarak in Egypt, Bin Ali in Tunisia, and even Muammar al-Qadhdhafi in Libya. The leading radical Islamic movement of concern was the Muslim Brotherhood, which harbored a deep hostility to Israel and in the past had not hidden its opposition to the Israel-Egypt Peace Agreement. In another scenario, Israelis expressed concern that the lack of stability, chaos, and anarchy prevailing all over the Arab world would lead to the emergence all along Israel’s borders of radical jihadist movements acting under the inspiration of al-Qaida (Rosenberg, 2013; Goren & Podeh, 2013; Inbar, 2013).

Official Israel refused to view favorably the scenes in Tahrir Square or the declarations of support for the demonstrators being issued from all sides, and especially from the White House. As will be remembered, the latter hastened to welcome the change taking place in the Arab world, especially in Egypt. Later Washington even took the side of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, after they came out victorious in the parliamentary and presidential elections. In the eyes of official Israel, the US’s support for the Arab Spring was quite a clear indication of short-sightedness and basic lack of understanding of the reality prevailing in the region. After all, the outcome of the Arab Spring process was most likely to be the undermining of regional stability and damage to the interests of Washington itself, and to the interests of America’s regional allies, including Israel. An earlier example of official Israel’s assessment differing from that of Washington’s can be seen in the events of 2006, when the US pressured Israel to allow Palestinian Authority elections to be held, and these led ultimately to Hamas gaining control of Gaza.

Following this, one can understand Israel’s concern in 2011 that this time as well the collapse of the governing orders in the Arab states would ultimately lead to the victory of Islamic movements. This was especially so in light of the anarchy and chaos accompanying the collapse, and the circumstance that the Arab societies were not yet ripe for the import of Western-style democracy. The Islamic movements would exploit the democratic process, Israel argued, but not in the manner customary in the West. Rather, they would treat it as a matter of, “one man, one vote, one election—and that’s it!” Once democratic elections would bring the representatives of the Islamic movements to power, they would change the rules of the game and establish “Islamic democracy” as the system of government. Iran is a good example of this. There is no similarity whatsoever between Iran’s form of government and democracy as understood in the West.

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu gave expression to this mood in a speech he gave on 23 November 2011 before the Knesset plenum. He stated that: “the Arab world is not advancing forward but marching backward”, and added,

This past February I stood at this podium as millions of Egyptian citizens poured onto the streets of Cairo. Commentators and not a few of my colleagues here in the opposition explained to me that we were standing before a new era of liberalism and progress that would wash away the old order... They told me that I was trying to frighten the public, and that I didn’t see that we were on the wrong side of history, and that I didn’t understand in which direction matters were advancing. However, the time that has passed proves that I was right.2

Netanyahu went on to ask, “Who here did not understand the situation? Who here did not understand the history?” He concluded his speech by declaring:

Israel stands before a period of instability and uncertainty in the region. This is surely not the time to listen to those who tell us to follow wishful thinking. I remember that many of you called upon me to take the opportunity to make hasty concessions, to rush to an agreement, because this was precisely the time for it. But I do not base Israel’s policy on illusions. There is here a tremendous shock... Whoever does not see it is simply hiding his head in the sand. But it didn’t

2 Voice of Israel, November 23, 2011.
stop people from coming and proposing, “give”, “concede”. I said that we want to reach an agreement with the Palestinians, that we do not want a bi-national state, but we insist that there be foundations of stability and security. We always want this, but now even more so.

It should be mentioned that the factor that presented the Israeli government with its greatest difficulty in confronting the challenge posed by the Arab Spring was, of course, the government’s internal composition, which required maintaining a political status quo and preventing any real shift in the political arena, especially vis-à-vis the Palestinians.

Nevertheless, from the very beginning Israel was well aware of the order of priorities it must adopt regarding the concern it must show for what might happen from any particular direction, the attention it needed to pay to each arena, and the alertness it must show.

It was clear that the first focus of attention must be Egypt, the large and important Arab state that had served as a pioneer in the struggle to establish an Arab-Israeli peace. The second focus of attention was the arena represented by Lebanon and Syria. This region was perceived as constituting a significant threat mainly because of the strength of the Hizballah organization. Later the perception of pending danger was based upon the achievements of the radical Islamists, who had become a leading force in the camp of the Syrian rebels and were drawing closer and closer to the Syrian-Israeli border on the Golan Heights. The Palestinian issue came in as only the third focus of attention. From Israel’s point of view, this problem did not seem likely to be very explosive or prone to generate instability. This approach was reinforced by the circumstance that this issue required Israel to take decisions and make moves that the government was not interested in making, mainly on account of domestic political considerations.

All the factors mentioned above stood in the shadow of Iran, at least during the first years of the Arab upheavals when their outcome was not yet clear. Iran continued to be an arena of primary importance at least until the election of Hasan Rouhani as president of the country in June 2013 and the beginning of the Iranian-American negotiations aimed at stopping Iran’s race to develop nuclear weapons. Iran’s primacy in the calculations and attention of the Israeli leadership was based upon the extent of the threat it was perceived as presenting to Israel’s existence, which appeared to be of existential proportions. Nevertheless, as worrying as the Iranian danger was, it remained largely theoretical and potential at a time when the events unfolding along Israel’s borders were forcing their attention on both the Israeli public and its government.

**Egypt First**

The 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement served as the cornerstone of Israel’s security strategy for many years. It enabled Israel to lower its security expenditures drastically, and, notably, it gave the country a strong sense of security, since until that time Egypt was Israel’s main adversary. With the departure of Egypt, the biggest and strongest Arab state, from the circle of confrontation with Israel, the possibility of establishing a pan-Arab military coalition for initiating war with Israel, such as May 1948 and the October 1973 war happened in the Arab invasion which was in practice eliminated.

For many Israelis, and certainly for the government of Israel, the events in Egypt beginning with the fall of Husni Mubarak’s regime and ending with the election of Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi as president a little over three years later served as proof of the severe damage done to Israel by the Arab Spring. On the one hand, an immediate threat arose, what some would call a tactical threat. It came in the shape of terrorist squads affiliated

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3 Voice of Israel, November 23, 2011.
with al-Qaeda and radical Islamic organizations inspired by al-Qaeda, like Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (Supporters of the Holy House™, also known as Ansar Jerusalem, “Supporters of Jerusalem”). The latter organization took root in the Sinai Peninsula and began to act against Israel when the Egyptian government lost control over Sinai. The radicals demonstrated their power by launching missiles toward the city of Eilat and attacks against Israeli patrols along the Israel-Egypt border.

On the other hand, Israel was troubled by a strategic threat, in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood, which became well-established after the fall of Husni Mubarak. The Brotherhood increased its power and became the leading force in the Egyptian state and society. The Brothers soon achieved dramatic successes in the elections to the People’s Council (Majlis al-Shab, and the Consultative Council (Majlis al-Shura), the upper house of the Egyptian Parliament) held during 2011, and their representative, Muhammad Mursi, was elected President of Egypt in June 2012. Mursi remained in office for about a year until he was ousted by the army in June 2013 (Rutherford, 2012).

It is interesting to note that Mursi himself, even though he was the Muslim Brothers’ representative, refrained from damaging relations between Egypt and Israel. During his presidency, he did indeed find it difficult to utter Israel’s name in his speeches. At the same time, he repeatedly expressed a general obligation to preserve all of the international agreements Egypt had signed over the years, including by implication the peace agreement with Israel. Also during the short term of his rule, contacts between the military and security apparatuses of the two countries continued, and diplomatic contacts, which in any case had been frozen for many years already, remained intact.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian political system—that “deep state” of political elites allied with the governmental, security, and, of course, military apparatuses—survived the earthquake that visited Egypt. It recovered and after two years returned the state to the days of Husni Mubarak, with some slight differences. General Abd al-Fattah al-SISI replaced President Mubarak. The overthrow of Muhamad Mursi on June 30, 2013, by the Egyptian army led by then Minister of Defense SISI, and later, in June 2014, the election of al-SISI as President of Egypt, returned calm to the country, and in turn, also to relations with Israel. Furthermore, the change of power in Egypt created a harmony of interests between Israel and the new Egyptian government led by SISI. This harmony revolved around the Hamas organization in Gaza, which had been the enemy of Israel for some time already and which SISI now perceived as part of the long arm of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers. Israel’s efforts to diminish Washington’s criticism of SISI and Israel’s readiness to help Egypt in its struggle with Islamic radicalism undoubtedly raised Israel’s prestige in SISI’s eyes and created the basis for deepening understanding and cooperation between the two countries (BBC, 2014; Stock, 2014).

After Egypt, Syria

As the situation on Israel’s southern front became stabilized, the country turned its attention to the north. Israel began following closely the disintegration of the Syrian state and its descent into bloody civil war.

Official Israel did not hide its view, even if it refrained from giving it expression authoritatively or in any outright manner, that Bashar al-Assad was “the devil you know”, to whom Israel had become accustomed over the years. Therefore, Israel had no interest in his downfall. Some senior Israeli officials even took the trouble to explain that Israel preferred a weakened and bloodied Bashar in power in Damascus, focused on what was happening inside his country, over a victory by the Islamic movements and their coming to power, such as what had happened, at least temporarily, in Tunis and Egypt. Indeed, many Israelis perceived the continuation of
Bashar’s regime as the only guarantee that quiet and calm along the Syria-Israel border would be preserved and the only effective barrier to Islamic radical groups becoming established on the Golan Heights, such as had happened in the Sinai Peninsula. At the same time, Israel exploited Bashar’s weakness and brought about a change in the rules of the game. For example, Israel undertook steps to prevent the transfer of advanced weapons from Syria to Hizballah, something it had previously refrained from doing. These steps passed without any response from Bashar, who was completely absorbed in the struggle against the rebels within Syria, and quite surprisingly, without any response from Hizballah, which preferred not to open a new front against Israel on Syrian soil (Ajami, 2012; Lesch, 2012; Zisser, 2013).

Israel became acutely aware of the complexity of the situation in Syria when ISIS advanced into the center of the regional stage in the summer of 2014. In a lightning attack, the organization’s activists managed to take and maintain control of huge areas of the states of Iraq and Syria, areas amounting to the size of Great Britain or France. With ISIS’s rise to prominence, and later, the declaration of the Islamic Caliphate by ISIS’s leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the possibility, limited though it may be, first became evident that the organization might be able to overthrow Bashar al-Asad’s regime, or, alternatively, to take control of great swathes of Syria, right up to the border with Israel. Meanwhile, however, rebel groups not affiliated with ISIS took control of the territory on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights front. The most prominent of these groups was “The Support Front” (“Jabhat al-Nusra”), which split off from ISIS some time ago because it refused to meet ISIS’s demand that it end its affiliation with al-Qaida. The difference between ISIS and “The Support Front” is mainly tactical, relating to their disagreements over the order of priorities and the timetable for implementing their very similar ideologies and worldviews. They both want to establish a regime based strictly upon Islamic law in all the territory they conquer, and they both advocate pursuing relentless jihadic warfare against the enemies of Islam, which include Bashar al-Asad’s Syria, the Shiites in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon, and, finally, Israel as well (Harel, 2014; Zisser, 2014).

The Challenge of Hizballah

The Lebanese arena, which the “Arab Spring” skipped over, remained at the margins of the Syrian arena. Hizballah’s mobilization on the side of Bashar al-Asad created a backlash among jihadist groups like the ones that moved their activity from Syria to Lebanon or arose on the margins of the Sunni community in Lebanon. However, insofar as can be determined, public opinion in Lebanon—Shiite, Christian, and even Sunni—prefers to maintain the quiet and the stability of the Lebanese state and to prevent the civil war being fought in Syria from seeping into Lebanon. Notwithstanding the price Hizballah paid for its participation in the war in Syria—hundreds of killed and wounded—it was careful to maintain its military power, especially its advanced missile arsenal, and it remained a major source of concern for Israel and a threat for which Israel had no answer. Still, the state of mutual deterrence prevailing between the two sides was preserved, since neither had any interest in escalation. This was so despite a series of incidents. Thus, for example, there was the January 2015 assassination of Hizballah’s Golan Heights regional commander, Jihad Imad Mughniyeh, as he was participating in a patrol along the Syrian-Israeli border, and Hizballah’s fierce but limited response to that incident. These events proved the volatility of the quiet prevailing along the Lebanese-Israeli border, but at the same time, the supreme interest of both sides in avoiding a flare up (Harel, 2015; Khatib, Matar, & Alshaer, 2014).
The Shadow of Iran

Toward the end of the first decade of the 21st century Iran was perceived as the main challenge confronting Israel. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s belligerent rhetoric was accompanied by Iran’s accelerated race to develop nuclear weapons and its efforts to strengthen Israel’s nearby adversaries, Hizballah and Hamas. The latter, it is true, did not constitute an immediate existential threat to Israel, but Hizballah’s amassing of an arsenal containing tens of thousands of advanced missiles and Hamas’s amassing of thousands of missiles did present Israel with security threats of major proportions (Ahren, 2015).

Initially the “Arab Spring” seemed as if it would strengthen Iran, which tried to fill the vacuum created in the region and extend its influence over all the territory extending from Teheran to Baghdad to Damascus and finally to Beirut and Gaza. The international community’s total lack of determination in dealing with the Iranian issue prompted Israel’s leaders to contemplate the option of an Israeli military strike against Iran. However, as the years passed, Teheran joined the other states that had sunk into the treacherous quagmire of regional chaos. Thus, after the outbreak of the Syrian revolution and in the wake of ISIS’s military conquests in Iraq and Syria, Iran’s investments in those areas became threatened. It will be recalled that even Hizballah has paid a heavy price for being drawn into intervention in Syria. It has suffered hundreds of dead and extensive damage to its image, and the fact that the Syrian revolution overflowed into Lebanon itself has been especially detrimental.

The fear that Israel might take some action was definitely an important motive behind the West’s decision to confront Iran and impose a regime of international sanctions against that country. The international sanctions severely damaged Iran’s economy and undoubtedly contributed to the election of President Hasan Rouhani in June 2013. This, perhaps, heralded the beginning of change in Iran and a softening of its positions, which led to the opening of a dialogue between Washington and Teheran that produced an interim agreement between the sides (Keck, 2015; Kurz & Brom, 2015).

The Palestinian Issue

This Question in particular was pushed to the side over and over again, despite American and European efforts to promote a process that would bring about a breakthrough in the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, and contrariwise, despite the repeated rounds of violence that broke out between Hamas and Israel. At the same time, many Israelis remained staunchly convinced that the real challenge for Israel lay in this issue. However, the relative calm prevailing on the West Bank allowed Israel to avoid devoting real effort in confronting this issue. The most Israel would do was to accede to American pressures to conduct negotiations with the leadership of the Palestinian Authority led by Abu Mazin (Mahmud Abbas). However, neither of the two sides really trusted the other nor, most importantly, did they believe in the other’s ability to advance the political process.

The rounds of violence between Israel and Hamas in Gaza—Operation “Cast Lead” in December 2008-January 2009, Operation “Pillar of Defense” in October 2012, and Operation “Protective Edge” in the summer of 2014—became a matter of routine and demonstrated the difficulty in preserving calm and stability in this arena when there was no progress toward a settlement and Hamas in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority on the West Bank had to deal with the internal pressures exerted by their populations. The rounds of violence left thousands of casualties and great destruction on the Palestinian side, while failing to solve Israel’s security problems, as the danger of renewed outbreaks of violence was left in place. It seems that the government of
Israel was deterred from trying to advance negotiations with the Palestinians for reasons of domestic politics. That is, it knew the high political price it would have to pay for such progress, namely, withdrawal to lines based upon the situation as of June 4, 1967. Progress over this issue was also not helped by the absence of a Palestinian partner carrying weight and authority with the Palestinian public and the weakness manifested by the American mediator (Keinon, 2015).

**Elusive Horizon**

With the ending of Operation “Protective Edge” in the summer of 2014, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman predicted that a window of opportunity had opened before Israel presenting a new political horizon, whose direction was cooperation with the moderate states in the region, especially the states of the Persian Gulf. However, progress toward a political arrangement with the Palestinians and active American intervention were also needed in order to give content to any Israeli-Gulf State alliance. As long as these were lacking it would probably remain merely a paper alliance Netanyahu: Regional changes promise new diplomatic horizon (Haaretz, 2014).

In this connection we may recall that at the end of the 1950s, in face of the growing influence of Egyptian President Gamal Abd al-Nasir and the Arab nationalism he promoted, Israel established the Alliance of the Periphery. Its aim was to link Israel with Ethiopia, Turkey, and Iran, non-Arab Muslim states on the outskirts of the Middle East, so that it could stand up to Nasser.

