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Tamar Arieli

Conflict Management Program, Tel Hai Academic College, Upper Galilee, Israel

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Borders of Peace in Policy and Practice: National and Local Perspectives of Israel-Jordan Border Management

TAMAR ARIELI
Conflict Management Program, Tel Hai Academic College, Upper Galilee, Israel

Border-management policies are designed to balance national interests of border control with the costs of monitored cross-border interaction. These policies, formulated by national authorities, are often based on constructed definitions and interests of national security rather than wider understandings of the components of human security. This is especially evident in post-conflict borders where local initiatives of economic, social and environmental cross-border interaction are posed to contribute to regional stability and security. This article analyzes civilian cross-border cooperation in the southern section of the Israel-Jordan border region, distinguishing between local and national perspectives regarding border management. Focusing mainly on Israel’s policies the article demonstrates how despite the vision of good neighbourly relations and their potential contribution towards regional prosperity and stability, local cross-border initiatives have been inhibited in the name of national security. The case study demonstrates the mechanisms and ramifications of exclusive securitisation policies of post-conflict border management.

INTRODUCTION

Border regions often face challenges which arise from their locational marginality with respect to their national centres. These may include competition for national resources, infrastructure deficits and a problematic image of remoteness. In post-conflict border regions, the realities of life are also...
significantly dominated by security-related events and policies which affect the regional image and quality of life.

The management of border crossings is a central aspect of public policy, especially in regions of recent or regional conflict. Borders and border regions remain central factors of national security, despite the developments in means of warfare and defence. In formulating border management policies an important dimension to consider is the relationship between security and civil authorities particularly regarding post-conflict border security. Here, the necessary conditions for social and economic development from a local civilian perspective are often at odds with security measures regarding the border region as determined in the interests of national security.1

This article emphasises the dimension of the border region in the challenge of transition to normalised relations in the post-conflict period, a topic also addressed by Martínez, Paasi, Henrikson, and Newman.2 The theoretical contribution of this analysis is the exposure of the constructed nature of security and its problematic ramifications in border management policy, both on civilian life in the borderlands, and on the prospects for post-conflict normalisation.

Since the 1994 peace treaty, Israel and Jordan relations are in a post-conflict transition towards some degree of stable, peaceful relations. An environment of conflict is not necessarily one of actual war and likewise peaceful regions can be broadly defined. Galtung differentiates between negative and positive peace.3 This differentiation correlates to some degree to the concepts of ‘cold’ and ‘warm’ peace. As Press-Barnathan notes, cold peace is the stabilisation of normalised relations, while a warm peace points to the existence of highly developed transnational ties.4

The Israel-Jordan border region is unique as a relatively populated peaceful border within a conflict zone. Cross-border relations are developing on the basis of the 1994 peace treaty, but these relations are far from normalised and are burdened by the ongoing sensitivities and events of the wider Arab-Israel conflict and specifically the continuity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The large Palestinian population in Jordan expresses its identification with the Palestinian struggle by opposing normalisation of Jordanian-Israeli relations, and any expression of collaboration between Jordanian and Israeli government agencies, professionals and academics. This clearly serves to inhibit many Jordanians from initiating or participating in cross-border initiatives. Yet, despite this opposition, the present study points to a developed network of ties and collaboration along the shared border and especially in the southern Arava Valley region.

This article focuses on Israel’s policies regarding border management, although this focus alone clearly does not fully explain the reality of cross-border cooperation in this region, including the many inhibiting factors. Israel’s securitisation perspectives regarding the border work in tandem with the more widely recognised phenomenon of Jordanian public and political
opposition to normalisation as obstacles to cooperation and joint initiatives. Both are based in the national centres, and both serve as inhibiting factors to the development of border-based cooperative initiatives. The dynamics of this border region should be understood in light of both countries’ challenges and policies.

Regarding Israel-Jordan relations, one must ask why the gap between national and local interests is significant in the management of a border region where the distance to population centres and capital cities is barely eighty kilometres. Despite this actual distance between Jerusalem and Amman, in terms of the regional political realities, it appears that the local interests promote cross-border collaboration that is atypical of the international ties between these countries.

This case study focuses on the southern section of the Israeli-Jordanian border, due to the developed shared interests local ties in this relatively populated region. It analyses the dominance of security considerations in determining Israel’s border management policies and the problematic ramifications for local cross-border initiatives despite their potential in terms of human security and regional stability. Therefore, although similar patterns of national security monitoring exist in the northern and central sections of this border, the problem is more pronounced in this southern region where the cities Aqaba and Eilat face and almost touch each other on the Gulf of Aqaba.

