Israel's Attitude towards the Palestinian Non-Violent Resistance Movement: A Practice-Oriented Analysis of Israel's Security of Identity

RESEARCH QUESTION

Why is Israel using forceful measures against the Palestinian non-violent resistance movement?

HYPOTHESIS

Israel's answer to the Palestinian non-violent resistance movement is rooted in the security practices of Israel, which build upon the identity narrative of the Israeli state. While presenting strategic culture as a reflection of Israel's effort to defend its identity, the paper stresses that state ontological security is maintained through the routinised practices of Israeli security actors.

OBJECTIVES

- To specify the role of *routinisation/ routinised practices* in Ontological Security Theory (OST) through an actor-oriented analysis of the (security) practices that support the safeguarding of state identity;
- To bridge the gap between OST and strategic culture;
- To offer a sociological perspective on the engagement of the Israeli security elites and professionals with the Palestinian non-violent resistance movement;

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rooted in psychiatry and sociology, Ontological Security Theory represents a recent effort in the study of post-Cold War security. Coined by R.D. Laing, ontological security refers to individuals' endeavor to maintain a sense of self through routinised relations and through mechanisms that challenge identity threats.[1] Anthony Giddens believes individuals maintain ontological security by developing a so-called 'trust-system' that helps them to face the challenges of modernity.[2]

In International Relations, ontological security divides scholars in two opposing camps. While some authors argue that states experience ontological (in)security, others believe that, in fact, states are a source of ontological (in)security. Jennifer Mitzen upgrades ontological security at the state-level and offers an alternative explanation for state security dilemma. While states maintain security of identity through routinised relations with significant others, breaking from these relations determines states to experience ontological insecurity. Consequently, states might not want to escape from the security dilemma.[3] Amir Lupovici, Felix Berenskoetter and Bastian Giegerich build upon Mitzen's insights. Lupovici claims that states experience ontological dissonance, if measures taken to deal with identity threats conflict one with another.[4] Felix Berenskoetter and Bastian Giegerich explain Germany's decision to support the development of the European Security and Defense Policy as means to safeguard its ontological identity.[5] Finally, Jennifer Mitzen argues that routinised

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[1] R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (London: Penguin Classics, 2010).

[2] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

[3] Jennifer Mitzen, "Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma," *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no.3 (2006): 341-70.

[4] Amir Lupovici, "Ontological Dissonance, Clashing Identities and Israel's Unilateral Steps Towards the Palestinians," *Review of International Studies* 38, no.4 (2012): 809-33.

[5] Felix Berenskoetter and Bastian Giegerich, "From NATO to ESDP: A Social Constructivist Analysis of German Strategic Adjustment after the End of the Cold War," *Security Studies* 19, no.3 (2010): 407-52.

interactions between European Union Member States' officials that date back to the 1970s support the European civilian identity whereas the development of the European military capacity does not endanger Europe's normative power.[6]

Brent J. Steele distances from Mitzen and authors alike by claiming that state identity is maintained through a continuous (re)enactment of state's autobiographical narrative rooted in national history and past experiences. By introducing the concepts of 'shame' and 'honor' and favouring a discursive approach on ontological security, Steele explains events such as the British neutrality in the American Civil War, the launching of humanitarian interventions, and the American soldiers' practice of torture against terrorists.[7] Building on Steele, Ayse Zarakol claims that Japan and Turkey regard the apology for the Second World War crimes and respectively, the Armenian genocide as a shameful action that challenges their self-proclaimed identity of civilized and Westernized state.[8] Through a gender-oriented critique, Will K. Delehanty and Brent J. Steele argue that state narratives are gendered masculine through a process of 'internal othering,' which marginalizes feminine state narratives.[9]

Other scholars prefer an individual-oriented perspective on ontological security. While Jef Huysmans argues that internal others (strangers) such as illegal immigrants threaten individuals' ontological security,[10] Catarina Kinnvall believes individuals attach to collective identities such as religion or nationalism in order to secure their identity against the threat of globalization.[11] Alanna Krolikowski and Stuart Croft claim that states' failure to provide ontological security for individuals determines the emergence of phenomena such as the Chinese nationalism or the securitization of British Muslims.[12]

Apart from the debate that underpins OST, this project focuses on the routinised practices that sustain security of identity. While ontological security scholarship relies on the concept of routinisation, little has been said on the form and ways of observing the routinised practices, which in turn uphold the state narrative. Consequently, this project advocates an actor-oriented study of ontological security while arguing that state's security of identity is sustained through individuals' corresponding practices, routines and habits.

A caveat. As states experience multiple identities and an infinite number of practices support their ontological security, the paper narrows down the research at one of the defining characters of the state, *i.e.* legitimate use of force, and its strategic culture. Therefore, the current project scrutinises the practices that uphold the security of state identity through Pierre Bourdieu's sociological lens of *habitus* and *field*.

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[6] Jennifer Mitzen, "Anchoring Europe's civilizing identity: habits, capabilities, and ontological security," *Journal of European Public Policy* 13, no.2 (2006): 270-85.

[7] Brent J. Steele, "Ontological Security and the power of self-identity: British neutrality and the Civil War," *Review of International Studies* 31 (2005): 519-40; Id., *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State* (London: Routledge, 2008); Id., "Making Words Matter: The Asian Tsunami, Darfur, and 'Reflexive Discourse' in International Politics," *International Studies Quarterly* 51, no.4 (2007): 901-25; Id., Brent J. Steele, "'Ideals that were never really in our possession': Torture, Honor and US Identity," *International Relations* 22, no.2 (2008): 243-61.