Now, in 2014, Israel was seeking to establish a new alliance of moderates, based upon the moderate Sunni Arab states, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan, along with the Gulf States. From Jerusalem’s point of view, the new alliance had several aims. One was to block Iran’s growing influence insofar as possible. Another was to deal with the chaos plaguing Syria and Iraq and the rising power of radical Islam. Furthermore, the coalition might even serve as a counterweight to the assertive policies of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who was seeking to increase Ankara’s regional influence at the expense, not only of Israel, but of President ‘Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi’s Egypt as well.

**Summary**

In recent years the Middle East has experienced a wave of radical transformations. Some of the latter involved much-needed generational changes. This is what happened in Egypt, for example, with President Husni Mubarak’s replacement by Abd al-Fattah al-SISI. Some of the changes resulted from the intensification of social and economic tensions, as well as tensions based upon community and religious affiliations, to the breaking point. Such dissension threatens to unravel the delicate social fabric holding the several communities and religions together, and perhaps even more, it threatens to bring about the disintegration or collapse of the state the communities inhabit in common. Indeed, the events in Syria and Iraq—which led to the appearance of the Islamic State and the declaration of the caliphate by the Islamic State’s leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi—represent a type of challenge to the whole state system that was formulated in the wake of the post-World War I Sykes–Picot Agreement.

This situation placed a challenge and a very difficult dilemma before Israel: How was Israel to act in face of the tsunami inundating the states of the region? After all, this turmoil led to the collapse of the Middle East order to which Israel had become accustomed and to the fall of Arab regimes, at their head, the Mubarak regime, Israel’s reliable partner in the effort to maintain regional stability and preserve the Israel-Egypt Peace
Treaty. Israeli officials did not hide their worry that regimes led by radical Islamic movements, hostile to Israel, would rise in place of the old Arab regimes.

Many Israelis thought their country should (and could) help advance the developments taking place all around it by undertaking a political initiative that would resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, or at least soften and take the sting out of it. Others, including Israel’s leaders in particular, held that Israel must take a wait and see position, remaining on the sidelines, since in any case Israel could not control the unfolding events. However, it is clear that the developments in the Arab world in the years since the outbreak of the “Arab Spring” have pulled the rug out from under the claim that Israel can remain entrenched in its positions and do nothing.

As in the past, Israel faced several different fronts. In the end, however, it chose a passive approach and allowed events to work themselves out and drag it along with them. In some of the arenas matters worked out favorably, for example, in Egypt. In some of the arenas, like Syria and Lebanon, Israel remained a worried observer from the sidelines. In Syria chaos spread all over, and in Lebanon Hizballah continued to grow stronger. Meanwhile, the Palestinian arena with all its problems remained on ice, lingering in a state of waiting.

Time will tell whether Israel’s policy was prudent or simply evasive. Was Israel behaving like the ostrich, burying its head in the sand and avoiding like fire any policy initiative, mainly because it feared progress in the Palestinian arena? Or was Israel’s policy prudent, sound, and necessary given the limitations on Israel’s power? After all, the regional upheavals were toppling regimes and states that had been perceived for many long years as strong, stable, and immune to any serious threat to their power.

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Ecuador and World War I: One Nation’s Experience on the Periphery of the Great War and During its Aftermath, 1914-1924

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In the horrific conflict of 1914-1918 known as World War I, Latin American nations were peripheral players but they were not immune from its effects. This essay reviews the conflict’s impact on Ecuador—a Latin American nation that after declaring neutrality in 1914, broke relations with Germany on December 7, 1917 but refrained from any involvement in the actual fighting. Following a brief review of the existing historiography of this period, the study examines Ecuador’s geographic, political, economic and social situation in 1914; its involvement in the war as a neutral between 1914 and April 6, 1917; and the developments that occurred after its decision to break relations with Germany in December 1917 until the armistice on November 11, 1918. Finally it suggests how the consequences of Ecuador’s stance in the months after the restoration of peace contributed to the end of the Liberal Era in 1924.

Keywords: World War I, Ecuador, cacao, diplomatic relations

Introduction

Before it became known as the First World War, the conflict of 1914-1918 was aptly known to millions of Europeans as the “Great War”. Nine million soldiers died and millions more suffered mental and physical injuries. The war cost billions of dollars, not only in military expenses but also in property damage. Four major empires collapsed, and the peace settlements that followed changed boundaries around the world. Immeasurable was the cost in broken lives, shattered societies, and the residue of hate and bitterness. As historian William Kelleher Storey states succinctly, “The First World War was a social and political cataclysm” (Storey, 2014, p. 1; Hochschild, 2011).

In contrast to Europe, the military aspects of the war barely touched Latin America. For the first two and one half years all 20 nations remained neutral. Once the US entered the conflict, Brazil and Cuba took an active part in the fighting; six more countries (Costa Rica, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama) declared war; Peru, Bolivia, Uruguay, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic severed relations with Germany while Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Salvador, Venezuela, Paraguay and Colombia maintained a strict neutrality.

This lack of direct involvement may explain why World War I is rarely discussed in Latin American historiography. In 1925 Percy Alvin Martin published Latin America and the War, an expanded version of a series of lectures he delivered at Johns Hopkins University four years earlier. It is remarkable that after 90 years, Martin’s study reprinted in 1967 remains the definitive work on the subject. Given the tremendous economic
and financial crises caused by the war in Latin America and the realignments of global interests in its aftermath, it is a reasonable assumption that this period deserves greater attention, especially as the world observes the 100th anniversary of Germany’s declaration of war on Russia and France on August 1, 1914.

The purpose of this study is to redress this lacunae by taking a fresh look at the conflict’s impact between 1914 and 1924 on Ecuador—a nation that after declaring neutrality in 1914, broke relations with Germany on December 7, 1917 but refrained from any involvement in the actual fighting. Following a brief review of the existing historiography of this period, I will consider Ecuador’s geographic, political, economic and social situation in 1914; its involvement in the war as a neutral between 1914 and April 6, 1917; the developments that occurred after its decision to break relations with Germany in December 1917 until the armistice on November 11, 1918, and finally, show how the consequences of Ecuador’s stance in the months following the restoration of peace contributed to the end of the Liberal Era in 1924.

**Historiography**

The vast bibliography concerning World War I contains few books or articles dealing with Latin America. As Olivier Compagnon has suggested this lack of attention may have arisen from the fact that scholars who have examined the 20th century history of the region emphasize the economic crisis of October 1929 and the Cuban Revolution of 1959 as the principal defining turning points rather than the two world wars (Compagnon, 2009, p. 291). Given this mindset, it is perhaps not surprising that the aforementioned book by Percy Alvin Martin composed soon after the end of the conflict is unique in that it includes chapters on the diplomacy and foreign policies of all 20 Latin American republics during the Great War. To be sure, in the 1980s there were investigations of the war’s impact on the economies and political culture of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, and Friedrich Katz produced a ground-breaking study of German involvement in Mexico, but until recently the effect of the war on the Bolivarian countries of northern South America has remained a much neglected topic (Alber, 1988; Fritsch, 1988; Gravil, 1985; Tato, 2008; Katz, 1981).

With regard to Ecuador, the best single study is still Rafael H. Elizalde’s “La América Latina en la guerra mundial: Ecuador” which appeared in the May, 1920 issue of La Revista del Mundo, a now defunct journal published in New York City by Doubleday, Page and Company. The principal diplomatic histories published since then avoid discussing World War I to focus instead on Ecuador’s treaties with other nations and defense of its borders (Moscoco & Jorge, 1967; Mera, 1916; Lecaro Bustamante, 1985). More general histories either ignore the war era or regard it as one of several developments during the period known as the “Liberal Oligarchy” that extended from 1895-1924 or the shorter period referred to as the “Plutocratic Era” between 1912 and 1924 (Pareja Diezcanseco, 1979; Deas, 1986; Cevallos García, 1987; Reyes, 1967). Yet there is no question that the Great War that transformed the world forever had an important impact on the Western Hemisphere. The decline of European supremacy made way for the rise of the United States as a super power, and Latin American elites who had long wished to emulate Europe were profoundly disillusioned by the spectacle Compagnon has described as the “Death Throes of Civilization”. Ecuador could not avoid being affected. As Minister of Foreign Relations Rafael Elizalde wrote in 1915, “The events developing every hour in the world are too large to be ignored, and it is well known that they have repercussions even in the most distant

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1 It is significant that the most recent anthology Zepeda (2010) contains essays spanning the 19th and 20th centuries but completely skips over the World War I era.
areas… Ecuador has already suffered the consequences of that early universal conflagration” (Elizalde, 1915).

**Ecuador in 1914**

In 1914 Ecuador, with an area of 245,882 square miles and a population of less than two million was, with the exception of Uruguay, the smallest of the South American nations. The two Andean cordilleras (mountain ranges) that traverse the country from north to south divide the country into three distinct geographic zones: the Sierra, the Costa, and the Amazonian Oriente. Nearly one half of the population lived in the Sierra, a temperate region of high plateaus and valleys suitable for cultivation of grain, vegetables, cotton, sugar, tropical fruit, and cattle. The capital, Quito, with a population of 50,000 and other important cities of Ambato, Riobamba, and Cuenca were located in or near these temperate mountain basins.

The coastal area was a different world—flat, low, hot, and very humid with vast areas covered with tropical forests. Bounded by the Pacific Ocean on the west and the Andes on the east, it was a productive region with a variety of fruits and vegetables oriented toward an export market. The Guayas lowlands which extend north and southwest of Guayaquil, the republic’s principal port and with a population of 75,000 its largest city, offered ideal conditions for tropical agriculture, a situation aided by rivers that provided access to the sea. By the early 20th century, cacao, bananas, and coffee produced on plantations were Ecuador’s primary exports. The Oriente, extending from the foothills of the eastern cordillera to the Amazon Basin, comprised approximately 46% of the country’s territory but being sparsely populated and isolated by the mountains, it played little role in early 20th century developments except as an issue in border disputes (Pineo, 2007, pp. 6-11).

In addition to these mainland regions, Ecuador’s territory included the Galápagos Archipelago consisting of more than 60 small volcanic islands lying 500 to 700 miles due west of the mainland. Today these islands with their wide variety of exotic fauna and flora are an attraction for tourists and scientists, but in the 19th century a scarcity of water and isolation from the rest of the country limited their population to a few hundred settlers. At the end of the 20th century, President Eloy Alfaro considered the islands a strategic liability since Ecuador lacked a navy to defend them. On several occasions he offered them to the United States in exchange for a guarantee of protection and money, but the US was not interested (Pineo, 2007, p. 85). With the onset of the Great War, however, the Galápagos would gain greater importance due to their proximity to the recently completed Panama Canal and their potential as a base for hostile naval operations.

Politically Ecuador in 1914 was half way through an era of Liberal rule that began with the election of Eloy Alfaro in 1895 and ended with the overthrow of President Gonzalo Córdova by military coup on July 9, 1925. Alfaro, who served as president from 1895-1901 and again from 1906 to 1911, remains a controversial figure. During his first administration he convened a constituent assembly that produced a new constitution that would allow Liberals to retain power for the next three decades. In his second term he began an effort at agrarian reform by overseeing the passage of a law nationalizing land held in mortmain by religious orders, and he presided over the inauguration of the railroad connecting Quito and Guayaquil, a project authorized in 1865 but not completed until 1908. Although hailed by all as a marvel of engineering, the railroad failed to turn a profit and left the government responsible for paying off an enormous sum to foreign bondholders who had provided funds for its construction. Alfaro’s harsh repression of political opponents and lack of respect for civil liberties also tended to tarnish the accomplishments he achieved. After failing to prevent the inauguration of his
successor Emilio Estrada on August 31, 1911, he participated in an unsuccessful insurrection against the new regime. Captured with other rebels, Alfaro was taken by the army to Quito to stand trial, but on January 28, 1912 an angry mob burst into the prison where he was being held. They brutally murdered the former president and five other rebel leaders bringing an ignominious end to the career of one of Ecuador’s most colorful political leaders (Rodríguez, 1985, pp. 46-49; Spindler, 1987, p. 210).

The new president, Leonidas Plaza Gutiérrez was a former colleague of Alfaro who had served an earlier term from 1901-1905. Unlike Alfaro, Plaza achieved unparalleled political influence thanks to his strong ties to both the coast and the sierra. Coastal entrepreneurs supported him because he worked to control political violence and promote the export economy. Sierra landowners respected him thanks to his marriage into a highland family and his ownership of large haciendas. Urban professional and middle classes endorsed him because his progressive administration provided them with opportunities for advancement. Even more important, by promoting officers loyal to him, he managed to obtain the firm backing of the military (Rodríguez, 1985, pp. 50-51).

Military allegiance was critical to Plaza for his principal domestic opponents were staunch Alfaro loyalists determined to revenge their leader’s assassination. In 1913 Col. Carlo Andrade led an uprising in the north which the army quickly suppressed, but a second revolt begun in the same year by Carlos Concha Torres proved more difficult to contain. Rallying the Afro-Ecuadorean population of Esmeraldas Province, Concha defeated entire government battalions near the sea and the mountains. For nearly three years he kept the army off balance with ambushes and surprise attacks. A general amnesty ended the revolt on September 1, 1916, but the ongoing bloody combat provided a major distraction throughout Plaza’s second administration, and was in full force when the Great War broke out in August 1914 (Reyes, 1967, p. 249).

The boom in the production and export of cacao begun in the late 19th century dominated Ecuador’s economy in 1914 accounting for 95% of its exports. The coastal region was ideal for the development of this crop grown on large estates whose owners contracted laborers to care for a given number of trees until they came into production. These workers received cash advances and the right to grow their own subsistence crops, while they themselves, their family, and others worked as peons on the plantations. Some landowners engaged in banking and foreign commerce, but Guayaquil also generated a bank and trade community that was not directly tied to the cacao plantations. Foreign capital was present, but not dominant, although Ecuador relied on the British Steam Navigation Company and US merchant ships to transport the cacao from Guayaquil to markets abroad and bring in imports of food and manufactured goods (Rodríguez, 1985, p. 22).

In 1913, Ecuador’s exports amounted to 32,488,000 sucre\(^2\). France was the primary destination receiving 34 %, followed by the US with 24%; Germany 17%; Great Britain 10%; Spain 4%; and others 11% (Pineo, 1996, pp. 23-26). A year later Ecuador produced one of the largest cacao crops of its history—971,678 quintales\(^3\) (the average annual crop was 676,097 quintales), but even before the outbreak of the war, there were troubling developments. Thanks to competition from cacao producing plantations in Brazil and British colonies in Africa and the impact of two devastating fungus diseases: *monilia* and *escoba de bruja* (witches broom) which made themselves felt as early as 1915, Ecuador’s percentage of the world market in cacao slowly slipped from a high of

\(^2\) Ecuador’s standard monetary unit. In 1914 one sucre equalled SUS 48.6.

\(^3\) A quintal equals 100 lbs.
28% in 1894 to just 6.5% 20 years later (Crawford de Roberts, 1980, p. 155; Deas, 1986, pp. 669-670).

In 1914 a small group of white elites (estimated in 1907 at 100,000 to 120,000 including many individuals of mixed ancestry) dominated Ecuador’s political and economic affairs. Ranking below them on the social scale were 300,000-450,000 mestizos, and 44,500 Afro-Ecuadorians and mulattoes who resided for the most part in Esmeraldas Province. The bulk of the population or over one million indigenous people consisted of descendants from two groups—the Quitus and the Caras. Approximately 6,000 non Ecuadorans also lived in the country. Included in this category were 5,000 citizens of neighboring Latin American republics, 700 Europeans and Americans, and 300 Chinese.

Figures for the actual number of Germans and British living in Ecuador are not available, but they exercised outsized influence in comparison to their reduced presence. British ships belonging to the Pacific Steam and Navigation Company were the principal haulers of Ecuadoran cacao, and Englishmen were active in commerce and industry (Crawford de Roberts, 1980, p. 154). Germans, however, seemed to have outdone the British for they assimilated more easily into the culture, learning Spanish and marrying Ecuadoran women “who made them happy and gave them many sons which later served not the native land but that of the Kaiser” (Elizalde, 1920, p. 64). A Colombian observer, Enrique Pérez, wrote that “practically the whole of the import trade of Ecuador and a not insignificant part of the export trade were and long had been in the hands of Germans; and it must be admitted that they had done everything to deserve it” (Pérez, 1918, p. 18). Germans were directly involved in the exploitation of cacao, and German agents represented many of the British commercial firms in addition to their own. In order that no want should go unsupplied, these entrepreneurs imported British, American, and French goods when Germany did not have what was required. German engineers were involved in the railroad under construction from Sibambe to Cuenca. German technical advisors assisted the ministries of Public Instruction and the Public Works while German teachers were in charge of the normal schools for both sexes. Finally, the military had received a Prussian imprint through the employment of Chilean officers as instructors, and many members of the Catholic hierarchy were Germanophile in sympathy (Elizalde, 1920, p. 64; Martin, 1967, p. 440).