This article is based on qualitative field research, mapping and evaluating Israel-Jordan cross-border interactions conducted during the years 2006–2010. Local civilian interactions were studied using three tools: interviews, non-participant observations and a sector-based analysis of original and secondary sources. In the course of the research, many tours and observations of the border region were conducted, and key actors in Israel and Jordan were interviewed: entrepreneurs, local residents, local and national government officials, security personnel, and representatives of non-governmental organisations involved in the administration and funding of normalisation-promoting initiatives.

The research examined the motivations of the various actors and analysed the factors that contribute to and inhibit their activity. As an Israeli woman researcher, I expected to be challenged by political sensitivities of the post-conflict period and social-cultural issues. I found that both Israeli and Jordanian border-region activists were interested in sharing their experiences and drawing attention to their perspectives and needs. As Cohen and Arieli noted regarding post-conflict research environments, snowball sampling was found to be most effective in identifying, accessing and engaging interviewees and in overcoming occasional sensitivities.5

Part Two of this article examines the literature on borders in regions of conflict, and considers national and local interests in border management. Part Three analyses the gap between the Israel-Jordan vision and
realities of peace, focusing on the civilian and security aspects of the border region. Parts Four and Five present research findings regarding the Israel-Jordan border since the peace treaty: the logistical aspects of border crossing, and an analysis of cross-border interactions between the cities of Eilat and Aqaba and between rural communities in the southern Arava valley. Part Six presents an analysis of the implications of Israeli policy for management of this border, and conclusions regarding the dominance of the security perspective in the management of a peaceful border.

BORDERS AND CONFLICT

The post-conflict period challenges the formulation of border management goals and the implementation of effective border management policies. The period of transition from conflict to coexistence and normalisation emphasises the dual function of borders. Borders are a central component in the definition of nation-states and in the security discourse, but they also take expression and have implications in everyday life in the realms of society, economy and environment especially for those who live in their vicinity. Therefore, while borders remain a focus of national security policies, they serve as a basis for local civilian initiatives. Cross-border interaction is a manifestation of the local ability to respond to post-conflict realities, to harness regional advantages and to overcome potential drawbacks of remote areas characteristic of border regions.

All border issues are framed by security. Therefore, central to the analysis of border management policy are perceptions of border security and of the effects of cross-border interaction on securitisation. Cross-border interaction can hardly develop along a sealed border. Therefore policy makers must assess the potential and risks of allowing cross-border traffic through a somewhat permeable border.

What is the value of cross-border interaction in conflict and post-conflict border regions? Minghi does not identify political or social potential in the minimal cross-border interaction of conflicted border regions. Martínez, in his typology, ranks borders according to their respective levels of diplomatic relations. Despite his above outlined appreciation for the potential of cross-border interaction in terms of regional development, he sees cross-border relations as the outgrowth of the quality of diplomatic relations between neighbouring states rather than a factor that influences these relations.

Henrikson presents an alternative approach by emphasising the political contribution of expanding cross-border interactions. These interactions are a form of “transboundary diplomacy” which can extend to the political and diplomatic discourses at the countries’ centres, constituting a positive and stabilising factor. This approach suggests the importance of integrating local and national interests in planning the border environment.
Similarly, Patrick examines the tension between security and economic interaction in the context of the US-Mexico border. He claims that security actually depends on economic and environmental well-being which, paradoxically, can be limited by national security policies. In this vein Kliot explores the diplomatic potential of cross-border interdependence, analysing cross-border parks as frameworks for collaboration in managing the natural environment and national resources.

The more market forces, political clout and culture integrate a cross-border region, the more porous it will become. Therefore, Brunet-Jailly, suggests that border management policies are especially challenged in regulating cross-border flows and securitising borders where regional tendencies promote increased cross-border interaction. This understanding is based on his general model of borderland security developed in reference to European and North American borders.

In continuing this analysis, clearly post-conflict borders are far from levels of cross-border interaction typical of the interdependent and integrated border regions of North America and Europe where economic considerations are central factors of border policy management. Yet, as this case study demonstrates, the limited cross-border interactions in these border regions are hardly represented to national security agencies or appreciated by them in formulating border management policies. Therefore, there is a clear need for analysis of post-conflict border-management goals and policies, based on a combined national and local perspective of security and regional interests. This is a basic pre-condition for realising the potential of cross-border interaction.

National and Local Perspectives of Border Management

Border management policies shape and also reflect the nature of relations and interactions between countries, touching upon basic questions of political philosophy. In the realist approach, states operate for self-preservation, stability is a supreme goal, and secured borders are necessary for deterring conflict. The liberal view sees relationships, collaboration and shared interests as the main factors for changing discourses of conflict and creating a basis for trust between former rivals. This approach is reflected through “softer” forms of border enforcement that enable cross-border passage and relationships.