[8] Ayse Zarakol, "Ontological (In)Security and State Denial of Historical Crimes: Turkey and Japan," *International Relations* 24, no.1 (2010): 3-23.

[9] William K. Delehanty, "Engaging the narrative in ontological (in)security theory: insights from feminist IR," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22, no.3 (2009): 523-40.

[10] Jef Huysmans, "Security! What do you mean? From concept to thick signifier," *European Journal of International Relations* 4 (1998): 226-55.

[11] Catarina Kinnvall, "Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity and the Search of Ontological Security," *Political Psychology* 25, no.5 (2004): 741-67.

[12] Alanna Krolikowski, "State Personhood in Ontological Security Theories of International Relations and Chinese Nationalism: A Skeptical View," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 2 (2008): 109-33; Stuart Croft, "Constructing Ontological Insecurity: The (In) Securitization of British Muslims," *Contemporary Security Policy* 33, no.2 (2012): 219-35.

RELEVANCE & JUSTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The international community has witnessed, in the past years, a revival of non-violent resistance movement in the Palestinian Occupied Territories, movement that dates back to the 1940s. International and Palestinian activists joined the protests of the International Solidarity Movement or the weekly-organized Friday meetings in the towns of Bi'lin or Nilin in order to demonstrate against the building of the Separation Wall. In a similar vein, activists protest against Israeli settlements or the demolishing of Palestinian houses. The Israeli security forces have met these protests with violence by throwing tear-gas canisters at activists, by firing rubber or real bullets, by arresting or by killing participants.[13] Witnessing a violent episode between the peace activists and the Israeli forces, Dana Butu, a Palestinian lawyer commented: "Nonviolent resistance is the Achilles heel of Israel. When they [Israeli Defense Forces] see nonviolent resistance, soldiers don't know how to act."[14] Inspired by the previous comment, this research project questions: although Israeli security forces do not know how to act, *why do they use force against the Palestinian-based activists?*

In order to answer this question, the paper builds on three strands of literature: OST, strategic culture and the 'practice turn' in International Relations.[15] There is a two-level justification for linking these bodies of literature. Firstly, the paper opens up the study of OST to the strategic culture scholarship by building upon Berenskoetter and Giegerich's observation that "strategic culture is central to the state's ontological security."[16] In spite of this declaratory link, there has been hardly any attempt in building a conceptual bridge between the two theoretical approaches while observing the role of strategic culture in safeguarding state identity. Bringing together OST and strategic culture calls for a refined analysis of security decision-making, behavior and practices by rooting them in state narrative accounts.

Secondly, bringing Pierre Bourdieu in the study of ontological security supports the project's aim to specify the routinised practices that sustain state identity. Through the lens of Bourdieu's *habitus-field* approach, the paper argues that state ontological security is maintained through routinised practices in which security elites and professionals engage while dealing with a security threat. Defined as a "system of durable, transposable dispositions which integrate all past experiences […] predisposed to function as principles which generate and organise practice,"[17] *habitus* refers to a set of schemas, forms of know-how and competences that reflect the place of the actor in a certain *field*.[18] Specifically, actors occupy a specific position in the field, which is defined by rules that are respected and taken for granted by each actor.[19] Therefore, a set of dispositions and positions inform the actors' security behaviour. The behaviour of security professionals and elites reflects a set of

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[13] Charmaine Seitz, "ISM at the Crossroads: The Evolution of the International Solidarity Movement," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 32, no. 3 (2004): 56-67; Polly Pallister-Wilkins, "Radical Ground: Israeli and Palestinian Activists and Joint Protest Against the Wall," *Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest* 8, no.4 (2009): 393-407; Maia Carter Hallward, "Creative Responses to Separation: Israeli and Palestinian Joint Activism in Bi'lin," *Journal of Peace Research* 46, no. 4 (2009): 541-58.

[14] Lourdes Garcia-Navarro, "Palestinians Practice Non-Violent Resistance Movement in West Bank," December 26, 2009, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=121998612>, (accessed January 12, 2013).

[15] The 'practice turn' in International Relations represents a recent scholarly endeavor that draws on the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu and observes the actors' behaviour by looking at the stock of inculcated knowledge that is learnt in and through practice and out of which action becomes possible.

[16] Berenskoetter and Giegerich, *From NATO to ESDP*, 421.

[17] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Id., *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique, précédé de trois études d' ethnologie kabyle* (Paris : Seuil, 2001), 261.

[18] David L. Swarz, "The Sociology of Habit: The Perspective of Pierre Bourdieu," *Occupational Therapy Journal Of Research* 22, no.1 (2002): 62.

[19] Pierre Bourdieu quoted in Vincet Pouliot, "The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities," *International Organizations* 62 (2008): 275.

collective and individual experiences, of practical knowledge, of habits and routines within which actors are socialised and which imbues their social actions.

Finally yet importantly, Israel's case study is important because sheds some light on the features that characterise the management of Israel's internal security and the participation of the Israeli security forces in the policing activities from the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Rooting the behaviour of the security actors in a practice-oriented analysis of ontological security allows for a grounded observation of Israel's security sector and its security culture.

METHODOLOGY

While building the conceptual framework, the paper will rely on content analysis of scholarly articles and books that engage with the strands of literature proposed as theoretical background for this project. The paper engages in an interpretative research while focusing on an in-depth case study analysis: the Israeli security sector engagement with non-violent resistance movement in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In order to forward the empirical study, the paper resorts to scholarly books and articles that focus on the Israeli national security, the sociology of the military, the impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the Israeli society, or address the nexus between Israeli security and state identity. Additionally, the paper will rely on field research while interviewing members of non-violent resistance movement, stakeholders in the security sector of Israel, or members of the civil society in Israel.

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