To summarize, in 1914 Ecuador’s total foreign commerce was approximately $US16,000,000. European capital was only beginning to enter the country, and while European immigration was negligible, foreigners, especially the English and Germans played a significant role within the native elite. As Martin points out, under these circumstances one might imagine that Ecuador would be little affected by the Great War, but such a supposition fails to take into account several factors of fundamental importance. The country’s location fronting on the Pacific and its possession of the Galápagos Islands complicated the difficulties of maintaining neutrality early in the war while the adverse effects of the prolonged conflict on the export of cacao, Ecuador’s chief source of national income, precipitated an economic crisis from which the country suffered during and long after the end of hostilities (Barrett & Pérez-Verdia, 1919, p. 437).

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4 Crawford (1980) notes that “by 1915, the method of cacao production had converted the plantation in swampy terrains ideal for two fungus diseases: la monilia and la escoba de bruja. Foreign observers described the plantations as veritable jungles in part impenetrable (p. 164).

5 1911 Encyclopaedia Britannica/Ecuador.
Between August 4 and August 13, 1914, Foreign Minister Rafael Elizalde received a series of cables announcing that Germany was at war with Russia and France, that Germans had invaded Belgium, and that Britain was at war with Germany and Austria-Hungary. Four days later on August 17 the Ecuadorian government officially proclaimed its neutrality. Although it had signed but not ratified the Hague Convention of 1907, it declared it would adhere to the guidelines set out in Article V, *The Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in case of War on Land*. Under these provisions, port authorities were to prevent the transport of arms, munitions, and any other elements of war in ships belonging to belligerent nations. They were enjoined to stop the dispatch of these same items in merchant marine ships if an authorized agent declared the cargo destined to states fighting the war. The authorities were to limit shipments of coal in belligerent boats to amounts necessary to allow them to reach the nearest foreign port. They might permit warships to take on food and other supplies that were not arms, munitions, coal or other elements of war, however, any cases of contraband that were discovered were to be reported to the Ministry of Foreign Relations. Finally, seaport authorities were to notify ships belonging to belligerent nations that they should disarm their wireless telegraph equipment since they were not permitted to send messages while there were in Ecuadorian waters.

Ecuador faced complex foreign and domestic challenges during the first six months of the war. With regard to the former, its declaration of neutrality was in line with the stance taken by other Western Hemisphere nations, and as was the case elsewhere, public opinion was sharply divided on the merits of the warring parties. President Plaza and his ministers, horrified by the German invasion of Belgium, were strongly in favor of the allies (the Entente), but there was also support for Germany (the Central Powers) that was manipulated by the German chargé d’affaires in Quito, Herr Heinrich Rohland, a skillful and discrete diplomat. In contrast to Rohland the resident ministers representing the Allies seemed to have been extraordinarily ill-suited for their positions. At news of the war’s outbreak the French minister, Louis Gaussen, a youth of “talent and heart” immediately returned to Europe to fight for his country, only to be replaced by Henry Francastel, who soon caused so many difficulties that Elizalde asked that he should be recalled. Lucien J. Jerome who served Britain as chargé d’affaires at Quito and consul general at Guayaquil proved equally inept. The lack of tact on the part of these agents, who were more preoccupied with events in Europe than developments in Ecuador, was a major factor in the crisis that occurred in September 1914 concerning the stopover in the Galápagos Islands of the German cruiser *Leipzig*, the German Transport *Maria*, and the Norwegian bark *Kala* (República del Ecuador, 1915; Elizalde, 1920, p. 64).

With reference to this incident and based on investigations conducted by the Ecuadorian authorities, it appears that the *Leipzig* remained in Ecuadorian waters some 78 hours, taking on coal from the *Maria* and the *Kala*. The *Leipzig* also abandoned on one of the islands the crew of a British ship which had sunk some time previously. The local authorities sent these men to Guayaquil where they arrived on October 2. The governor of Guayas Province dispatched a telegram to Elizalde informing him of the arrival of the British sailors adding that “it is suspected that the German navy is attempting to utilize this archipelago as a base for its raids”. Dr. Elizalde immediately communicated this information to British chargé d’affaires Jerome, noting that while the...

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dispatch merely suggested the possibility of the use of the Galápagos as a base by German navy ships, if such suspicion be verified, the government would not fail to lodge the necessary protest with the Imperial German Government (Martin, 1967, pp. 441-443; República del Ecuador, 1915, p. 303).

Jerome and French Minister Francastle immediately cabled their governments that it was an actual fact that the Germans were using Galápagos as a base. Although their allegation was unfounded, Britain and France requested that the United States instruct its Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in Quito, Charles S. Hartman to investigate. Elizalde resented this action because the accusation was absolutely false, and as a sovereign nation, Ecuador had diplomats in England and France to resolve the issue. He explained to Hartman, Jerome and Francastle the truth of the matter, but nevertheless in November Jerome and Francastel again cabled their respective governments with the new charge that Ecuador was not exercising necessary vigilance in controlling the radio station at Guayaquil. This statement had as little foundation as the preceding one. After Elizalde flatly denied it, Jerome and Francastel reported that they did not desire to pursue the issue, but on November 25 the British House of Commons was informed that the British and French governments had taken the unusual step of appealing to the US to investigate whether the Germans were in fact using the Galápagos as a naval base and Ecuador was failing to supervise the wireless station in Guayaquil.

In the words of Percy Martin, the conduct of these representatives after the assurances of Dr. Elizalde was “frankly inexplicable”, and on the basis of documents published by Ecuador there was no reason to believe that the authorities were remiss in their duties. Charles Hartman duly investigated the matter in Quito and supported Elizalde’s assurance that the accusations had no substance (República del Ecuador, 1915, p. 294). In a circular directed to the diplomatic corps dated December 31, 1914, Dr. Elizalde asserted in the most positive terms that the government of Ecuador had no definite knowledge of any act which might be construed as an infringement of the neutrality of the republic; that a warship would promptly be dispatched to investigate acts alleged to have been committed by the German fleet at Galápagos, and that the government would not fail to make the necessary protests should such acts be proven. Finally, he alluded to the painful impression caused by the appeal of Great Britain and France to the US, a state in no way involved in the existing controversy. This correspondence apparently closed the episode for no further protests were made by the British or French foreign offices (Martin, 1967, pp. 443-445).

In these first months of the war, Ecuador took an active role in conferences held by the Pan American Union to define more clearly the rights and obligations of Western Hemisphere neutral nations. The provisions of Article V of the Hague Convention quickly proved difficult for any one state to uphold, and as early as August 1914, the Peruvian government formally proposed that the American republics through their representatives at the Pan American Union in Washington D.C. work to secure a more exact definition of their rights as neutrals and to adopt a common policy for the protection of their commercial interests. On December 8, the governing board held its first meeting to consider proposals dealing with this question. The board unanimously agreed to adopt a plan offered by the Argentine ambassador, Dr. Rómulo S. Naón to name a commission of nine members of which the US secretary of state would be chairman, ex officio to study the problems presented by the European war and submit suggestions deemed of common interest. In addition, Ecuador proposed that the commission should negotiate an agreement with the belligerents that the ocean bathing the coasts of the American nations be considered neutral given the neutrality of the entire hemisphere,
while Venezuela circulated a memorandum calling for a meeting of a congress of neutrals (Martin, 1967, pp. 20-23; Elizalde, 1920, p. 67).

Although the commission met periodically throughout 1915 to discuss these and other proposals its labors failed to bear fruit for two reasons. First, during the autumn of 1914 the presence of powerful German and British fleets in South American waters had acted as a strong motive for common action, but on December 8 the British navy won a decisive victory over a German squadron commanded by Admiral Graf Maximilian von Spee when it attacked its supply base at Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands. Of the known German force of eight ships, only two escaped and one these, the light cruiser Dresden was destroyed by the British on March 14, 1915. This victory ended commercial raiding on the high seas by regular German warships. Even though several armed merchant vessels continued to be active in the Atlantic, South American countries found the task of safeguarding their neutral rights lightened. Second, the US did not support any of the proposals put forth by the Latin Americans. Without American backing and given the disagreement over strategy between the republics, efforts to come to a consensus consistently floundered (Martin, 1919, p. 24).

In August 1914 the domestic challenges facing Ecuador proved far more daunting than the diplomatic situation. In that year the county produced one of the largest cacao crops of its history: 971,678 quintales (the average crop was 676,097 quintales). Having no merchant marine of its own, Ecuador relied on British Pacific Steam and Navigation Company ships to transport its cacao to the principal markets in Hamburg and London. The lack of cargo ships was the first economic problem presented by the war since German as well as English merchant ships took refuge in neutral ports to escape confiscation. When transport was resumed, it was difficult and expensive; insurance coverage was restricted, and payment was often delayed for more than a year. Foreseeing these problems the government adopted on August 30 the Ley de Inconvertibilidad or Moratoria that prohibited the exchange of paper bills for gold (which had been the normal practice of every bank) and the use of gold to pay commercial obligations. Plaza Gutiérrez argued that this emergency measure was indispensable to deal with the financial problems caused by the Great War, but it also had an important objective: to avoid the collapse due to insolvency of the country’s largest bank, the Banco Comercial y Agrícola of Guayaquil, for since 1913 this bank had been emitting bills that were only 19 percent backed by gold (Medina, 2000).

The Ley Moratoria effectively made the Banco Comercial y Agrícola the official bank of the country. Between 1914 and 1924 the government relied on it to provide funds for its financial obligations, and one consequence was the near total absorption of the national economy by the plutocracy and the bank. President Plaza ruled from his hacienda “La Ciénega” in the sierra while the president of the Banco Comercial y Agrícola, Francisco Urbina Jado controlled financial affairs from Guayaquil. In order to be elected candidates for congress had to have Urbina’s approval, and between the bank and the government was an interdependence similar to a “tyrannical lending organization and a poor debtor permanently without funds” (Reyes, 1967, pp. 250-252). Thanks to restrictions on trade caused by the world war, income from customs declined. The government desperately needed money to support its bureaucracy and increasing debts, and the Banco Comercial y Agrícola was ready to supply funds for salaries, public works and financial obligations. It proved an inexhaustible lender, and despite the Ley Moratoria it issued billetes that were not backed by gold. This practice caused the depreciation of the sucre and increased the cost of living.
The outbreak of the war had a profound effect on cacao markets since Hamburg and London were the principal recipients of Ecuador’s crop. The huge harvest coupled with market adjustments reduced income from cacao by 15% by the end of the first quarter of 1914, and by September prices in Guayaquil were down 50%. In view of these difficulties, the Asociación de Agricultores de Guayaquil, a commercial organization begun in 1913 to provide price supports for cacao, intervened to buy and store the harvest. This strategy ended the initial depression in prices paid for cacao to the hacendados, and conditions improved enough by November 1914 that one quintal increased from a low of $10 to $18. On December 14, 1914, the US consul in Guayaquil, reported that the war in Europe had very little impact on the commercial situation in Ecuador. He continued:

The only effect has been the retention of gold from the local banks in Europe for a time, and there is no foundation for the assertions made in some places of a commercial depression, for its foreign trade is practically the same as always… It is clear that the commercial situation in Ecuador is decidedly favorable with respect for exports, and imports are equally satisfactory. (Crawford de Roberts, 1980, p. 156)

Although the war only temporarily harmed exporters, consumers were greatly affected by the change in the value of the sucre from 48.6 cents to 37 cents to the dollar between July and December 1914. Exporters bought cacao locally with cheap money and sold it expensively on the exterior markets. Importers and local consumers, on the other hand, were forced to use depreciated money to purchase articles only available from outside the country. As Crawford de Roberts points out, Ecuador was still a classic export country. Its imports were basic necessities, and the worker on the cacao plantation faced inflation when he bought clothing and food. “He did not die of hunger but he could not purchase as much from the hacienda store with his daily salary of $1.00” (Crawford de Roberts, 1980, p. 158).

Between January 1915 and the entrance of the United States in the war on April 6, 1917, Ecuador continued the policies of neutrality it had established in the first six months. When German, British and Japanese ships remained in the port of Guayaquil beyond the regulation limit of 24 hours, Minister Elizalde sent protests to the respective governments. In addition, on October 16, 1915 President Plaza signed a decree subjecting all radio stations to the inspection of the government, forbidding the employment of any subject of the belligerent powers as an operator, prohibiting the use of ciphers and ordering ships of all the belligerent powers to lower their antennae while in Ecuadorian waters (República del Ecuador, 1916, pp. 138-139). In June of the following year, at the request of the British and French legations at Quito, he modified this decree to the extent of permitting messages of an official character to be sent in code or cipher (Martin, 1967, p. 448).

Elizalde was also concerned about repatriation of Ecuadorian nationals living abroad when the war began. Consulates in Chile, Peru and Panama as well as those in Europe and the US received authorization to repatriate several citizens. The situation of one Salomón Phillips, the son of an Englishman born in Ecuador and registered as Ecuadorian with the Consulate in Hamburg, proved especially contentious. German authorities interned Phillips on the grounds that he was English. Elizalde sent an official protest asking that Phillips should be released since Ecuador did not recognize dual nationality and considered Phillips Ecuadorian (República del Ecuador, 1916, p. XXIV). Thanks to his effort the Germans did finally release Phillips (República del Ecuador, 1917, p. XXV).

The war forced postponement of several inter-American congresses which had been planned for 1915, 1916, and 1917, but Juan Cueva García, Vicente Gonzáles B. and Enrique Gallardo represented Ecuador at the
first Pan-American Financial Conference that met in Washington on May 24-June 15, 1915 under the
chairmanship of US Treasury Secretary William G. McAdoo. Delegates to this conference discussed public
finance, the monetary situation, the existing banking system, the financing of public projects and private
enterprises, the extension of inter-American markets, the merchant marine, and improving facilities of
transportation (Pineo, 1996).

Their deliberations extended beyond emergencies caused by the war to consider the organization of a
permanent hemispheric entity that could deal with such problems as they arose. To pursue this goal, the
delegates voted to establish an Inter-American High Commission to which each country would contribute a
section of no more than nine persons headed by a cabinet minister to carry on the work of organizing an
international body simultaneously in all the countries. The organization of the High Commission was of the
great practical significance since it signaled a movement toward the creation of the Pan-American Union
(Moore, 1920, pp. 343-344).

Domestic developments during this period again took precedence over concerns over war in Europe. As
Plazas’ presidential term came to a close, two men vied to succeed him: Dr. Alfredo Baquerizo Moreno, the
official Liberal candidate, and Dr. Rafael María Arizaga who represented the Conservatives. Baquerizo Moreno,
backed by the coastal plutocracy, emerged as the winner in a patently fraudulent election held in February 1916,
but as Reyes observes, despite the tainted victory, Baquerizo was probably “the better candidate of the two, a
distinguished lawyer, a man of letters and a brilliant politician” (Reyes, 1967, p. 254).

In one of the last acts of his administration, on July 15, 1916 Plazas presided over the signing of the
Muñoz Vernaza-Suárez Treaty that resolved long-standing questions concerning Ecuador’s 586 kilometer
frontier with Colombia. Following the principal of *Divotium aquarum* or “just divide”, it established a border
that ran through the highlands between the Putumayo and Napo rivers so that the Napo and its waters belonged
to Ecuador and the Putumayo and its tributaries belonged to Colombia. The treaty guaranteed in perpetuity free
navigation of jointly held rivers and created a mixed commission to settle the line in the Amazon region—an
area further compromised by the occupation of Peruvian authorities (Rivas, 1961, p. 667).\(^7\)

The inauguration of Baquerizo on September 1, 1916 coincided with end of the bloody Esmeraldas revolt
and the granting of a general amnesty for all those involved. Establishing peace in this important province freed
Baquerizo to concentrate on other matters including the promotion of railroad construction, expansion of
telegraph communication, and collaboration with Dr. Hideyo Noguchi, a member of the Rockefeller Institute in
the sanitation of Guayaquil and the eradication of yellow fever along the coast.