Border-management policies illuminate more than perspectives regarding cross-border relations. Rather, these policies are geopolitical statements which reflect power relations between national political centres and peripheral border regions. Contemporary border and critical geopolitical research question these relations and the assumptions, practices and consequences which underlie agendas regarding national security. In this vein, Flint calls to identify gains and losses of state-imposed classifications and to analyse
practices which promote limiting policies formulated by some at the expense of others.18

Following this critique, clearly the concept of security is central to border management policies. Perceptions and definitions of security are not objective or neutral, rather they represent “situated knowledge and reasoning” of states and interest groups and are reinforced by them.19 Thus security is constructed by a variety of political actors, such as bureaucrats, security professionals, and political elites.20 This is not to imply that real material security problems do not exist, rather to analyse the wider meanings and implications attached to any securitised issue.

Buzan reflects on this constructed nature and subjectivity of security claiming that ‘what is perceived [or portrayed] as a threat, and what can be objectively assessed as threatening may [or may not] be quite different’.21 Security concepts are not automatic responses to inter-state realities; rather they arise, to a great degree, out of discursive practices within states.22 Securitisation of issues raises them to new categories of importance on the political agenda, justifying extraordinary policy responses.23 Thus, although the border embodies the outer line of national security, the political and social agendas of securitisation define what threats the border is meant to keep out. In this vein Ackleson demonstrates how the US-Mexican border security has been constructed to include policies regarding immigration as well as legal and illegal commercial activity.

While economic interests are constructed into the security agenda in North American and European contexts, regarding post-conflict border regions security concerns are deeply rooted throughout society. Therefore, there is a norm of deference to national security authorities regarding border management. In the post-conflict period these authorities continue to dominate border management policies with little societal engagement, realising their agendas despite the changing circumstances.

These dominating geopolitical assumptions of security threats produce geographic representations and practices regarding the border. Dalby challenges critical political geographies to investigate “the politics of the geographical specification of politics”.24 In the context of border research, this means a deconstruction of the securitisation agenda through increased engagement of multi-level governments and wider sectors of society, including border region communities, in formulating border-management policies. This not only increases the depth of democratic engagement, it also potentially contributes to security by including broader perceptions of economy and environment rather than mainly military aspects.

Border management policy is comprised both of the border’s physical manifestation in space, and regulated procedures and laws pertaining to the border and border crossing. These factors are also central to the way in which the border is perceived by the population, its image and the aversion it at times arouses.25 A border with a striking physical presence
or a threatening regime of procedures could contribute to the absolute-ness of separation between populations, enforcing mutual negative images and arousing an aversion to forging cross-border ties (a process that is the reverse of Henrikson’s above outlined “transboundary diplomacy”). This also reinforces the image of the border area as remote and dangerous.

Local actors in the border region are likely to identify opportunities to be realised through interaction with cross-border neighbours. While protection of border and state security from outside threats remains a precondition for all cross-border movement, local interests are often not represented in the discussion of border policy. House sees this as a result of their political peripherality and weakness. In this reality where security and civilian expectations and functions are at cross-purposes, a “good border” is one that enables the transformation of the discourse of threat, prevalent in border regions to a one that incorporates the needs of the local population on both sides. In this vein, the Israel-Jordan Peace treaty outlines a special vision for neighbourly relations along the shared border.

ISRAELI-JORDANIAN RELATIONS

The Peace Agreement: Vision and Reality

Open diplomatic ties between Israel and Jordan are a new stage in the relations between the countries, but they are not their beginning. Despite the official state of war between them, both countries were engaged in strategic and functional collaboration for some forty years prior to the signing of peace agreement in 1994. Over 700 hours of conversation and 39 secret agreements addressed numerous realms of shared interests regarding the border, the West Bank, the Dead Sea, the Gulf of Aqaba and management of water and natural resources. This series of agreements can be viewed as trust-building measures towards the signing of the peace agreement, which essentially expanded the coordination regarding many of these shared interests.

King Hussein referred to the Jordan Valley as a “Valley of Peace” where economic projects would be developed through cross-border cooperation. In this vein, the peace treaty emphasises the broader aspects of peaceful and neighbourly relations with the border as their focal point. Article 11 points to neighbourly relations as the basis for overarching security. The treaty mentions “cooperation” twenty times, “mutuality” eleven times, and “joint efforts” ten times. The areas of shared interest mentioned include environment, water, energy development, economic activity and security. Security issues are not central in the treaty since Israel and Jordan did not consider each other as actual security threats.

