

MID-EAST e-NEWS

An electronic journal of the Middle East, for those who want to be informed.

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Welcome

This issue is a couple of days late (if you had noticed) due to the pressure of college assignments. I am doing a Thesis on Education in the Arab World, and have been reading a lot of material over the last month. I am particularly interested in whether *rote memorization* is as common in the Middle East as we are led to believe. If any of you have insights in this area, I would love to correspond about it. Are you a teacher, student, parent, and know what “current practice” is in local schools there?

As I wrote the article below Chuck Swindoll was on the radio saying “Christians, keep in touch with the news.” I hope this issue helps!

Email your responses to pkclark@pmbx.net & check the web for back issues.

Islamic Interface – A Religious War?

Last issue we presented a list of ways that religion can be involved in conflict. A summary of these is in the box below. These factors have been numbered (1-6) and placed alongside the

Past wars	1-5	Type of war
1066 Norman Invasion	-	Territorial
1099- Crusades	1	Religious
1337- Hundred Years War	-	Territorial
-1492 Reconquista	1	Religious/Independence
1588 Spanish Armada	1/5	Religious/Political
1642-51 English Civil Wars	3/5	Political/Religious
1776 US Independence	6?	Independence
1898 Spanish-American War	3	Territorial
1912-13 Balkan Wars	3	Independence
1931-45 Sino-Japanese War	3	Territorial
1939-45 WW II	-	Political/Territorial
1950-53 Korean War	2	Political
1957-75 Vietnam War	2	Territorial
1990/91 Gulf War	2	Territorial

1. because the enemy is a different religion?
2. when the enemy *happens* to have a different religion?
3. when opponents can be *identified* by their religion?
4. when the goals of either party will *incidentally* impact their opponents' religious beliefs or practices?
5. when either party *intends* an influence upon their opponent's religious practices?
6. when one party is *defending* their religious beliefs/practices.

1-3: #1 is the strongest, since religion is the key to the conflict; in #2 religion is incidental; in #3 religion may contribute to the conflict.

4-6: #4 is the weakest, since the religious aspect is not primary; in #5 the effect on the opponent's religion is intentional; #6 is similar to #4 or #5 but from the defensive aspect.

historical list of conflicts in the upper part of the table. In some cases religion seems to have had little or no involvement, whereas in other cases it is the ‘prime mover.’

You may disagree with some of the numbers in the list. Maybe I don't know enough about the Hundred Years War, or another? If so, let me know, and we'll amend the list.

One way this can assist us in our discussion of A *Religious War?* is that we can use this comparison of past events to help us in our understanding of the present. Having labeled the conflicts in the list, we can look at the events of today and use similar criteria to decide whether we can consider the present “War on Terror,” or “Gulf War II,” to be a Religious War or not.

Since last week I added #6 to the list, and it might be worth explaining it. If a conflict *intends* to effect changes in the opponent's religious practices (as with #5), then this may be similar to #1, but with the target being a religious practice rather than the religion as a whole. (I think of England banning the practice of Sati in India, or even France/Turkey prohibiting the wearing of head scarves). Even if it is not the *intention* to change the religious practice (as with #4), from the opponent's point of view the practice of their religion is being attacked and their response may be to defend it.

In the next issue we can look at the current conflict(s) through this lens, to help us in our pursuit of an answer to our question.

Jerusalem – Herodian Period

Rome went through three civil wars during the half-century before Jesus' birth. Hyrcanus and Antipater initially supported Pompey in the first (49 BC), but switched allegiances when he lost, and were rewarded by Julius Caesar for their support in the east. When Caesar visited Syria in 48 BC, he appointed Hyrcanus as High Priest, and later, *ethnarch*, and Antipater as procurator of Judea. In 47 BC Antipater's son, Herod, attracted Caesar's favor when he put down a rebellion in Galilee and executed its leader, Ezekias. The Sanhedrin in Jerusalem were angered by this, and attempted to try Herod, sentencing him to death, but the Roman authorities intervened and he was allowed to leave.

When the second civil war broke out (42 BC), after the assassination of Julius Caesar, the Hasmoneans supported Brutus and Cassius against Antonius. Cassius demanded that the Jews raise funds to support him in the war. Amongst those that failed to raise the required amounts were Emmaus and Lydda. Cassius then had their inhabitants sold into slavery. During this period, in 43 BC, Antipater was assassinated, being succeeded by his sons, Herod and Phasael. When Marc Anthony was victorious over Cassius, Herod and Hyrcanus had to rapidly assure him of their full support. Since he was an Idumean, (his family converted to Judaism the previous century) many of the Jewish leaders objected to Herod's rule, however, even after he married into the Hasmonean family, by taking Mariamne as his wife.



Known as the 'Tower of David', this portion of the Citadel was actually constructed by Herod with the top portion being added as a repair by the Crusaders.

During 40 BC the Parthians, from eastern Persia, were attacking Rome's eastern border, and the Hasmonean, Antigonus (Hebrew equivalent, *Mattathiah*), allied himself with them, taking control of Jerusalem. Herod & Phasael were captured, and though Herod escaped, Phasael was killed. Antigonus also cut off the ears of his uncle, Aristobulus (Hebrew, *Judah*), disqualifying him from the office of High Priest, which he had taken illegally. Herod fled to the Romans, and in Rome obtained the approval of Marc Anthony. He returned in 37 BC and with Roman military assistance defeated Antigonus to regain Jerusalem, ruling as king until his death in 1 BC. (Recent research has confirmed this revised date for his death, the earlier date being caused by a misreading of a text of Josephus').