On September 6, Baquerizo appointed Dr. Carlos Tobar Borgoño to succeed Rafael Elizalde as his
Minister of Foreign Affairs while Elizalde became Ecuador’s ambassador to the US.\(^8\) Until January 1917 when
Germany announced that it would begin an unlimited U-boat attack, Tobar Borgoño’s main concerns were
finding ways to market the cacao harvest and to deflect US calls for repayment of bonds due on the
Guayaquil-Quito railroad which had consistently failed to produce profits. Demand for chocolate grew during
the war expanding from 230,000 tons in 1911 to 260,400 in 1916, but the former purchasing houses in London

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\(^7\) Colombians regarded the treaty as an unqualified success, but Ecuadorians were less enthusiastic believing that they had surrendered a large portion of territory that originally belonged to the Audiencia de Quito (Pareja Diezcanseco, 1979, p. 331).

\(^8\) Tobar y Borgoño served as Minister of Foreign Relations throughout Baquerizo’s administration. In 1919 he was succeeded by Augusto Aguirre Aparicio who was appointed by incoming president José Luis Tamayo.
and Hamburg were now proscribed belligerents, forcing exporters to find a neutral port. By default New York became the world center of the cacao market retaining this position after the war. With the German-British monopoly on Ecuador’s commerce finally broken, the US emerged as the principal buyer for cacao and the supplier of 51 percent of the country’s imports.

In 1916 the Minister of Treasury reported that the country was facing a disastrous monetary crisis due to public debt, money owed to government employees, and underfunded public works. In addition payments exceeding $1,200,000 were owed the army for its service during the four-year war in Esmeraldas. A year later the Minister of Hacienda declared that the government owed $23,087,624.48 to the Banco Comercial y Agrícola. The budget was $3,650,000 but its obligations totaled over $5,634,211. Oblivious to Ecuador’s penury the US State Department insisted that the republic begin monthly payments on bonds owed to American share holders of the Quito-Guayaquil the railroad. Subjected to relentless pressure President Baquerizo Moreno buckled and promised to make deposits into the accounts of the Guayaquil and Quito Railway in Guayaquil banks beginning on January 1, 1917 fully aware that the treasury lacked funds to honor this commitment (Crawford de Roberts, 1980, p. 15; Pineo, 2007, pp. 82-83).

On January 31, 1917 Germany declared that it would commence unlimited submarine warfare making fair game of almost any vessel headed for Allied port including those from a neutral country. As soon as this news reached the United States, President Woodrow Wilson severed diplomatic relations with Germany and urged the Latin American nations to follow his example. Ecuador did not respond citing the fact that it had not been officially notified of the German decree since the German chargé de affaires, Heinrich Rohland had left Quito some time previously leaving the legation vacant. When on February 5 the US ambassador Charles S. Hartman asked Tobar Borgoño to state whether or not Ecuador would join the remaining neutral countries in breaking relations with Germany as a result of the submarine crisis, the minister demurred, replying that “his government would never consent that any one of the belligerents diminish or flout the rights to which Ecuador is assured by international law and existing treaties”, but that Ecuador would not proceed until it had learned the sentiments of the remaining governments of the continent (República del Ecuador, 1917, p. 237). Tobar Borgoño then issued a circular letter on February 16 addressed to the ministers or chargés d’affaires of the US, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay proposing an American Congress to meet immediately in Uruguay to come to agreement “on the means for the guarantee of the rights of neutrality and a possible moderation of the rigors of the struggle” (República del Ecuador, 1917, pp. 249-250). When this effort bore no fruit, Tobar abandoned further attempts to take the initiative in summoning a congress of neutrals (Martin, 1967, pp. 452-453).

**Ecuador and the Great War, April 6, 1917 to November 11, 1918**

The US declaration of war against Germany on April 6, 1917 followed by Cuba and Brazil and the severance of diplomatic relations by Peru, Uruguay and Bolivia brought renewed pressure on Ecuador to follow suit, but President Baquerizo temporized. In his message to Congress on August 10, 1917 he declared:

> We continue to uphold a policy of neutrality and our efforts to secure a more open and frank understanding among all nations of the American Continent. We have said on every occasion, when justice so demanded, that we are in sympathy with and have faith in the great democratic principles, the fundamental basis of those nations. The Continent of America, therefore, will always find us with it. (Barrett & Pérez-Verdía, 1919, p. 18)
Circumstances changed when Peru broke off diplomatic relations with Germany on October 5, 1917, and it was reported that Dr. Frederick Perl, who was the German minister at Lima, intended to go to Ecuador, since he was appointed minister to both countries. Tobar Borgoño announced on October 7 that if Dr. Perl tried to present his credentials in Quito, the Ecuadorean government could not receive him without doing violence to the principles of American solidarity which governed its foreign policy.

Shortly thereafter Dr. Wilhelm Müller (formerly German consul at Seattle) requested that he should be received as chargé d’affaires replacing the absent Rohland. As his only credentials were some telegrams and a letter of credence from Perl, Tobar y Borgoño refused to recognize him. Müller, who seems to have been unable to take no for an answer, continued to style himself in Quito as “chargé d’affaires”. His final gaffe occurred on December 3 when on the occasion of the death of Mgr. Federico González Suárez, Archbishop of Quito, he sent a letter of condolence to the vicar-general of the archdiocese in which he signed himself “the chargé d’affaires of Germany, though not yet recognized”. On attending the archbishop’s funeral, Müller insisted that he should be seated in the place reserved for the diplomatic corps, taking precedence over members of the supreme court of justice. This time he had gone too far. On December 4, Tobar sent a communication to Sr. Victor Eastman, Chilean minister and dean of the diplomatic corps, describing Müller’s offensive conduct. Then determined to remove all uncertainty regarding Ecuador’s attitude toward Germany and its self-styled representative, he dispatched a circular to the members of the diplomatic corps on December 7 declaring that the suspension of diplomatic relations that had existed for some time between Ecuador and the German Empire should forthwith be regarded as “a formal and definite rupture” (Kelchner, 1930, p. 29). A few days later the minister of war issued an order to port authorities that henceforth all ships of the Allies or the United States might enter Ecuadorian territorial waters without restriction (Martin, 1967, p. 460).

By breaking relations but not declaring war on Germany, Ecuador’s adopted a position similar to Peru, Bolivia, Uruguay and the Dominican Republic. In his Message to Congress on August 10, 1918 President Baquerizo Moreno explained the decision with the following words:

On December last we broke off diplomatic relations with the German Empire. In the session of 1917, the Congress had been already informed of our refusal to receive the German Minister, Mr. Perl, a refusal which implied of course the suspension of our diplomatic intercourse with Germany. The attitude of Mr. Müller and our duty to follow a course which should express our solidarity with many countries of America which have already adopted a similar attitude or have gone even farther in their expression of international policy, have seemed to us reasons to justify Ecuador, which is a democratic country with liberal institutions, in adopting such a course. (Barrett & Pérez-Verdú, 1919, p. 18)

Ecuador’s new stance on the war did not soften US determination to force its government to make payments on the railroad bonds. In 1918 the newly created US Shipping Board and the US War Trade Board began to drastically reduce licenses granted for cacao and other imports deemed nonessential to the US war effort. In June Secretary of State Robert Lansing warned Minister Tobar Borgoño that interests on the bonds must to be paid “in order to avoid more serious restrictions being placed by the War Trade Board on the import of cacao into the United States” (Pineo, 2007, p. 82). In fact the War Trade Board was contemplating blocking all Ecuadorian cacao shipments “in order to save tonnage for important war purposes” and was also considering restricting imports of tagua (nuts from ivory palms) and Ecuadorian-made panama hats. By July Ecuador caved in completely promising to make daily deposits from customs receipts to serve the bonds, and Washington responded that it would allow it to continue to send cacao to the US.
When a month passed without Ecuador making any of the promised daily deposits, the annoyed US War Trade Board withdrew all Ecuadorian licenses for cacao shipments. Trade immediately halted in Guayaquil, and dockworkers stopped loading cacao on the ships at the wharf. Confronted with US pressure and utterly humiliated, Ecuador commenced daily bank deposits to service the debt submitting the paperwork for the daily customs receipts to the US consul in Guayaquil so that he could verify that the deposits were being made. In November 1918 the War Trade Board lifted the ban and approved Ecuador’s request that 14,000 tons of cacao in storage be shipped to the US with receipts from its sale applied toward retiring the debt (Pineo, 2007, p. 83).

In the meantime, while the tug of war over bond payments was being carried out, a campaign begun two years before by the Rockefeller Foundation Yellow Fever Commission to rid Guayaquil of yellow fever was achieving remarkable success. The discovery that a specific type of mosquito—the Aëdes aegypti—transmitted the disease had prompted General W. C. Gorgas to undertake vigorous anti-mosquito measures first in Havana and later in Panama—actions that contributed to the successful completion of the Panama Canal in 1914. In 1916, Gorgas, now director of the Rockefeller Foundation’s Yellow Fever Commission, turned his attention to Guayaquil, a port infamous for harboring contagious tropical diseases. Under his leadership a staff of 125 men working in 25 squads began ridding the city of mosquitoes by screening water-storage tanks, cleaning out roof gutters, clearing courtyards of cans, buckets and other containers where the mosquito could breed. They drained ditches, applied oil to standing water and resorted to such ingenious devices as using fish to devour mosquito larvae in water barrels. The results of these efforts were soon discernable. In 1918 Guayaquil registered 480 yellow fever cases, but after six months of control work the last case of the disease was recorded in May 1919 (Fosdick, 1952, p. 61). Guayaquil, long the worst pest port on the Pacific, was declared healthy for Ecuadorians and foreigners alike.

Given this unhealthy reputation, it is surprising to note that the influenza pandemic that engulfed most of the world between June 1918 and June 1919 and left some 50 million people dead seems to have bypassed Guayaquil. On December 6, the port authorities informed President Baquerizo Moreno that “the Spanish flu has not appeared in Guayaquil and that all incoming boat crews had been carefully checked without finding traces of the disease”.9 Cases of influenza were reported in Quito by mid December, but the epidemic’s impact appears to have been far less than in other Andean cities such as Bogotá and Caracas.10

**Ecuador and the Restoration of Peace**

On November 11, 1918 at 11 A.M. the armistice signed between the German commission and Allied military leaders took effect, and the Great War was officially over. For concentrated destructiveness it had surpassed anything in human history, with millions of people killed and many more seriously wounded. Even more significant from the standpoint of Ecuador and the rest of Latin America was that as Britain, Germany, and France struggled to rebuild after the war, the United States was solidifying its economic and political ascendancy in the Western Hemisphere.

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9 *El Comercio* (Guayaquil), No. 4,564, December 6, 1918. Pineo who made an extensive study of disease, health care and death in Guayaquil from 1870 to 1925 found no evidence of an increase of cases of influenza that might be attributed to the pandemic (Pineo, 1996, pp. 100-137).

10 *El Comercio* (Guayaquil), No. 4,593, December 23, 1918. Ecuador’s experience with the Spanish Flu is a fascinating topic that remains to be systematically researched. For the devastation caused by the disease in Bogotá see Álvaro Miranda, “Treinta días persiguiendo la muerte: miseria, dolor y obras de caridad en Bogotá de 1918, desolada por la epidemia de gripe” (Miranda, 2008).
On January 18, 1919 diplomats of the victorious allies gathered in Versailles, France to decide the fate of Germany and its defeated partners. Those Latin American republics which had severed relations with Germany or declared war against that country were invited to participate in the peace conference which continued until the signing of the Versailles Peace Treaty on June 28. Dr. Enrique Dorn y de Alsúa, Ecuador’s ambassador to France and Great Britain, attended these meetings and signed the peace treaty for Ecuador, but the government failed to ratify it (República del Ecuador, 1917, 1919; Martin, 1967, p. 550). Although eligible to join the newly established League of Nations, Ecuador delayed accepting the invitation until 1935, an omission Pineo suggests was due to the fact that during “its endless changes of government” in the post war period, Ecuador let lapse nearly all its diplomatic postings, maintaining only minimal representation in Peru, Colombia and the United States (Pineo, 2007, p. 104).11

Conclusion

In an article published in the May 1920 La Revista del Mundo, former Minister of Foreign Affairs Rafael Elizalde summarized the impact of the war on Ecuador. On the one hand, he noted that after resolving problems caused by belligerent ships visiting the Galapagos in the fall of 1914, the actual fighting of the war in Europe barely touched the country. In contrast to some Western Hemisphere countries, not even one German ship was stranded in Ecuadorian ports. The conflict brought to the fore the need to place controls over wireless telegraph operations and the dilemmas raised by dual citizenship of Ecuadorians living in Europe, but Elizalde asserted that the European war also had a politically positive effect in solidifying the determination of the Western Hemisphere states to join in a Pan American union.

On the other hand, the economic impact of the four years of fighting was anything but favorable. Elizalde asserted that Ecuador was “the only American country that not only did not benefit economically from the war but that suffered the consequences of it”. While other countries saw an increase in exports to the US of wheat, meat, wool, sugar, and metals, Ecuador had only cacao to export in large quantities and these exports were restricted by Great Britain, France, and even the United States. Due to the war necessities, Britain prohibited the export of jute with neutral countries resulting in a lack of sacks in which to pack the grain, and with the absence of ships to transport cacao, complete paralysis of trade was avoided with great difficulty. Given the problems of importing food products after the US restricted their export citing wartime concerns, domestic needs stimulated the growing of potatoes, wheat, and rice in the sierra region and promoted the production of petroleum, a nascent industry being developed with national capital. Nevertheless, the decrease in trade reduced proceeds from customs causing a 15% income decline between 1913 and 1917 and forcing the regime to delay service on debts owned to foreign creditors, to cut back salaries of government employees, and to postpone proposed public works projects (Elizalde, 1920, pp. 68-69). The dependency of the government on the Banco Commercial y Agrícola encouraged graft and corruption and solidified the control of the so-called plutocracy in running the country.

By 1918, when Ecuador was producing about 45,000 tons of cacao a year or 15% of the world total, the US War Trade Board limited the sale to 14,400 tons a year. By June 1919, with another Ecuadorian harvest on the way, Ecuador would soon have some 42,000 tons of cacao awaiting a buyer. Fortunately, in that year the

11 Aguirre Aparicio in his Informe of 1919 discusses at length the lack of funds to support Ecuador’s diplomats abroad (pp. 6-10).
US closed down its wartime bureaucracies, freeing up Ecuador’s shipments, but by that time there were new threats to the country’s reliance on exports of a single crop (República del Ecuador, 1919, p. 31). Cacao plantations planted in Brazil and the Gold Coast in Africa in the 20th century had begun exporting their harvests at the same time the two fungus diseases, Monilia and witches broom were ravishing Ecuador’s plantations. Although there was a hope that a cure would be discovered, post war British and US reports described the conditions of the plantations as “poor and disastrous”. By 1920 the Gold Coast had emerged as the world’s leading producer with an annual output of 126,596 tons, Brazil was second with 56,654 tons leaving Ecuador in third place with 43,000 tons (Crawford de Roberts, 1980, pp. 163-164).

In September 1920 Baquerizo Moreno delivered the presidency without incident to fellow guayaquileño and staunch Liberal, Dr. José Luis Tamayo who would face the enduring effects of the impact of the European war. Embezzlement rooted in the war economy did not disappear because it had become...

References


Two Ways: Representations of the Holocaust in Israeli Art

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The subject of the Holocaust appeared in Israeli art from the establishment of the State and onwards. The integration of the Holocaust in Israeli art through the years was influenced by Israeli society and the Israeli art institutional attitude towards the subject and by local historical events. As a result, we witness a development of two directions in Israeli art concerning the Holocaust. One of them has two facets: a massive use of images emphasizing the enormous personal as well as collective destruction of the Jewish nation as the ultimate victim that “the entire world is against us”; while the other facet is that despite the Jewish people emerge battered and humiliated from the Holocaust, they built a country to be an immovable, permanent and safe place for the Jewish nation since “there is no one else except for us to do it”. The other direction regarding the Holocaust that developed in Israeli art, examining in a universal approach the Israeli response to the Holocaust through the prism of local historical events occurring since the establishment of the State. Therefore, we see imagery that examines the aggressive impression of the Israelis, as an internal as well as external criticism of what seems as aggression and violence against another nation. In Israel, as well as in other Modern states, art is used as a means for expression of different viewpoints. In this article, I am focusing on the artistic references to the above approaches to the Holocaust.