Following the signing of the peace treaty, various organisations initiated joint projects to realise its economic and political potential. While
post-conflict developmental efforts often depend on the revamping of infrastructure destroyed by war, in the Israeli-Jordanian case parallel infrastructure exists along the border. Here, the developmental challenge is to maximise their efficiency by facilitating cooperation between their administrators towards continued development and joint problem solving. In this vein, Shimon Peres, as Minister of Regional Cooperation and Minister of Development of the Negev and the Galilee (1999–2007), promoted the idea of a “peace corridor” – 520 kilometers of joint initiatives along the Israel-Jordan-Palestinian border to include projects such as the Red Sea–Dead Sea Canal, water desalination, electricity generation, cross-border railway transportation, industrial and tourism initiatives, and a shared airport in Aqaba.

Common to these projects is that they involve open and deep multi-system collaboration between Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority.

A few initiatives for Israeli-Jordanian collaboration were carried out fully or partially, such as employment of the Jordanian army as a sub-contractor for building a border fence, joint patrolling of the Gulf waters, cooperation in culture and sports programming in the Gulf area, and collaboration in operating the ports. Some initiatives were suggested but never implemented such as connecting the telephone and electricity lines of both countries, and more grandiose initiatives such as building floating islands facing Aqaba and Eilat.

There is a gap between the level of the plans and the actual implementation. Most of the plans carried out were smaller initiatives that reflect a clear and immediate local need, mainly in the realm of environment and management of water resources. In the economic realm, only limited ties developed between Israel and Jordan, despite the activation of the Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ) plan for joint industrial areas, initiated by the United States. Large infrastructure projects of water and energy were not advanced, despite their potential.

The peace treaty is widely supported in Israel for its political rather than its economic significance; therefore little Israeli disappointment is voiced over the minimal economic relations. Yet the gap between proposed projects and those actually implemented had a negative effect on Jordanian perceptions of the peace treaty. The treaty is subjected to wide criticism expressing disappointment with the meager “fruits of peace”. This is in addition to political critique related to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The resulting widespread Jordanian opposition to normalisation of relations with Israelis a strong disincentive for Jordanian business people and professionals to initiate or participate in interactions with Israelis. This is a central factor in explaining why most cross-border interactions are initiated by Israelis or international organisations. Another aspect of the relatively passive Jordanian cooperation is the difference in their economic capacities, comparable to other asymmetric border regions such as that of United States–Mexico. As will be demonstrated, this negative Jordanian sentiment
regarding the peace treaty is further exacerbated by Israel’s policy regarding border management.

Security and Civilian Aspects of Israeli-Jordanian Relations

Israel’s border-administration policy vis-à-vis Jordan demonstrates Israel’s patterns of interaction between the security and civilian sectors. Michael claims that the various agencies in Israel’s security sector are deeply involved in political processes, and even influence them, even though they are formally subordinate and deferential to the civil government. The tremendous effect of Israel’s security sector can be attributed to a complex reality of internal and external security threats, and the public’s admiration for (and deference to) the security apparatus’s knowledge infrastructure and expertise.

In Israel, therefore, the civil government system often fails to prevail over the security sector in determining priorities and strategy. Michael defines this relational pattern as “strategic helplessness” in which the political echelon is sometimes at a loss as to how to act in order to reach a desired objective in security matters. The political echelon thus provides vague guidelines or is satisfied to merely respond to assessments and suggestions made by the security agencies and their experts. This gives security agencies hegemony in providing assessments and in making policy proposals within the public discourse. Michael goes so far as to claim that due to the lack of a clear governmental dictate, the security establishment tends to prefer minimising the level of exposure to danger. This preference is sometimes manifested in actions that contradict the original intentions of the political echelon.

Recognising the dominance of the security apparatuses in Israel is indispensable to understanding the management policy for the border with Jordan. Despite the vision of neighbourly relations involving the citizenry that reside at the basis of the peace agreement, it is clear that the policy regarding management of this peaceful border aims first and foremost at dealing with security aspects. Concerns about weapons and drug smuggling, as well as the increase in illegal aliens and the infiltration of dangerous elements through the border is clearly what guides Israeli decision makers.

While these concerns are real, they severely marginalise important civilian interests focussed on this border. A possible explanation could paradoxically be the comprehension of shared security interests of national authorities. Israel-Jordan security collaboration is ongoing and deep, although most of it is not publicised. Security collaboration exists even in the management of Jordan’s border crossings with the West Bank, as per Jordan’s demand. The importance that both countries place on collaboration around security issues supported the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan, allowing it to survive political crises, local wars, and broad,
public, internal Jordanian opposition to its very existence. Yet, paradoxically, security coordination between Israel and Jordan is viewed as such a shared deep interest between the parties to the point that there is insufficient appreciation for the potential contribution of civilian collaboration as a stabilising factor. Since it is impossible to prove that there is no security risk in allowing Jordanians to enter Israel, it appears that the security authorities and the government of Israel have little motivation to risk changing the policy.