The third civil war was between Octavian (Augustus) and Antonius. Until 31 BC they had together ruled the western and eastern portions of the Empire, but a dispute between them led to war, and Octavian's defeat of Antonius. He and Cleopatra fled to Alexandria, but committed suicide there when they realized that they could not escape Octavian. Herod was allowed to remain as king by Octavian. His territory extended almost as far as Damascus, but was bounded in the south and east by Nabataean territory, which included the southern portion of the Dead Sea and also Damascus.

History of Islam

In Medina

Having won the support of the city of Medina, Muhammad succeeded in uniting its major tribes. He was not, however, successful in converting the Jewish tribes of the city, even after establishing their feast of *Ashura* (Day of Atonement) as an important festival, and directing that the *qibla* (direction of prayer) should be towards Jerusalem. As he realized that they were not going to accept his message, his attitude towards the Jews changed, as we shall see later. The *qibla* was later changed to Mecca from Jerusalem (Qur'an 2:142) and the feast to the month of Ramadan.

It was in Medina (622-630) that the practice began of raiding Mecca trade caravans. This enriched the Muslims and was a challenge to the rival city. A major success by the Meccan commander, Abu Sufyan, at Badr in 624 actually served to strengthen Muhammad's authority in Medina. Taking advantage of this he began the assassination of his opponents in the city, also banning one of the three Jewish tribes from residing in the city. They took their belongings as they left, but when he expelled the second tribe two years later they were prevented from taking their belongings with them. This enriched the Muslims much more than any of their raids ever had.

Abu Sufyan led the Meccans in further assaults on the Muslims, gaining the victory in one, at Uhud in 625, and failing to dislodge Muhammad from behind his defences in Medina in a final assault in 627. Claiming that the third Jewish tribe had plotted with Mecca, Muhammad put all their men to death and sold the women and children into slavery. (Much of this information was obtained from: [Answering Islam](#), Geisler & Saleeb, 2002)

The Sixth Crusade

Between the call for a Fifth Crusade in 1213, and the Sixth in 1228, there were three Popes. Innocent III had been succeeded by Honorius II, and in 1227 Gregory IX became Pope. Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor had been challenging the authority of the Popes, and was excommunicated (though on another pretext) in 1227. Nevertheless he chose to sail for Acre in 1228. Having married the daughter of John of Brienne, Frederick had a claim to Jerusalem, but the princes in Cyprus and Acre did not want him. Two orders of knights, the Templars and the Hospitallers also wanted nothing to do with him.

Frederick took advantage, however, of Ayyubid politics in 1229, by allying with Al-Kamil (of Egypt) against Al-Kamil's son, who held Palestine in rebellion against his father. As part of this February 18th agreement, Frederick was able to take control of Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth. He was not allowed to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, but he was able to enter the city as King.

Frederick left Jerusalem before a year elapsed, with more pressing duties at home. The treaty elapsed in 1239, and in 1244 the Mamelukes of Cairo overthrew the Ayyubids, occupying Jerusalem and Syria and eventually pushing the last Crusaders out of the region.



The Knights Templar in battle. These orders of knights were originally established to protect pilgrims in the Holy Land.

Background

The assassination of Lebanese ex-Prime Minister Rafik Hariri last week has been blamed on Syria, but this has not been confirmed. Hariri and his construction company were responsible for much of the reconstruction of Beirut since the civil war. His assassination raised concerns of whether Lebanon was going to slide once more into sectarian conflict, but the crowds that gathered outside parliament over the last week suggest that his death might do more to bind the Lebanese together than to divide them. The whole country seems to have become united behind the call for Syria to withdraw its presence from Lebanon – in addition to the 14,000 troops it has, Syria's dominance of Lebanese politics and the presence of its secret police in the country are a concern for Lebanese citizens.

Demonstrators had been warned that congregating in public would be banned, but they gathered nevertheless, and were seen decorating with red roses the paratroopers deployed to keep order. Their campaign was surprisingly successful on Monday, when the current Prime Minister (installed at Syria's orders when Hariri resigned last year) himself resigned. The whole government then resigned en masse.

There are factions that still want Syria to remain in Lebanon. The protesters include Christian (primarily Maronite), Druze (a Muslim sect) and also Sunni. That these disparate groups are uniting is encouraging for Lebanon, where divisions from the civil war still rankle. The only group that has stood aside from the demonstrations is the Shiite group, Hezbollah. It is supported by Syria, though financed by Iran, and since the death of Hariri has not (as of today) stated a strong position for or against Syria's presence.

Also this week, having been blamed for the death of Hariri, and then for their support of the Palestinian group, Islamic Jihad, (which placed a bomb in Tel Aviv that killed 5 on Feb 25th) Syria handed over 30 Iraqis associated with Saddam Hussein's regime. Some of them are also suspected of helping organize the insurgency that has frustrated attempts to bring order to the country.

This Month

Feb	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
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