Keywords: Holocaust art, Israeli art, Holocaust and the existence of the State of Israel, Moshe Bernstein, Itzhak Belfer, Naftali Bezem, Pinchas Sha’ar, Shraga Weil, Nathan Rapoport, Pál Fux, Yaakov Gildor, Avner Bar Hama

Introduction

The subject of the Holocaust appeared in Israeli art from the establishment of the State and onwards. The integration of the Holocaust in Israeli art through the years was influenced by Israeli society, Israeli art’s institutional attitude towards the subject and by local historical events such as wars, Nazi criminals’ trials etc.. In the early years of the State, Israeli society and art had rejected the survivors’ artworks since they dealt with a difficult subject matter and the depictions were difficult to look at, also the artworks were not consistent with the mainstream style of the era—an abstract international style (Manor, 1998; Brutin, 2000; Brutin, 2005a). As a result, we witness a development of two directions in Israeli art concerning the Holocaust. One of them has two facets: a massive use of images emphasizing the enormous personal as well as collective destruction of the Jewish nation as the ultimate victim that “the entire world is against us”; the other facet is that despite the Jewish people emerge battered and humiliated from the Holocaust, they built a country to be an immovable, permanent and safe place for the Jewish nation since “there is no one else except for us to do it”. The other direction regarding the Holocaust that developed in Israeli art, examining in a universal approach the Israeli response to the Holocaust through the prism of local historical events occurring since the establishment of the State.
State. Therefore, we see imagery that examines the aggressive impression of the Israelis, as an internal as well as external criticism of what seems as aggression and violence against another nation. In Israel, as well as in other Modern states, art is used as a means for expression of different viewpoints. In this article, I am focusing on the artistic references to the above approaches to the Holocaust. This article will discuss the works of art by Israeli artists who dealt with the heritage of the Holocaust through the years by emphasizing each artist’s personal as well as collective attitude.

**The Entire World is Against us**

In the early years of the State of Israel, survivor artists wanted to express immediately in their work the difficult experiences they endured during the Holocaust. Their goal was to show the brutal actions of the Nazis and their collaborators who harmed them simply because they were Jews, and to deal with the fact that Nazi Germany wanted the eradication of the entire Jewish people and the world stood by. The artists depicted the atrocities the Nazis inflicted on the Jews in ghettos and camps from a personal and collective perspective alike.

Moshe Bernstein, expressively described an emaciated, tortured and exhausted Muselmann from Auschwitz in despair (see Figure 1). He stares at us directly forcing us to confront his emaciated body, the blurred number on his arm and his scream. Bernstein, who knew that Muselmanns generally reached skeletal condition with a no expression stare and they were apathetic to their surroundings and unable to stand steady on their feet, tried to stay true to the reality by describing the figure lying exhausted. Bernstein also knew that the camp prisoners usually wore striped clothes, but this description replaced them with a fringed undergarment—“Talit Katan” to emphasize his Jewish identity and to express clearly the fact that he was imprisoned in Auschwitz and tattooed to erase his personal identity just because he was a Jew. This symbolic description combines tremendous personal pain of the death of the artist’s family, with collective reference expressed by a cry of despair for the disaster of the Jewish people that the world turned their back on them and not come to help them (Basok, 1986; Brutin, 2000).

As opposed to Bernstein, Itzchak Belfer, depicted a group of camp prisoners with striped uniform seen in an angle showing only half of their body (see Figure 2). The front character appears with a shaved head, mouth open and eyes wide open looking terrified. The other prisoners are wearing striped hats, with their faces expressing suffering and fear, all introspective and with gazes down. The figures are gathered closely, their skinny bodies’ volume is hardly substantial, and the unified description of the striped garments causes them to merge. The multitude of stripes in the clothes and hats conveys a sense of loss of personal identity and a message of a mass of people with a common fate. In this work Belfer seeks to tell the story of many Jews whose personal identity was stolen from them, they were humiliated, tortured and killed, and the world has given a hand to that in its silence (Belfer, 1995).

Alongside with the depiction of the ultimate victim that “the entire world is against us”, artists referred to the feeling that the Jews after the Holocaust, should take their own fate in their hands, recover their lives and build their own country.

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1 Author’s interview with Moshe Bernstein, Tel Aviv, August 1999.
2 Author’s interviews with Itzchak Belfer, Tel Aviv, July 1999.
Figure 1. Moshe Bernstein, *The Cry (Auschwitz)*, 1950-1951.

Figure 2. Itzchak Belfer, *Muselmanns in Prisoners Uniform*, the sixties.
There is No One Else Except for us to do it

The national social reality prevailing in Israel when Holocaust survivor artists arrived was that of a society wishing to start a “new page” (Brutin, 2000). We can read in the declaration of the State of Israel, “this right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be master of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign state”. [The declaration of the State of Israel, May 14, 1948 (five of Iyar 5708)]. The desire was to create in the land of Israel a just society, a nation like all other nations, around a common set of new values, such as farming, pioneering, cooperation and protection. The feeling was that only Jewish society in Israel could defend itself, because experience from the Holocaust teaches that Jewish society can only rely on itself.

Some artists described the rapid integration of Holocaust survivors in Israeli society, in establishing communities and protecting them. Naftali Bezem shows in the work A Jewish Stonecutter from 1953 (see Figure 3) his solution to integration in the Israeli society after the Holocaust through labor by depicting a figure of a pioneer holding a cutting tool in his hand, which has a prisoner number tattooed on it. The number represents the destruction and death and the cutting tool represents life, building and work. In this work, Bezem points to an optimistic result of the Holocaust: the remains of the Holocaust came to Israel and despite all they endured, rebuilt their life and built a state (Bezem, 1953; Amishai-Maisels, 1986; Amishai-Maisels, 1993). While the number on prisoners’ arms was tattooed on the left arm, in Bezem’s depiction it is tattooed on the right arm holding the cutting tool. It is customary to refer to the right side as a positive: thus the phrase “stood to his right” is interpreted as support or starting something “on the right foot” is interpreted as a good start. Bezem, by depicting the number on the right arm strengthens the positive idea he brings up in this work and it connects well to Bezem’s own wish as a refugee to integrate into Israeli life.

However, the cutter’s sad gaze is prominent, reflecting the difficult past hidden in his inner world, and his closed mouth implies to his powerful silence in effort to remember the past while coming back to life in the present. The role of the red color in the background is to describe the past from which the cutter “emerged”. The choice of red is to symbolize powerfulness and aggression, destruction, death and blood—the Holocaust. The uniform red color in the background against the formal description of the cutter highlights and enhances the description and emphasizes the connection to the Holocaust. Bezem emphasizes here that survivors put aside the trauma of the Holocaust and actively participated in the establishment of the state of Israel and its development out of the understanding that only the Jewish state can protect them from another disaster if it will happen.

Pinchas Sha’ar also dealt with rooting in the land of Israel by working the land. He depicted in his work A Farmer Plows from 1957 (see Figure 4) a farmer plowing his land at the foot of the Judean Mountains, wearing a round brimless hat to symbolize his Israeliness. The cypress trees characteristic of Israel are seen at the foot of the mountains and they symbolize the connection to the land and its sceneries. In many depictions and ritual articles from the 19th century, the cypress tree is seen alongside the Western Wall as a symbol to the connection of the Jewish people to their homeland. Sha’ar’s depiction of the cypress tree at the foot of the Judean Mountains, where Israel’s capital Jerusalem lies, conveys the message of return to the homeland and the plowing symbolizes the hold on it. The image of the cock on mountain tops is an ancient Jewish motif that symbolizes manhood. The call of the man as a Cockerow symbolizes renewal and awakening, thus implying to

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1 The sealed mouth motif appears in many artists’ artworks in order to express speechlessness following the Holocaust, an inability or lack of desire to speak about the past trauma of the Holocaust.
The renewal of agriculture in Israel by the Jews that arrived after the Holocaust. The color scheme in this work symbolizes the Joy of fieldwork.

Figure 3. Naftali Bezem, A Jewish Stonecutter, 1953.

Figure 4. Pinchas Sha’ar, Farmer Plowing the Land at the Foot of the Judean Mountains, 1957.
Pinchas Sha’ar highlights the necessity for cultivation as a message of belonging to the land and the Jews must to return to cultivate the land, a work they were banned from in Europe in order to establish a state of their own without outside assistance.\(^4\)

Shraga Weil presents another way of creating a rooted connection with the homeland in his work *The Planter* From 1954 (see Figure 5) by depicting a farmer digging the land firmly with a shovel in order to plant the seedling placed beside him. The stem and the leaves of the seedling on the left and the vegetal decorativeness on the right and the ground at his feet, create a blooming frame that wraps around the planter. In this depiction the artist emphasizes the bond between the planter and his land and creates a fundamental link between them. Through the planting the farmer clings to his land and proclaims ownership.

![Figure 5. ShragaWeil, The Planter, 1954.](image)

The planter is busy with his work and his face is hidden to conceal his emotion, sadness and pain following his Holocaust experiences blended with the joy of planting. Weil highlights the planter’s focus on working the land as representing the present—renewal of his relationship with land of Israel. In this work, he

\(^4\) Pinchas Shaar has decided to live a meaningful life and create a positive and colorful art about life, renewal, joy, Jewish culture and experience, all in order to compensate for the suffering he experienced during the Holocaust. Shaar passed away in 1997. An interview with his brother Mr. Joseph Schwartz and his former wife, Mrs. Eli (Elisheva) Shaar, January 2000.
illustrates his personal feeling toward his new country and at the same time expresses the feelings of many survivors that in spite of the pain and loss have found a home and hope in Israel after the horrors of the Holocaust.

Here, as in Bezem’s work, the depiction of the survivor working the land expresses the understanding that only Jews can themselves build and develop their country. The outcome of the feeling in Israeli consciousness that “There is no one else except for us to do it” is the necessity to defend themselves and fight for Israel’s existence and survival.

Israel’s Fight for Its Existence and Survival

The catastrophe which befell the Jewish people and the massacre of millions of Jews in Europe clearly demonstrated the urgent need to solve the problem of the Jews’ homelessness by re-establishing the Jewish state in Eretz-Israel; This would open the gates of the homeland wide to all Jews and confer upon the Jewish people the status of a fully privileged member of the comity of nations. Survivors of the Nazi Holocaust in Europe, as well as Jews from other parts of the world, migrated to Israel, undaunted by difficulties and restrictions, and never ceased to assert their right to dignity, freedom, and honest toil in their national homeland. (The declaration of the State of Israel, May 14, 1948 (5 Iyar 5708))

According to the declaration, the solution to the problem of exile is a rebirth. Indeed Jews fought fiercely for the establishment of Israel. The struggle for international political recognition and the military campaign to establish the state gave to the Jews according to this approach, compensation for powerlessness and helplessness that they were subjected to during the Holocaust, when they could not influence their fate. During the struggle for Jewish statehood, the Jews demonstrated their political ability and military power (Zertal, 2002).

In the national consciousness of the early days of the state, the fight for its establishment was identified with the rebellions in ghettos, as “two Jewish Wars led by Jews for a Jewish cause” (Yablonka, 1994; Yablonka, 2001). Opposed to it, Holocaust victims were identified as “Lambs to the slaughter”, a reference which penetrated into public consciousness in the country with the arrival of the first of the survivors (Keshev, 1962; Yablonka, 1994; Yablonka, 2001). The source of this negative statement is a proclamation that was read at a meeting of the Pioneer Youth in Vilna ghetto on January 1, 1942: “Do not let us be taken as lambs to the slaughter... Hitler aims to destroy all the Jews of Europe. The Jews of Lithuania had to be first in line. Let us not be led as lambs to the slaughter!” (Kovner, 1981).

At the beginning of the state of Israel, the founders emphasized the revolt, the fighting and the resistance during the Holocaust, the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in particular, and it played a central and essential role in integrating the Holocaust into Israeli consciousness and culture. Since the historical circumstances of the uprising were suitable to the myth of “a few against the many”, it became a role model for Israeli existence and fighting for its survival.

One of the first examples is the Mordechai Anielewicz monument erected by Nathan Rapoport in 1951(see Figure 6). The monument shows a huge strong young man, dressed like a Kibbutz member, his chest is exposed, a look of determination on his face and a hand grenade in his hand. Rapoport makes a connection between the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising heroism and of Kibbutz Yad Mordechai’s members, who fought the strong and large Egyptian army during Israel’s War of Independence. He does so by depicting Anielewicz—who was actually a lean, bespectacled lad—as a strong, young kibbutznik (Kibbutz member) and by positioning the sculpture in front of the war-damaged water tower (Young, 1993; Brutin, 2005b).
Figure 6. Nathan Rapoport, Mordechai Anielewicz, 1951.

Figure 7. Naftali Bezem, Isaac sacrifice, 1968.

Rapoport was undoubtedly influenced by Michelangelo’s David of 1501-1504 for his depiction of
Anielewicz. The muscular body, the nodding of the head, the facial features and the hair are similar. The choice to depict Anielewicz as David was not indefinite because in the Jewish culture, David is a symbol of the weak fighting the mighty. Although the end of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the fight between David and Goliath stories are not identical, Rapoport “corrected” the story of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising by equalizing it to the story of David and Goliath. He wanted to convey the message that the Jews in the past as well as in the present must fight for their existence.

Jewish artists used biblical imagery in the context of the Holocaust, not only because all know it and so their message will pass on clearly, but also because they had been brought up on the concept of the identification between past and present (Amishai-Maisels, 1993).

Figure 8. Pál Fux, Abraham and Isaac, 1982.

Naftali Bezem painted the Sacrifice of Isaac (see Figure 7) out of a sense that the Holocaust led to the establishment of Israel (Bezem, 1972). Bezem describes Isaac as a Diaspora Jew lying on the altar representing the Holocaust victims who perished and the pyramidal structure alongside his head symbolizes their commemoration. The pyramid is an accepted symbol for commemoration the dead since the erection of the Egyptian’s pyramids in the third millennium BC (Levin, 1983). The plant he is holding in his hands implies to renewal and life. Thus, the shroud enveloping his body become the cactus plant, a symbol of the Israeli sabra, a symbol of hope. The message in this description is that out of the ashes of Holocaust victims, who are a generation of exile, arises Israel’s new generation that represents the renewal. However, one cannot ignore the fact that Isaac is lying on the altar, the artist called the creation the Sacrifice of Isaac, and it was made after the Six-Day War. This description reflects Bezem’s concern for the fact that we did not sacrifice enough victims in the Holocaust; Israeli-born generation continues to make sacrifices in his war for the existence of the Jewish
people in its sovereign state.

Pál Fux refers in *Abraham and Isaac* (see Figure 8) to the Lebanon war of 1982 in general without a personal connection. He depicted Abraham as an Auschwitz survivor with a number on his arm dressed in white to highlight his purity and to emphasize him as the victim of the past. Abraham’s hand touches a helmet that contains both a young soldier’s face and a lamb to symbolize the victim of the present. This work integrates the victims of the Holocaust with the fallen soldiers of Israel’s wars representing them as having sacrificed their lives for the nation and the homeland.\(^5\)

![Figure 9. Yaakov Gildor, Targets, 1993.](image)

In order to deal with Israel’s fight for its survival, artists used images from the Holocaust, integrated, and compared them to the local conflicted reality. Following the Gulf War (1991), which brought the issue of the Holocaust back to the minds of Israelis, Yaakov Gildor created *Targets* of 1993 (see Figure 9). For him, this war resulted in dealing with the Holocaust from a different perspective; he deals with the continuation of the struggle for existence of the Jewish people (Brutin, 2009).\(^6\) In this work, Gildor presents two separate

\(^5\) Author’s interviews with Pál Fux, Jerusalem, October 1999.

\(^6\) Author’s interviews with Yaakov Gildor, Tel Aviv, January 1998.
descriptions of two identities, which co-exist simultaneously in Israeli society. In the bottom, Jews are seen in the Holocaust, nude, packed and distorted, a depiction which expresses helplessness and vulnerability, and which is somewhat reminiscent of gas chamber descriptions (Amishai-Maisels, 1993). The hues of red the artist chose for painting the images and the background contribute to the atmosphere of disaster. In the top section, two soldiers, aiming their rifles at the viewer, are seen. The soldiers appear powerful, and in control of their space, but instead of depicting them standing, the artist has the characters lie at opposite directions, as is customary in army ambushes. Gildor used two-part, contradictory visual saying, by showing the soldiers laying down in an ambush, idle, instead of standing up, the artist actually emphasizes their control of space, while in the depiction of victims, standing up instead of laying down, they appear to rise from the dead, to sound their cry. The meaning of this artwork is that in order to not be victimized again, like in the Holocaust when we were vulnerable, now that we have a state and an army we can fight and defend ourselves.