Despite the centrality of security, the Israeli-Jordanian border merits complex treatment in formulating its border management policy. This derives from a number of factors unique to this border region, including population concentrations on both sides of the border, the plethora of shared local interests, and juxtaposition of the strong security relations between Israel and Jordan against the widespread opposition in Jordan to the normalisation of ties with Israel. These factors point to the potential in developing a human security approach, at least to complement the prevailing approaches of military security.

Human security encompasses concerns such as security, health, drugs, livelihoods and environmental conditions rather than the narrow traditional security focus on armies and government policies regarding conflict. Promoting stability and well-being through regional collaboration in these realms would therefore increase human security. The paradigm of human security is in the maelstrom of debate due to the lack of clarity regarding its definition, the nature of the research, its extent, implementation in policy, and doubts regarding its contribution to the understanding of conflicts and their resolutions.

Feminist geopolitics adds yet another dimension to the analysis of human security, challenging the masculine security discourse to reflect upon its normative assumptions. The feminist critique expands the military-centred focus of traditional security discourses by focusing on the individual and community, rather than the state or the international system. This critique emphasises the potential of addressing human needs and building relationships in peace-building. Yet, while women are active in peace-promoting organisations at the grassroots level, they are usually not heard in security-military circles where border management policies are formulated, allowing the continued domination of traditional security perspectives.

While security policy is determined exclusively by the captains of the state and security authorities, the fashioning and implementation of policies based on perspectives of human security include a variety of local, regional and national actors. Including local voices in determining border-crossing policy and responding rather than blocking peaceful cross-border initiatives of border region communities is likely to contribute to the quality of life and image of border regions, complementing regional security rather than deterring it.
The realities of Israeli-Jordanian border region have direct implications for this discourse of human security. Many interactions between Israel and Jordan, both past and present, do not relate in any way to the level of the border and surrounding region. And yet, the border, as a primary physical interface between the countries, always constituted an important factor in the relations between them, both in the realm of security and in functional civilian realms.

Until 1994, communications between the countries took place at the level of the national governments and security establishments, even regarding non-military issues. Since the signing of the peace agreement, there has been gradual development of local involvement in the communications between the countries. This reflects growing local recognition of the contribution of cross-border interaction to the quality of life in terms of environment, society and economy. These civilian cross-border initiatives challenge the dominance of security considerations in determining border region management policy. This policy translates into a logistical system pertaining to the granting of visas and border-crossing management, which will be discussed in the following section.

**BORDER MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES**

**Logistical Aspects of Border Crossing**

The freedom of movement through border crossings is a main factor in the success of shared initiatives and in the deepening awareness of mutual dependency between people on both sides. The logistics of obtaining a visa and border-crossing demonstrates how the actual distance between adjacent communities on two sides of a border is only negligibly relevant in estimating their potential for interaction and collaboration. Despite the relative closeness between Israeli and Jordanian communities in various population clusters in the border region, the calculation of distance must incorporate to the time, cost and effort expended in the border-crossing process.

The Israeli-Jordanian case illustrates that the border-crossing procedures of the two countries are asymmetric, which impinges on developing and maintaining civilian interactions. While most Israelis receive visas to Jordan within moments of arrival at the border crossing, processing the entry of Jordanians to Israel is much more protracted, with the status of the applicant and the visit purpose often insufficiently considered. The difficulty faced by Jordanians in obtaining a visa is a main finding that emerged in the interviews with many individuals involved in cross-border interactions and collaboration.48

The research points to two difficulties for Jordanians seeking to enter Israel: the visa application process, and the border-crossing process. Jordanians seeking to enter Israel must apply at the Israeli consulate in
Amman (a three-hour trip for Aqaba residents). The experience of visiting at the consulate is often difficult. For security reasons, the building is heavily buttressed, and anyone seeking entry or service is subjected to intensive inspection. The visa is granted only after a wait of several weeks, sometimes even months. Many Jordanians meet with refusal, even if they have visited Israel in the past, and even if they are invited on commercial, local governmental, environmental, scientific or social business. The visa granted to Jordanians is valid for a one-time entry into Israel, and a new request is necessary for every visit.