*Figure 10. Avner Bar Hama, Generation to Generation – Continuity - Pure Hands! 2005.*

Avner Bar Hama used the iconic photograph of the Warsaw boy to convey a political and critical message concerning the Israeli Palestinian conflict. Bar Hama in the work *Generation to Generation—Continuity—Pure Hands!* of 2005 (see Figure 10) contends with the Israeli Palestinian conflict opposite the Holocaust by means of using hand positions. The background is the black and white photograph of the Warsaw boy with his hands up in surrender, to indicate the Jewish nation’s experience of the Holocaust. Superimposed are images of a Palestinian with his blood-stained hands up as a victory sign immediately after he took part in the Ramallah lynch of 2000 and a Palestinian girl’s photograph where she raises her hands soaked in red color, to her right a model of the Dome of the Rock and the colors of the Palestinian flag. Bar Hama stated that by placing the Palestinian photographs as opposed to the Warsaw boy photograph, he wished to present his one-sided
standpoint:

I present mine—our side. I clarify the differences between us and them, Judaism versus Islam. On one hand, the memory on which we educate is “Never Again!” and on the other hand, the Palestinian girl is being educated to more slaughter and more murder.

Conclusions

Living in the shadow of the Holocaust influenced Israelis personal as well as national existence and Israeli identity along the years. The Israeli artists referred to the Holocaust in various ways as seen in the artworks presented in the article. Some artists described their attitude towards their feeling as the ultimate victim that the entire world is against them. Other artists depicted how, after the destruction of the Jewish people during the Holocaust, the Jews in Israel built a country to be a stable, permanent and safe place for the Jewish nation since there is no one else except for themselves to do it. Israeli artists depicted their perception on the State of Israel’s constant struggle for its existence and survival. Will the Holocaust continue to be a significant component in Israeli art in the future? Time will tell.

References

Global Dynamics of the China Dream and Possible Turkish-China Partnership on a New Silk Road to Renaissance by 2023

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Turkey and China are two ancient civilizations with historic links in blood-line, trade, and strategic thinking. At the beginning of the 21st century, both countries are at the crossroads of an epochal shift of world gravitas from the West to the East and from the advanced to the developing countries. China is set to overtake the United States as the world’s largest economy probably within this decade. Under President XI Jinping, the country is pursuing a China Dream of renaissance in the coming years, harking back to China’s glorious past. This resonates well with Turkey’s ambition to achieve a similar goal by the hundredth anniversary of Ataturk in 2023. The horizon for cooperation is full of exciting possibilities, including high-speed rail from China’s industrial seaboard passing through Turkey to the seaports in Western Europe; a customs-free expressway from the Western border of China through Kazakhstan and Belarus to Amsterdam; linking Bosphorus to China’s world-leading container ports; investments in telecommunications and mining in the Central Asia region; partnership in a host of African “special economic zones” being managed by China; and capitalizing on the internationalization of the RMB, the Chinese yuan, to grow Istanbul to a world-class financial centre. In the light of these and other opportunities, there is no reason why areas of possible divergence between the two countries cannot be adequately managed. These include Turkey’s cultural links with the Uyghur “separatists” in China’s Xinjiang Province, membership of US- dominated North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and different approaches to international conflicts such as Syria. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), in which China is playing a leading part, may be a strategic theatre where Turkey-China cooperation may be enhanced and their differences minimized. In short, as the tide of history is rapidly turning, Turkey and China are likely to find themselves as serendipitous partners on a New Silk Road to Renaissance in the coming decades.

Keywords: silk road, Renaissance, China dream, Eurasian high speed rail, Kazakhstan-Belarus expressway, Bosphorus, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Uyghurs, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Swing of History’s Pendulum

Until the late 19th century, the world’s economy and political power was dominated by the Middle Kingdom, the Ottoman Empire and India. During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), for example, China’s economy was the richest in the world both in aggregate and in per capita terms. During 1405-1433, Admiral
ZHENG He, a Muslim eunuch, set sail seven times with a gigantic fleet of over 300 massive ships and 28,000 crewmen to spread China’s culture and trade over the oceans to distant shores. The Ottoman Empire witnessed a similarly glorious chapter in its history. However, as from the nineteenth century, both the Middle Kingdom and the Ottoman Empire faced a terminal decline when the West’s Industrial Revolution completely tipped the balance.

Now hegemony and empires have no place in a multi-polar world. But history’s pendulum is swinging the other way. According to research by Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria (BBVA), a Spanish bank, the Emerging and Growth Leading Economies, including Turkey (EAGLEs) and NEST countries (upcoming-EAGLEs) are together expected to contribute 68% to world growth between 2012-2022. China and India are each expected to contribute a higher share than the US. The G7 economies together will add a mere 16% (Annual Report, 2013). Goldman Sachs estimates that by 2050, the six EAGLEs combined economic weight, what may be called the E6, would be over two and half times more than the economies of US, Japan, United Kingdom and Germany combined.

**Dynamics of China’s Rising Economic Power**

China’s economy is already bigger than the rest of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries combined. According to the Economist, China is likely to overtake the United States as the world’s largest economy by 2019 at market exchange rates. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) puts the date earlier, by 2016, on the basis of purchasing power parity (Reported in Mail Online of the Daily Mail, 2013). According to Global Sherpa statistics, by 2050 Turkey’s economy, as the world’s 10th largest, will be one notch higher than Japan (BRICS countries path to 2050, 2013).

As of February 2013, China has surpassed the United States as the world’s largest trading nation (China Briefing, 2013). It has become the largest trading partner for 124 countries worldwide, including Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, Japan, Australia, Brazil and South Africa. As a sign of the times, the world’s top 10 busiest container ports are mainly in China including Hong Kong, occupying the 1st, 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th and 8th positions, a testament to the country’s status as the centre of a global production and supply chain.

What is more, China accounts for 95% of the world’s production of rare earths, which are essential in a host of electronics, electro-magnetic, and optical components for civilian as well as military applications including laser and nuclear batteries. In addition, China has become the world’s largest gold producer.

**China’s Bourgeoning Consumer Power**

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of China’s current growth is the dramatic rise of Chinese middle-class consumers.

According to the Brookings Institution (Kharas, 2011), China’s middle-class (those with discretionary income) is expected to jump from 12% (157 million) to 70% of China’s population by 2030. China’s mass affluent category (those with household income of $40,000-$80,000 in purchasing power parity terms) is expected to grow from 9.8% of the population in 2005 to 36.4% by 2025, and 80% of them are under 45 years of age.

China became the world’s largest car market by 2010. According to McKinsey, its sales of luxury cars are
expected to surpass the United States by 2016. USA Today (January 2013) says Beijing will overtake Atlanta as the world’s busiest airport by end 2013 while China will eclipse the United States in air traffic by 2030.

The McKinsey Global Institute reports (2013) that China is now the world’s largest e-commerce market, worth $190 billion in 2012. There are 130 million broadband accounts and six million e-merchants on Taobao, China’s e-Bay, registering an annual compound growth of 120% since 2003.

According to a Reuters report, for the first time, consumption (55%) exceeded investment (50%) in contribution to China’s GDP growth in October 2012. According to Credit Suisse, rising from a fairly low percentage (36%) of the GDP at present, China’s aggregate consumption is expected to surpass that of the United States by 2020, thanks to sheer size and accumulation of household wealth.

These dynamics are driven by the largest and fastest urbanization the world has even seen. According to McKinsey Global Institute (2008), China has been building 221 new third-and-fourth-tier cities in the inner provinces (many from villages and small towns) each with a population over one million by 2025, compared with only 32 cities of such size in the whole of Europe at present. Many of these new cities are inter-connected by new expressways and high-speed rail, absorbing massive migrants from the countryside. In 20 years, China will have added some 300 million urbanites, more than the entire population of the United States.

Given huge wage increases in recent years, mandated hikes in minimum wages by 13% annually through to 2015, and expected relaxation of the household registration system of social provisions, these urban centers are likely to be China’s engine of consumption growth in the coming decades. This is in line with a global trend. According to the Mckinsey Global Institute (2012), the world’s 600 cities will generate 60% of global GDP by 2025.

**Is the China Dream Sustainable?**

China’s President XI Jinping has repeatedly evoked the “China Dream”, a rallying call to national renaissance harking back to China’s glorious past. However, as China’s previous Premier WEN Jia-bao pointed out repeatedly, China’s development is “unstable, unbalanced, uncoordinated, and unsustainable”. China is facing a multitude of challenges, including rampant corruption, abuse of power, acute inequalities, ecological degradation, deficits in the rule of law, human rights violations, limitations of freedom of expression, ethnic unrests, imbalance between investment and consumption, inefficient allocation of capital, and worsening relations with Asian neighbors. What is more, China’s workforce is expected to dwindle by 2015 as her demographic dividend of a cheap labor pool is becoming exhausted with a fast-aging population profile, thanks to the One Child Policy. So is the China Dream attainable and sustainable?

In an article of 21 November, 2012 in Yale Global Online, professor David Shambaugh of George Washington University, Senior Fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at the Brookings Institution, identified a number of what may seem insurmountable obstacles (Shambaugh, 2012).

The professor recognizes “a surprising strong consensus” both inside and outside China on a catalogue of what needs to be done—revamping China’s economic growth model, breaking up state monopolies, nurturing civil society, reducing inequalities through adequate public goods like healthcare, old age pension, education, and environmental protection, safeguarding the rule of law, promoting better ethnic harmony in Tibet and Xinjiang, adopting a more accommodating and less confrontational posture in territorial disputes with Asian neighbors, and playing a more proactive role in global governance commensurate with the size of China’s
economy. However, he reckons that China’s leaders are hamstrung by four inherent constraints.

Path Dependency

Shambaugh thinks that The composition of (China’s) exports needs to move up the value chain—and this is linked to shifting investment from “hard” to “soft” infrastructure: education, science, cutting-edge technologies, innovation and cultural creativity. For China to make these transitions requires more than a shift in financial allocations, though, as it requires loosening of the political system, media censorship and civil society. A “knowledge economy” cannot easily be built in an authoritarian system.

Soviet Shadow

The professor argues that with the spectre of the collapse of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), together with the lingering threats of the Eurasian “color revolutions” and the “Arab spring”, there is a gripping fear that,

Opening the political system to genuine pluralism, empowering civil society, loosening media censorship, permitting free inquiry and critical thinking in education and research, or making the legislative and judicial systems autonomous of party control, would inevitable cascade out of control and spell the demise of party rule. (Shambaugh, 2013)

Institutionalized Vested Interests

Shambaugh opines that “The core problem is the state sector of the economy, which still accounts for roughly 30% of GDP”. This includes state monopolies of the banking, energy, finance, defense, heavy industrial, aerospace, telecommunications, and much of the transportation sectors, as well as enormous swaths of land and property owned by the party, state and military. Lenin warned of “state-monopoly capitalism” in 1917—China has it in spades today. These vested interests, particularly the 145,000 state enterprises and 120 “national champion” corporations, are not about to divest their interests voluntarily. In addition, “three other entrenched interest groups inhibit reforms: the military, the sprawling internal security apparatus and the arch-conservative wing of the Communist Party”.

Aggrieved Nationalism

The professor refers to the “entrenched national narrative of victimization. This narrative, assiduously developed over six decades through the propaganda and educational systems, underpins the political raison d’etre of the Communist Party—but it is a core source of the frictions with China’s neighbors and the West. China needs to shed this psychological baggage to truly normalize relations with Asia and the West—but to do so is to undercut the party’s legitimacy”. While Shambaugh’s scepticism is well-placed, it must nevertheless be seen in the following context.

On “Path Dependency”

Since China started to reform and open up in 1978, the country’s development has been a continuous work-in-progress to stay above waters of a continually changing tide. This perennial status of flux, of adaptation and change, has been at the core of China’s economic miracle, compressing over a century’s economic progress into a few decades.

As early as the beginning of China’s 11th Five Year Plan (2006-2010), the leadership flagged up the so-called “five imbalances”—between rural development versus urban development, human development
versus the environment, economic versus social development, national priorities versus local needs, and inward versus outward investments.

Since then, a swath of initiatives have been launched to hone “a nation of innovation”, including a battle for talent and the promotion of the kind of “soft infrastructure” highlighted by Shambaugh: education, science, cutting-edge technologies, innovation and cultural creativity.

XU Li-yan and QIU Jing (2012) of the Samsung Economic Research Institute in China elaborated on this in a recent article for Yale Global,

China is determined to evolve into a global hub for innovation. With climbing college enrolment and a R&D staff exceeding 1.5 million, the nation is reforming its higher-education system, hiring practices and immigration regulations; encouraging cooperation with industry; developing new majors in the sciences in areas like alternative energies and new-materials engineering; and offering incentives for Chinese students who studied overseas to return home. Plans are underway for 1200 education facilities—or “talent incubators”—for training technicians to be built in major cities by 2020. The government is also funding initiatives to develop leaders in philosophy, social science, publishing, culture, the arts and heritage protection. The goal is to transform Chinese firms into multinationals ranking among the world’s top companies and develop soft power. (Yale Global introduction to the author’s article)

Indeed, China has been churning out some seven to eight million university graduates a year. According to the Centre for American Progress, by 2030 China will have some 200 million university graduates, more than the entire American workforce today (Cooper & Hersh, 2012).

There has been a clear sense of changed direction since 2006—now reinforced by the 12th Five Year Plan (2011-2015)—towards a dramatically different path based on slower but more balanced, higher-quality, more equitable and more sustainable growth.

In the current Five Year Plan (2011-2015), a total of 35 projects for various industries have been given support under seven broad strategic categories: energy saving and environmental protection; next generation IT; bio-industries; high-end assembly and manufacturing; new energy sources; new materials; and new-energy-powered cars.

There is a broad-based awareness that the cheap labor pool is dwindling and China must redouble efforts to respond to the challenges of the so-called “Lewis Turning Point”1 and the “Middle Income Trap”2.

What is perhaps ground-breaking evidence of the emergence of a knowledge-based economy is the 2012 Report of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) (World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Report, 2012). This shows that for the first time in over a century, China as a developing country, tops the world in the filing of patents, trademarks and industrial designs. Eighty percent of these are home-grown. According to the Royal Society, China will surpass the United States in citations in scientific literature by end of 2013 (BBC News, 2012). “Path dependence” is by no means immutable.

On the “Soviet Shadow”

The Communist Party is caught in a quandary. What Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson describe as “extractive institutions” (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012) have generated growing social unrests that threaten to

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1 The “Lewis Turning Point” is the period where a country’s relatively cheap labor force is being exhausted and its economic growth model needs to change dramatically.
2 The “Middle Income Trap” refers to the phenomenon where many developing countries see their economic growth stall within the per capita income range of $3,000-$8,000.
undermine the stability of the whole regime. No change is clearly not an option. Uncharacteristically, a series of government about-turns have happened. Large projects approved in Beijing were allowed to be overturned in response to public protests against local land grabs and pollution. In particular, the so-called “Wukan model” of open and fair village elections was daringly promoted by Wang Yang. He is one of China’s rising pro-reform “stars”, now biding his time as a Vice Premier.

It is also instructive that a host of reform proposals in a new 468-page World Bank report (2012) were given the rare imprimatur of the State Council (Development Research Centre). These include the promotion of civil society, the role of the media to monitor governance (if initially only at the local level), and strengthening the rule of law.

Likewise instructive is the recent example of Foxconn, a Taiwanese “original equipment manufacturer” for Apple with 1.2 million workers in mainland China. According to a report in the Financial Times3, the company is allowed to get help from the US-based Fair Labor Association to train workers in voting for representatives on 18,000 union committees. Up to now, all workers on the mainland have been represented by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, a state-backed unelected organ more on the side of the government and the management.

It is reported that Alexis de Tocqueville’s “French Revolution” has been doing the rounds amongst China’s top leadership, including Premier LI Ke-qiang and WANG Qi-shan, the newly-installed anti-graft czar. Fighting corruption was termed a matter of “life or death” for the Party and the nation by both out-going President HU Jin-tao and in-coming President XI Jin-ping at the 18th Party Congress.

The point here is that notwithstanding the “Soviet shadow”, inertia against the momentum of the times will only threaten the whole regime’s survival. So change has to happen and is already happening. More change is about to come.