The cost of the border crossing is an additional aspect in determining the prospect of regular civilian cross-border activity. The toll for a round trip (from either side of the border) is approximately $40. While this may not be significant for commercial or institutional activity, it certainly may deter individuals, Israelis and Jordanians, from crossing the border for shopping or occasional social or cultural events. In what follows, I will demonstrate how these logistics affect the frequency and quality of the Israeli-Jordanian interaction, and how, as a result, they place a burden on the various initiatives for promoting local interests of the border region.

LOCAL INITIATIVES: EILAT-AQABA AND THE SOUTHERN ARAVA

The southern Arava Valley is particularly notable for the local initiatives of civilian cross-border collaboration. These initiatives reflect a local awareness of the regional interdependence in many areas of life but are somewhat limited by the strict scrutiny of non-local authorities.

Municipal Committees: Eilat-Aqaba

The collaboration between the neighbouring cities of Eilat and Aqaba is the most established manifestation of the shared interests of residents along the entire length of the border. Despite the significant differences in government structure, the interaction between the cities includes involvement at the level of local government, emergency forces, scientists, educators, and business. The formal expression of this interaction is eight joint committees, active especially between the years 2005–2009, in the realms of trade and economy, infrastructure, tourism, emergency services, health, education, culture and sport, transportation, border crossing and environment.49

These committees discussed shared problems and suggested solutions to local needs. Although the intervals between meetings were irregular, on the average 10 annual meetings of the various committees were held during the years of the study, 2006–2010, not including numerous preparatory sessions of the various coordinators. The committees’ proposals were transferred to a high steering committee that met biannually and had the
authority to approve or reject the committees’ suggestions. The Mayor of Eilat and director of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, as well as the Governor of the Aqaba Special Economic Zone (ASEZA), were members of the steering committee. As of 2011, the committees have not been active. Municipal cooperation continues through less visible and institutionalized channels of direct communication between a limited number of local government representatives. This is mainly due to the growing opposition in Jordan to normalised relations with Israel.

In evaluating the inter-municipal committees and their influence on the regional quality of life, it must be emphasised that many of the committees’ proposals were not actually implemented. Despite this, the ongoing activity of the committees and the ideational space of their members reflected an impressive level of coordination and liaison between neighbouring cities, as well as a vision regarding the future of the region. The activity of the committees in this southern border area, distanced from the population centres in Israel and Jordan, reflected a local recognition of the mutual dependence of the cities in cases of emergency, an awareness of the intensified dependence of each in the tourism branch, and a local acknowledgement that protecting the Gulf of Aqaba is an existential joint interest that no municipality can manage on its own. The main actual accomplishments of these committees are listed in Table 1.

Despite the lack of media exposure, or perhaps precisely because of this lack, municipal collaboration has proved more solid than that between higher diplomatic echelons of the two countries. During times of crises (the Second Lebanon War, the Mughrabi Gate Crisis, Operation Cast Lead) communications were disrupted between the foreign ministries of both countries,

<table>
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<th>TABLE 1 Main Achievements of Aqaba-Eilat Municipal Cooperation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Emergency forces</td>
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<td>• Regular communication and joint drills of local police, fire department and hospitals</td>
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<td>Pest control</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Regular inter-municipal coordination in control of flies, mosquitos and house-crows</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Programming for joint marine and environmental research, improving prospects for international funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Regular joint exercises for monitoring the Gulf waters and oil spill clean-ups</td>
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<td>• Development of communication between warning and monitoring systems of flash floods</td>
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<td>Education, culture and sports</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Joint school programme for environmental awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Participation of Jordanians in sports and cultural events in Eilat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collaboration in equipment use and repair services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Daily border-crossing of approximately 200 Jordanians employed in Eilat (on a special visa)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Joint planning for inter-municipal electrical grid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Initial planning and marketing joint tourism packages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Advancing ties between local operators</td>
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</table>
but the activity of most of the committees carried on as usual. The local Chamber of Commerce in Aqaba mostly ignored the activity of the committees and the collaborative initiatives in the border area, thereby deviating from the accepted line in Jordanian cities of anti-normalisation and boycott of those who collaborate with Israel.\(^{50}\)

The committees have even succeeded in involving the higher echelons of the two countries in collaboration, displaying a degree of bottom-up political entrepreneurship. Thus, although everyone who crosses the border needs a visa, occasionally arrangements for visas are expedited to allow participation in special activities such as emergency force drills. Committee coordinators have also succeeded in facilitating the creation of a multiple entrance visa, good for one year. This is offered to Jordanian individuals (approximately 70) of the local government, business or NGO communities after authorisation by Israel’s security authorities.

Another manifestation of higher governmental involvement is the presence of representatives of Israeli government ministries in the committee meetings. Aqaba, as the heart of an independent governmental authority in Jordan, the Aqaba Special Economic Zone, enjoys authorities parallel to those of a government ministry so no additional representatives of the national government are needed. The involvement of national government officials in the committees’ work can be viewed as supervision limiting the local autonomy regarding cross-border activity. Yet, another perspective of this involvement of both countries’ national government echelons is the manifestation of “transboundary diplomacy” mentioned above, according to which initiatives at the level of the border region serve as a “bottom up” influence informing national politics.\(^{51}\)

**Contributing and inhibiting factors in the committees’ work**

The Eilat-Aqaba region features a number of unique characteristics which explain the relative success in the work of the municipal committees.

**Distance:** The distance from the national centres of Israel and Jordan, and the extreme environmental conditions maintain an awareness of mutual dependence at the local level in economic development, in the emergency infrastructure, and in raising the standard of living in the region.

**Practicality:** The initiatives promoted are practical and relatively easy to implement, and have a potential for immediate mutual gain (in contrast to some of the projects suggested after the signing of the peace agreement, as mentioned above).

**Local focus:** The work of the committees expresses local needs, and not initiatives and priorities of organisations foreign to the region.

**Local government autonomy:** The relative autonomy of the Special Economic Zone in Aqaba as a government authority, and the Department
of Regional Collaboration in the Eilat municipality facilitate the structure and work of the committees.

The main obstacle impeding upon the municipal cooperation is the lack of symmetry between the Israeli and Jordanian policies in granting entry visas, as described above. The difficulty in obtaining a visa is particularly great for mid-to-low-level Jordanian clerks and business people. This problem is a source of frustration for many Jordanians, and has even created a phenomenon by which Jordanians who were once open to collaborating with Israelis now avoid collaborative endeavours.

The problem is very prominent in educational activity. Despite the proximity between the cities of Eilat and Aqaba, it is particularly difficult to organise joint local educational activities for Israeli and Jordanian students. While Jordanian students and teachers face difficulties in obtaining visas, Israeli students are prevented from entering Jordan as part of school activities due to a safety guideline of the Ministry of Education forbidding participation of students in programmes in Jordan. Therefore, the thrust of the ties and shared activities are based on telecommunications, which falls far short of expressing and fulfilling the social and educational potential of neighbourly relations.52

Issues of national control similarly affect the rural region of the southern Arava Valley and the local potential for cross-border interaction.

The Southern Arava Valley Project

The Southern Arava Valley Project is an agricultural initiative that began in 1998 as an agreement between al-Haq, a quasi-governmental Jordanian company (comprised of retirees from the Jordanian security services), and the Southern Arava Agricultural Research and Development Center at Kibbutz Yotvata. The essence of the initiative is the establishment of an agricultural farm at the Jordanian Bedouin village of Rachme, near Yotvata across the border. The goals of the programme were to develop Jordanian desert agriculture as well as employment and infrastructure for residents of the Jordanian villages in the area. The Israeli farmers at Yotvata had an additional goal: anchoring the peace agreement in a local project that would contribute to good neighbourly relations and regional stability.53

The initiative required frequent border-crossing for both Israelis and Jordanians. Agricultural experts from Yotvata were regularly invited to Rachme as consultants and guides for the agricultural activities. Jordanian agronomists and farmers participated in courses and training programmes organised for them at Yotvata (approximately twenty participants, with assistance and partial funding by the Israeli Foreign Ministry). The Jordanian
project managers participate in various agricultural conferences in Israel and purchased seeds, saplings and machinery from various sources throughout Israel.

The project, which is still ongoing, served in the past as a base for the germination of additional cross-border interaction in the southern Arava region:

- A joint educational project for Kibbutz Samar and the nearby Jordanian village of al-Qetar from 1999–2000
- Hosting of some two hundred special-needs Jordanian children from the village of Rachme and vicinity at a special activity in Eilat during Hanukkah of 2000
- Visits by women from Yotvata to women in Rachme for social dialogue
- Social events such as a Hanukkah party in Rachme, as well as a joint event for children and youth

These interactions point to the potential for the development and proliferation of civilian cross-border ties based on a local consciousness of neighbourly relations. Development and expansion of the farms in Rachme and the vicinity constitute a catalyst for raising the standard of living and physical and social infrastructure in the Jordanian southern Arava Valley. With the establishment of the farms and the local expertise, the level of cross-border interaction is waning, but the ties between the sides continue.

The southern Arava initiative also suffered from the difficulty in obtaining visas for Jordanians who wished to enter Israel. In 2005, the last course was held at Yotvata, and since then, the pace of Jordanian visits to the kibbutz has slowed, mainly due to the organisational and economic effort that obtaining visas entails.