**On Vested Interests**

The 18th Party Congress was unexpectedly delayed due to the shock of the BO Xi-lai affair. Regardless of factional vested interests, nothing concentrates the mind better than the very survival of the collective leadership. The moment of epiphany arrived that corruption and vested interests must be curbed, if not eradicated, including those represented by monopolistic state-owned enterprises which sap the vitality of the private sector. Indeed, this is one of the major reform recommendations highlighted in the World Bank/Development Research Centre report, of which Premier LI Ke-qiang is known to be a staunch supporter.

As for the military, a series of promotions and reshuffling of top generals took place before President Xi took over the Military Commission chairmanship in a first-of-its-kind complete power transfer at the 18th Party Congress. The Party’s top leadership has reduced its numbers from nine to seven members, downgrading the security and propaganda apparatus below the level of the Politburo Standing Committee. The wings of some powerful vested interests have begun to be clipped.

All these changes are of course not enough to break the so-called “iron quadrangle” of the military, the security apparatus, state-owned enterprises and arch-conservatives. This is not totally unlike the American example of the military-industrial complex forewarned by President Eisenhower or its modern incarnation of

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Capitol Hill, big business and Wall Street.

But in China, change for the better is on the horizon. Vested interests, when push comes to shove, can also trigger reform when whole regime stability is at stake.

**On Aggrieved Nationalism**

The nation’s historical baggage is a reality borne of centuries of painful foreign oppression, which, amongst other deep psychological scars, has resulted, amongst other things, in the territorial disputes simmering today.

Over the past two decades, China has already settled her territorial disputes with Russia, preferring the forging of a semi-ally instead of hardening an implacable enemy along China’s vast northern borders. The power dynamics in the Asia Pacific are more complex, involving geopolitics with America’s recent “Pivot to Asia” and the whole question of vital sea lanes of communication. Territorial disputes there do not lend themselves to quick solution. In any case, territorial integrity is likely to remain a sore point in China’ national psyche not amenable to easy compromise.

On the international front, China has simply grown too big to ignore her own role in the global commons. The country is the largest contributor of peace-keeping forces amongst Permanent Members of the Security Council. She is instrumental in brokering the six-party talks on North Korea and is recently beginning to take a keener interest in addressing conflicts in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, China is embarking on a mission to promote the country’s soft-power, including Confucianism and other aspects of China’s culture and heritage. However, notwithstanding the gravitas of China’s economy and growing world-wide interests in the Chinese language, doubts remain about the merits of the so-called Beijing Consensus, even though China has repeatedly stressed that her own unique development model is not meant to be copied. In any case, until the country succeeds in showcasing a heart and soul that appeal to the spirit of the times, China is unlikely to have many unreserved followers.

In the final analysis, however, despite warts and all, *The Economist* in its front cover article of 27 October 2012, states that

> In the past 10 years under the current leader, HU Jin-tao, the economy has quadrupled in size in dollar terms. A new (though rudimentary) social safety net provides 95% of all Chinese with some kind of health coverage, up from just 15% in 2000. Across the world, China is seen as second in status and influence only to America. (The Economist, 2012)

A recent Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report (2012) suggests that “China will overtake the eurozone (in purchasing power parity terms) in 2012 and the US within the next four years, to become the largest economy in the world. By 2060… the combined GDP of China (27.8%) and India (18.2%) will be larger than that of the OECD… the total output of China, India and the rest of the developing world (57.7%) will be greater than that of developed OECD and (other) non-OECD countries (combined) (42.3%)”.

So, huge challenges and problems notwithstanding, China’s rise seems inexorable. It may still be too early to tell how China will evolve. But what is certain is that an epochal tide is clearly turning.

**Turning of the Tide**

Benn Steil’s recent book *The Battle of Bretton Woods* (2013), expounds on how the world’s tide last
turned shortly before the end of the Second World War. At that time the old superpower Britain saw its strengths ebbing as the British Empire crumbled in India, the Middle East and other parts of the world. Due to War commitments and the destruction of its economy at home and abroad, Britain became highly indebted to the then-rising superpower, the United States. The Bretton Woods negotiations ended with the dismantling of the old Sterling Area in favor of free trade dominated by the United States and the dollar, sidelining the British Pound. This paved the way for subsequent years of American supremacy, which was later consolidated in 1989 with the collapse of the former USSR.

Now the tide is turning the other way, from the West to the East, from the developed to the developing countries, particularly China, and from US overall dominance to multilateralism, notwithstanding views in some quarters that the 21st will still remain essentially an American Century (Mahbubani, 2013). Although China is for now many years behind the United States in comprehensive world power, China’s indisputable ascendancy is perhaps exemplified by a recent research finding that the Renminbi (RMB), the Chinese yuan, has already eclipsed the dollar as an ipso facto “reference currency”. More currencies now move in tandem with the RMB than with the greenback (Subramanian, 2012).

This is not surprising as China is at the heart of the world’s globalized production and value chain. The situation is unlikely to change substantially even with “re-shoring” based on robotics and 3-D printing. For it would be immensely difficult to replicate a vast and efficient production base as China, supported by an efficient and comprehensive transportation infrastructure with a global reach. Moreover, China is also beginning to embrace 3-D printing technologies where appropriate, for example, in aeronautics.

The eclipse is also helped by China’s strategy of hastening the RMB’s internationalization, through currency swaps, use of the RMB for international settlements, and issuance of RMB-denominated bonds and other financial instruments. China’s State Council has recently called for a detailed roadmap to achieve full convertibility of the RMB by 2015. Pending this eventuality, some countries, including Australia and Japan, have already allocated a small percentage of their foreign currency reserves (5% in the case of Australia) to the RMB.

Naturally, even with full convertibility, the RMB is unlikely to displace the dominant role of the US dollar anytime soon. However, even if the RMB becomes just one of several major international reserve currencies like the euro, the British Pound or the Japanese yen, the change in world dynamics is likely to be dramatic because of the sheer size of the Chinese economy. This is likely to be compounded by restrained or reduced investments by China in US treasuries. There seems an on-going attempt to get out of what Paul Krugman, Nobel laureate in economics and New York Times columnist, calls “China’s dollar trap” (Krugman, 2009).

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4 His remark is insightful that “China… remains largely a closed society (but with) an open mind while the United States is an open society with a closed mind”: referring to the blind belief in some quarters that American dominance will remain unchanged.
6 According to Krugman (2009), in order to manage excessive surpluses, China is locked into the trap of investing so much in US treasuries that any hasty withdrawal will see the value of treasuries and the greenback plummet, hurting China most of all. In an article Our Currency, Your Problem dated 30 April, 2005 for the Hoover Institution, Harvard University Professor Niall Ferguson reckoned that the Bush administration’s combination of tax cuts and a global war on terror was being financed with a multibillion-dollar overdraft facility at the People’s Bank of China (through China’s huge purchase of Treasury bills), a kind of Chinese ‘tribute’ to the “American Empire”. Retrieved May 28, 2013, from http://www.hoover.org/publications/hoover-digest/article/6386
Re-configured Geopolitics

According to the National Intelligence Report—Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World (Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World, 2008) released in November 2008, while America’s global leadership is likely to remain, its capacity to lead is declining, in the wake of the financial crises and wars in the Middle East. A host of rival powers is rising, including state and non-state actors, which necessitate America’s working more closely with allies and non-allies in maintaining world order. This Report heralded the launch by former Secretary Hilary Clinton of America’s “Pacific Century” which sees the United States returning to the Asia Pacific (Clinton, 2013). The term “Pivot to Asia” is now being very carefully avoided. According to Zbigniew Brzezinski, a doyen in foreign policy, President Obama has never used this terminology. Nevertheless, no matter what it is called, following the winding down of American entanglement in the Middle East, this new strategy represents a re-configuration of American assets to the Asia Pacific, a theatre which has been under China’s growing influence in recent years but now considered most vital to US interest.

This reconfiguration has taken the form of boosting regional military, diplomatic and economic ties with a host of countries neighboring China, including the launch of a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which, tellingly, initially excludes China. In response, China has supported a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) without the United States. This comprises the 10 ASEAN Members and its Free Trade Agreement Partners (Australia, China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand). The United States has also strengthened its military and other exchanges with Australia and India, which China understandably interprets as part a deliberate China encirclement or containment strategy.

Redoubled American military support has emboldened a number of Asian countries with long-standing territorial disputes with China. These include Japan over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands in the East China Sea and Philippines and Vietnam over the Spratlys and Paracels in the South China Sea.

For China, not only do these waters contain vast strategic resources, they hold critical Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) for China’s maritime trade and energy import from the Middle East and other regions. What is more, as explained above, territorial integrity is at the heart of China’s national psyche. So it is no wonder that China is mounting a robust diplomatic and civilian-military response in these troubled waters.

Unfortunately, this comes at a time of resurgent Japanese right-wing politics, capitalizing their political popularity to build a more independently-minded and powerful Japan. Japan’s wartime past is being ignored or re-interpreted. A non-repentant stance is adopted on homage to the Yakuusi Shrine housing Japan’s war dead and Class A War Criminals. An evasive attitude is displayed over the highly emotionally-charged issue of Asia’s “Comfort Women” for the Japanese Imperial Army.

These right-wing leanings have translated into gung-ho foreign, economic and monetary policies. The latest beggar-thy-neighbor strategy of boosting Japan’s economy through a massive devaluation of the Japanese yen is an example. There are also political manoeuvres to pave the way for transforming Japan’s post-war defence set-up into a more robust military force expected of a “normal” power of the gravitas of Japan.

As a result, relations with China and South Korea have plummeted and alarming signals are being

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received by Japan’s neighbors whose peoples still remember their sufferings under Japanese imperialism. Notwithstanding appearances, tension in the region remains high.

The Importance of Central Asia to China’s Energy Security

China is just beginning to build a blue-water navy with the launch of her first (and outdated) aircraft carrier. Her naval power projection is many decades behind that of the United States. Nevertheless, China’s military capabilities are convincing and are seen as increasingly effective for operations over Taiwan. However, they are hardly adequate if China’s energy supply sea lanes are to be comprehensively safeguarded. These stretch from the Malacca Strait all the way to the Indian Ocean and beyond, including passage through the Strait of Hormuz near Iran, with multiple choke points beyond China’s control.

To ensure energy security, on which China’s continued economic development depends, the country has in recent years developed a network of gas and oil pipelines through China-receptive countries in Central Asia (Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) and in southwest Asia (Pakistan and Myanmar (Gronholt-Pedersen, 2013). According to a report in the Jamestown Foundation (Weitz, 2013), China is building a Eurasian transportation network of rail, highways, and maritime routes. These connect the port of Gwadar in Pakistan to the oil fields in Iran overland and onwards to the energy pipelines in Xinjiang province. There the energy supply is further transmitted to China’s industrial eastern seaboard. Given China’s substantial interest in energy resources in Afghanistan (Petersen, 2013), this Eurasian energy network is likely to assume even greater importance.

A significant anchor of China’s energy security is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). It was first set up by China and Russia to fight regional terrorism when both countries were increasingly alarmed with “separatist” terrorism. After 9/11, this anti-terrorism remit had a great deal of resonance with the United States. As world geopolitics wore on, the SCO was taking on a wider and wider geographical scope, extending well beyond Central Asia, as well as a greatly expanded agenda encompassing trade, economic, financial, cultural, diplomatic and non-terrorism related military exchanges. As its content and international sphere grew, more and more countries want to join in one form or another. Now, India, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, and Mongolia are Observers; Turkey, Belarus, and Sri Lanka are Dialogue Members; and ASEAN, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Turkmenistan, are Guest Attendees. Turkey, for one, is interested in becoming a full Member.

What distinguishes the SCO is the significant Islamic representation. At a time of the rise of Islam worldwide, both as a geopolitical force and as growing Islamic economies, this gives the SCO special gravitas to balance the influence of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the region.

The Growing Importance of Africa to China

Africa accounts for a third of China’s crude oil imports and is rich in largely unexploited mineral and other resources. China’s footprint in Africa has now become ubiquitous. For the first time in many centuries, in 2012 China surpassed the United States as Africa’s largest trading partner with a two-way trade worth $200 billion. China’s state-sponsored financial loans together with various forms of aid, grants, and investments have out-sized those of the World Bank. China’s state-run radio and TV network has the largest number of bureaus in Africa than any other country. There are now 28 Confucius Institutes in Africa, and still counting, as well as a “Peace Corp” type program for Chinese young volunteers.
What is more, there are eight extensive “special economic zones” throughout Africa which are set up by various African states with China’s help and management: two in Zambia, two in Nigeria, one in Egypt, one in Ethiopia, one in Tanzania, and one in Mauritius. Extractive industries are likely to remain a key feature except Mauritius, where the emphasis is on building a trading and finance hub in the Indian Ocean. Nevertheless, these zones are open to a host of other investments creating local skills and jobs, including those no longer viable in other parts of the world, including China. Their operations are based on market competition and cooperation with local and international businesses, supported by local government incentives.

China’s historical engagement with Africa has undergone many twists and turns, from the early Maoist days of exporting communism, through the Cold War period of rivalry with the former USSR, to winning support for the One China Policy against the influence of Taiwan, to what is now a confident and leading role in helping to re-build much needed health, education, transport and power infrastructure for the whole of Africa. This is, however, accompanied by problems of perceived insensitivity over government corruption, human rights violations, environmental pillage, undesirable labor practices, lack of corporate social responsibility, destruction of local informal businesses, impact on local jobs and a host of other social and economic issues. Some of these opportunities and problems are outlined in China and Africa: A Century of Engagement (Shinn, & Eisenman, 2012) and The Dragon’s Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa (Brautigam, 2009).

The Idea of a BRICS Development Bank

At a declaration on 27 March 2013 concluding their summit in Durban, South Africa, the BRICS countries agreed to set up a BRICS development bank primarily aimed at Africa. It is too soon to conclude whether the joint venture amongst the BRICS countries can work, as each has its own agenda and some mutual rivalry. The devil is in the detail, still to be hampered out.

Nevertheless, each BRICS member is already proactively engaged in the young continent. If successful, this new BRICS initiative may turn out to be an alternative to balance against the World Bank and the IMF. The latter are often viewed by some developing countries as West-dominated Bretton Woods institutions geared towards the Washington Consensus model of fast-track liberalization and democratization, usually before local conditions are ripe. Past experience is littered with glaring examples of failures as in the case of Argentina during 1999-2002 and Asia during the financial crisis of 1997-1998.

Though their priorities may differ, it is likely that BRICS Members can still bind where it suits them. Given deep pockets and increasing weight in Africa and the rest of the developing world, China is likely to try to win the rapport of the other BRICS members to make the proposed new development bank a credible success story.

China’s Military and Security Developments 2013

The US Department of Defense has released its 2013 Annual Report to Congress on the state and development of China’s military. According to the comprehensive report, China has dramatically improved a wide-range of military capabilities including Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD), C4ISR (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance), survivable long-range nuclear

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deterrence, nuclear submarines, guided missiles, stealth fighters, complex-environment information-warfare (IW), cyber warfare, space warfare, and civil-military integration.

The Pentagon Report nevertheless notes that China’s military is primarily defensive, in particular over Taiwan and its other territorial claims in the East and South China Seas, as well as guarding vital SLOC. The latter, however, would necessitate the expansion of China’s blue-water navy and military projection to distant shores, supported by the development of longer-range transport planes.

Professor Andrew Erickson of the Naval Defense College offers an in-depth assessment of China’s military fortes (Erickson, 2013). This highlights China’s nuclear-powered ballistic-missile submarines (SSBNs), nuclear attack submarines, the world’s only long-range anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs) with a range over 1,500 km, and a probable program of building multiple aircraft carriers. These are said to aim at distant “access points” in the form of agreements for re-fuelling, replenishment, crew rest, and low-level maintenance, possibly in the Malacca, Lombok and Sunda Straits, some of the “choke points” along China’s vital sea lanes. The development of a credible blue-water navy is supported by China’s world-class shipbuilding and nanotechnology capabilities.

The Report also highlights the efforts of China’s military to provide common goods such as anti-piracy, UN peace-keeping operations, and confidence-building joint military exchanges and exercises, including joint operations with the United States and other non-allied nations.

There is little doubt that China now possesses credible deterrence against any aggression, especially critical threats to her “core interests” of national security, territorial integrity, regime stability, and economic development.

The Report also refers to China’s identification of the first two decades of the 21st century as a rare window of opportunity to grow “Comprehensive National Power” in order to attain its status as a global power. It hints at China’s increasing interest and capability in projecting power further afield.

The Report emphasizes the need for the United States to remain vigilant in managing US-China relations during China’s ascendance in order to safeguard American interests as well as world peace and regional stability in the Asia Pacific.

**Brzezinski’s Strategic Vision of Global Re-balancing**

In the transformed world of the 21st century, Brzezinski offers a grand strategy for the United States to advance its national interest in his new book “Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power” (Brzezinski, 2012).

There are two main strands in Brzezinski’s Strategic Vision. The first is that he sees Europe as an inseparable apart of a Western whole which underpins US leadership. He postulates that the US should act as “promoter and guarantor” of a renewed “Larger West” by drawing Russia and Turkey into the European Union (EU) through gradual democratization and eventual conformity with Western norms. Paving the way for Russia to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) would be part of this trajectory. At the same time, rather than downplaying Europe, he emphasizes the importance of deepening the unification of the EU through fostering close cooperation among the key players of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. The second, and inter-related, strand is the “Complex East”, where US best interest would be served by acting as “regional balancer”, “replicating the role played by the United Kingdom in intra-European politics during the nineteenth
and early 20th century”.

Seemingly echoing America’s “Asian pivot”, he suggests that the United States “should help Asian states avoid a struggle for regional domination by mediating conflicts and offsetting power imbalances among potential rivals”.

However, contrary to the popular rhetoric of American military power projection in the Asia-Pacific, he points out that “the United States must recognize that stability in Asia can no longer be imposed by a non-Asian power, least of all by the direct application of US military power. Indeed, US efforts to buttress Asian stability could prove self-defeating, propelling Washington into a costly repeat of its recent wars, potentially even resulting in a replay of the tragic events of Europe in the twentieth century. If the United States fashioned an anti-Chinese alliance with India (or, less likely, with Vietnam) or promoted an anti-Chinese militarization in Japan, it could generate dangerous mutual resentment”. He recognizes that “in the 21st century, geopolitical equilibrium on the Asian mainland cannot depend on external military alliances with non-Asian powers”.

Instead, Brzezinski advocates that America “should respect China’s special historic and geopolitical role in maintaining stability on the Far Eastern mainland. Engaging with China in a dialogue regarding regional stability would not only help reduce the possibility of US-Chinese conflicts but also diminish the probability of miscalculation between China and Japan, or China and India, and even at some point between China and Russia over the resources and independent status of the Central Asian states. Thus, the United States’ balancing engagement in Asia is ultimately in China's interest, as well”.

It is clear that Brzezinski’s Asia consists of a much wider region extending to Central Asia connecting all the way to the “Larger West”.

The lynchpin of this realist strategy is a “US-Japanese-Chinese cooperative triangle” to be nurtured through progressive, but lasting reconciliation between China and Japan, similar to that between France and Germany and between Germany and Poland after World War II. In this context, “the guiding principle of the United States should be to uphold US obligations to Japan and South Korea while not allowing itself to be drawn into a war between Asian powers”.

“In that context, China should not view US support for Japan’s security as a threat, nor should Japan view the pursuit of a closer and more extensive US-Chinese partnership as a danger to its own interests. A deepening triangular relationship could also diminish Japanese concerns over the yuan’s eventually becoming the world's third reserve currency, thereby further consolidating China's stake in the existing international system and mitigating US anxieties over China’s future role”.

What is perhaps the most striking in Brzezinski’s China engagement strategy is his recognition of and suggestions for adopting a more accommodative approach to the three sticking points in US-China relations: US reconnaissance operations on the edges of China’s territorial waters or within China’s economic zone; reciprocal trust-building manoeuvres over US commitments to Japan and South Korea; and a feasible long-term solution over Taiwan in the light of improving cross-Strait relations. Brzezinski suggests that the first of these sticking points be resolved in the near future, the second over the course of the next several years, and the third probably within a decade or so.

Brzezinski’s whole rationale is summarized in his opening remarks in his article in *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2012, *Balancing the East, Upgrading the West—US Grand Strategy in an Age of Upheaval*)
The United States’ central challenge over the next several decades is to revitalize itself, while promoting a larger West and buttressing a complex balance in the East that can accommodate China’s rising global status. A successful US effort to enlarge the West, making it the world’s most stable and democratic zone, would seek to combine power with principle. A cooperative larger West—extending from North America and Europe through Eurasia (by eventually embracing Russia and Turkey), all the way to Japan and South Korea—would enhance the appeal of the West’s core principles for other cultures, thus encouraging the gradual emergence of a universal democratic political culture.

Drawing distinction from the historical geopolitics governing the separate fates of the Eastern and Western Roman Empires, Brzezinski opines that in a globalized and inter-connected world, “the West and the East cannot keep aloof from each other: their relationship can only be either reciprocally cooperative or mutually damaging”.

It is no coincidence that at this critical juncture of relations between the world’s extant superpower and its perceived challenger, President Obama and President XI Jinping chose to meet in a California ranch during 7-8 June. The unspoken agenda is to map out a new mode of engagement to avoid the risks of repeating past world calamities during former periods of global power transition.

**Ancient Sino-Turkish Silk Road Links**

According to Rosita Dellios and Nadir Kemal Yilmaz of Bond University in *Sino-Turkish Relations in a Globalizing Asia Pacific* (Dellios & Yilmaz, 2008), the early Toba tribe of Turkish-Mongol extraction helped found China’s Northern Wei Dynasty in A.D. 386, reuniting China across the northern steppes, the Tarim basin and the North China Plain. Sino-Turkish families were prominent amongst the imperial elite during China’s heyday in the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618-906). From the second century B.C. to the 15th century, the old Silk Road carried busy trade between the China’s ancient capital Xi’an and the eastern capital of the Christian world, Constantinople, later Istanbul in the Ottoman Empire. Caravans transported silk and other luxury goods from the Middle Kingdom in exchange for cosmetics, amber, carpets and other products. Exchanges of religious culture such as Buddhism and Islam and of technology such as paper and glass also took place.

**Philosophical Affinities**

According to the Bond University authors, there is much common ground between China’s Daoism and Turkish Sufism (Dellios & Yilmaz, 2008). Their commonality lies in a willingness to deny pre-conceived notions, a kind of heuristic constructivism, and a yin-yang correlativity in which the importance of identities and understanding is stressed. “A nation’s identity is seen as being a work-in-progress through mutual interaction and norm forming” that resists Western scientific predictions (Dellios & Yilmaz, 2008). This common philosophical leaning which sets great store on interaction with other countries and cultures resonates with both countries’ adaptive strategies in an “amorphous world of globalization”.

**Recent Developments in Turkish-China and China-Middle East Politics and Diplomacy**

Recent high-level visits from Turkey included President Abdullah Gul’s two-day visit to Xi’an, starting point of the ancient Silk Road and capital of China’s north-western Shaanxi Province, to receive an honorary Ph.D., granted by China’s Northwest University in late June, 2009. This was the first by a Turkish president in 14 years.

However, shortly afterwards, when China cracked down on the Uighur riots in Xinjiang in July 2009,
Ankara reacted strongly by openly condemning the suppression as a “near genocide”. This was in keeping with Turkey’s de facto guardianship of rights of ethnic Turkic peoples in the Caucasus and Central Asia after the breakup of the Soviet Union. This served to highlight one of Turkey’s few sticking points against China.

Nevertheless, not long afterwards, Chinese Premier WEN Jia-bao paid a three-day official visit to Turkey on October 7-10, 2010, the final stop of WEN’s European tour that included Greece, Belgium, and Italy. Lauding the start of a new “strategic partnership”, the Chinese Premier announced a joint goal to increase bilateral trade from $17 billion to $50 billion by 2015 and $100 billion by 2020. The China Railway Construction Corporation (CRSS) is constructing a high-speed rail link between Ankara and Istanbul. Prime Minister Erdogan said Turkey intended to build a railway connecting Istanbul to Beijing as part of China’s grand plan to connect China by rail to Western Europe via Central Asia and Turkey.

The Chinese Premier’s visit was quickly kept up by the visit of Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu to China from October 28 to November 4, 2010. Davutoglu announced that Turkey plans to expand its diplomatic presence across China by adding more consulates. He appealed to China’s core interests by reaffirming Ankara’s support of China’s “One China Policy” and Turkey’s commitment to target any activities occurring in Turkey that may threaten China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, alluding to China’s worries over Uighur separatists operating in other countries.

According to Chris Sambelis of the Jamestown Foundation (Sambelis, 2011), Davutoglu’s visit followed on the heels of an unprecedented participation by the People’s Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) in a NATO aerial military exercise, code named “Anatolian Eagle” in the central Anatolian region of Konya from 20 September to 4 October, 2010. This was the first time China’s military was involved in such operations on NATO soil. It is noteworthy that the United States and Israel, quite exceptionally, did not participate in this joint NATO exercise. This shows that Turkey’s NATO membership does not necessarily preclude closer Turkish-China military relations.

However, differences of opinion or approach to global issues remain between Ankara and Beijing over such issues as the Arab Spring and Syria. In the case of Syria, for example, China prefers adopting a more holistic approach, often siding with Russia, while Turkey leans on the side of its NATO ally the United States.

On the question of Iran, however, China’s different approach from the US position could draw Beijing closer to Ankara, according to the Jamestown Foundation author. Apart from a consistent preference for diplomacy rather than resort to coercive force, China has no intention of jeopardizing good relations with her key energy supplier in the Middle East. On the question of Iran, Davutoglu declared during his Beijing visit that “Our views are very close”. In this regard, Beijing’s efforts to court Ankara are part of a larger strategy to counter Washington’s moves in East Asia and other theatres where it sees its interests threatened.

Two ground-breaking top level visits took place in 2012 in cementing Turkish-China relations—the Turkey visit of former Vice President (now President) of the People’s Republic of China in February 2012 and Prime Minister Erdoğan’s China visit in April 2012, the first by a Turkish Prime Minister in 27 years. These coincided with a “Year of China” in Turkey 2012, to be followed by a “Year of Turkey” in China commencing March, 2013. During his China visit, in addition to promoting trade and tourism, Erdogan urged Chinese leaders to put pressure on Syria to end the violence.

All these diplomatic tangos suggest that differences between Turkey and China pale in comparison with
the huge strategic benefits to both countries from cementing closer ties and from adopting a more flexible and independently-minded direction at a time of rapid change in the world’s geopolitical landscape.

It was an eye-opener that for the first time in recent history, President XI Jinping hosted Palestinian President Abbas on 6th and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu on 9 May, 2013. This suggests a new Chinese initiative to take a more proactive role in the global commons by offering to help crack the toughest nut in Middle East affairs.

All the above developments augur well that a new era on Turkish-China foreign relations may be dawning as the world’s gravitas is shifting back to the silk road that bound ancient civilizations together.

**Ten Possible Projects for Turkish-China Cooperation**

As explained above, China remains anxious in gaining access to land-transit-based and less geopolitically-vulnerable commodities and energy supply routes. Additionally, China is likely to continue to seek more outward investment opportunities for her surplus capital to unlock it from a dollar trap of US treasuries. Against this background, the following 10 propositions may present win-win benefits for Turkish-China cooperation.

**A New Eurasian Land Bridge**

In a paper dated 27 April 2012 (Engdahl, 2012) for the Centre for Research on Globalization, F. William Engdahl outlines a proposed monumental railway project linking the Port of Shenzhen (near Hong Kong) to Kunming in Western China and onwards to Myanmar, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Iran, as well as across Turkey to Rotterdam. Known as the Third Eurasian Land Bridge, the proposed rail network will cross 20 countries in Asia and Europe and have a total length of about 15,000 kilometers, 3,000 to 6,000 kilometers shorter than the sea route via the Indian Ocean from the southeast coast through the Malacca Straits. The total annual trade volume of the regions the route passes through was nearly US$300 billion in 2009. Ultimately the plan is for a branch line that would start in Turkey, cross Syria and Palestine, and end in Egypt, facilitating transportation from China to Africa. This is slated to be part of a grand Chinese vision to connect her dense inland rail connections, including the world’s longest high-speed rail network, across the Eurasian Continent, to the Middle East, Western Europe, and Africa. The vision is breathtaking. It is understood that this project was discussed with China’s previous Premier WEN Jia-bao during President Erdogan’s visit to Beijing in April, 2012. If realized, this grand project would help Turkey to lock into the world’s most dynamic market which is also soon to become the world’s largest economy.

At the centre of the world supply and production chain China is supported by a host of the world’s top container ports along her eastern seaboard. Investment in the Port of Bosphorus at the hub of a burgeoning Eurasian economy should be immensely attractive to China’s leading port operators and container port owners.

The Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia came into force on January 1, 2010. This will greatly enhance the commercial viability of the 5,000-kilometre highway through Kazakhstan linking China to Europe. This is likely to present opportunities for Turkish and Chinese investments in the physical

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9 The First Eurasian Land Bridge runs through Russia, connecting Rotterdam to Russia’s Trans-Siberian Railway across 13,000 kilometres. The Second Eurasian Land Bridge runs 10,900 kilometers including 4100 kilometers in China, parallel to one of the ancient routes of the Silk Road, linking Kazakhstan and onwards via Russia and Belarus over Poland to the markets of the European Union.
infrastructure and logistics along this vibrant economic corridor.

With the growth worldwide of mobile and other forms of telecommunication, investment in this sector in the dynamic Eurasian region is likely to reap handsome dividends as it takes off economically in the coming decades.

According to Credit Suisse (2013), many of the Central Asian countries along the ancient Silk Road have witnessed an economic renaissance since the turn of the millennium, driven by their rich resources. These include Kazakhstan which is by far the region’s best endowed in oil and precious metals; Uzbekistan in agriculture, gold and natural Gas (1% of global reserve); and Tajikistan. Although Tajikistan relies heavily on its production of cotton and aluminium, its real competitive advantage lies in the vast water supply in its glaciers, lakes, rivers, underground sources, as well as in its nine operational reservoirs containing 15.34 cubic kilometers of water. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), these enormous water reserves represent four percent of the entire world’s hydroelectric potential with 520 billion kilowatt hour (kWh) of electricity expected annually for export. Tajikistan has also an abundance of mineral deposits of antimony, mercury, zinc, silver and rock salt.

Istanbul could take advantage of the RMB’s internationalization to grow its market share in RMB-based financial instruments including bonds and commercial papers. It may consider expanding the scope of currency swaps and using the RMB for trade settlements with China. Like Japan and Australia, a small percentage of foreign currency reserve may be denominated in the RMB. These initiatives should strengthen the financial links between Turkey and China and help establish Istanbul as a regional financial centre.

China is likely to take a leading role in the establishment of an agreed BRICS development bank targeting Africa initially. One of the likely future initiative of the bank is to seek the participation of commercial capital. As Africa is on the prowl and Turkey has a growing interest in the dynamic continent, the BRICS bank is likely to offer opportunities for Turkish investments on specific projects.

One of the key China initiatives in Africa in the coming decades is the development of “special economic zones” in a host of countries including Egypt, Nigeria, Mauritius (for trade and finance), Tanzania, Ethiopia and Gambia. These are open to foreign investments in a host of manufacturing industries not limited to oil and minerals. Turkish investments in these zones in partnership with China are likely to yield commercial as well as diplomatic dividends

According to the World Tourism Organization, China’s outbound tourism, already the world’s largest in number of visitors, will reach 100 million visitors by 2015, earlier than the original expectation of 2020. China’s tourists now top the world in spending, amounting to $102 billion in 2012. Turkey is rich in tourist destinations, including many World Heritage sites. It should stand a good chance of attracting more Chinese tourists through improved marketing, upgraded transport facilities, more China-friendly services as well as more imaginative packages e.g. combining sight-seeing in convenient-located venues in neighboring countries.

On the academic, research and cultural fronts, there are likewise many opportunities for cooperation, such as exchange programs and joint research projects between universities; promoting China-Turkish studies, cultural exhibitions, sister-city relationships, joint youth festivals; and establishing a national-level prestigious Turkish think-tank on contemporary China studies.
Conclusion

From time immemorial, Turkey and China have been linked by blood-line, a heuristic constructionist mindset, trade along the historic Silk Road, and an adaptable approach to foreign relations in keeping with the times. China has vowed to attain the status of a middle-income country with per capita income increasing from $5,500 to $10,000 by 2020. Turkey is aiming at renaissance by 2023, the hundredth anniversary of modern Turkey under Ataturk. As the world is re-balancing amidst epochal changes with Eurasia becoming much more economically and strategically important, both Turkey and China would stand to gain enormously from each other in exploring and pursuing avenues for greater cooperation as partners on a Silk Road to Renaissance.

References