The Rachme gate

A telling example of both the power of local initiative and weakness vis-à-vis the security system is the case of the opening of a local gate at the border between the communities of Rachme and Yotvata. Although Yotvata and Rachme are adjacent to one another with the border running between them, in order to reach Yotvata from Rachme or the reverse, one must travel 37 kilometres south to the Arava/Rabin terminal, in order to cross the border, and then return 37 kilometres back north along the other side of the border (a 148-kilometre round trip). Clearly this weighs heavily on the joint mixed meetings and on the transfer of equipment and supplies to farms.
A tremendous effort was invested by those involved in the project to convince Israeli government and military authorities in Israel of the necessity of opening a local gate between Rachme and Yotvata for limited passage. Despite the broad opposition among army personnel, police, customs authorities and the aviation authority, a gate was established in 2000 thanks to the support of senior army officials. The Jordanians were very supportive of the opening of the gate, and even acted quickly to pave a road connecting it to the village of Rachme.\textsuperscript{54}

The gate dedication ceremony took place only in 2003, delayed due to the outbreak of the Intifada. The ceremony was impressive, attended by senior Israeli and Jordanian government and army officials including the Governor of ASEZA, Israeli Foreign Ministry officials as well as German donors involved in the farm’s activity, and local residents. The ceremony included speeches by dignitaries and a belly dancing performance. Above the gate an inscription was placed, reading: “Come in Peace, and Go in Peace” in Arabic Hebrew and English. A procedure was established and local individuals were appointed to open the gate, approved by Israeli and Jordanian military personnel. Media representatives were not invited and the ceremony and establishment of the gate were not reported to the public in light of widespread political opposition in Jordan to normalisation of relations with Israel.

The permission granted for opening the gate between Yotvata and Rachme constituted a deviation from the Israeli pattern of determining border policy in that it constituted a certain easing of restrictions in the oversight on border crossings for the sake of improving the relationship and encouraging the local initiative. The rationale for opening the gate was substantiated by a senior military official as follows: “While the military arms itself at a cost of billions, real security will be achieved by civilian projects such as the one at Rachme.”\textsuperscript{55} While this view deviates from the prevailing security arrangements, it is consistent with the approach of many Israeli residents in the border area, who presumably are interested in protecting their security and are involved in a fabric of cross-border ties, based on such a perspective.

The gate was used only twice in 2003, until it was closed by the Israeli commander of this border zone. The reason given for the closing of the gate was that it posed a security threat to Israel.\textsuperscript{56} The manner in which the gate was opened and closed demonstrated to Israeli and Jordanian residents of the border region the arbitrary manner in which decisions are made in managing the border, and the disrespect for the thriving initiative for local cooperation. This case exemplifies well how Israeli border management policy fails to balance the needs of border-area residents with its security perspectives. As shall be demonstrated below, this lack of balance has far-reaching implications both on the needs of local residents, and on Israeli-Jordanian relations.
IMPLICATIONS OF BORDER MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The map and analysis of cross-border ties in the southern Arava Valley demonstrates the rationale and potential of cross-border initiatives, local involvement in cross-border collaboration, and the limitations of these in light of procedures and policy determined by non-local government agencies.

Realisation of the potential of cross-border interaction as a means of creating a regional consciousness and responsibility depends, inter alia, on shared experiences and mutual perspectives. The visa problem brings about delays and cancellations detrimental both to the smooth functioning of the relationship, and to the dignity and sense of equality of participants, particularly among the Jordanians. As a result of the Israeli policy, many Jordanians, especially high-ranking local officials, do not visit Israel. While most of the joint projects are still in process, the meetings usually take place in Jordan, and there is almost no chance of return-hosting on the Israeli side. Of late, there is increased reliance on telecommunications as a replacement for live encounters, although this solution does not contribute to the engendering and development of inter-personal ties in the manner of face-to-face encounters. The very existence of Israeli-Jordanian ties is positive, but their potential is stymied by the unwieldiness of the logistics, robbing participants of mutuality and equality.

There are many testimonies of the damage caused by imbalances between security perspectives and local needs. Visa delays have caused cancellations in the participation of Jordanian dignitaries in conferences in Israel (as occurred in meetings of the Israeli-Jordanian Chamber of Commerce and in various conferences). Thus Eilat-Aqaba municipal committees suffer from protracted interruptions in their ongoing activity. Educational activities of the Rabin School in Eilat with guest students from Aqaba have been held up for hours and almost cancelled due to delays of border terminal administration. The participation of Jordanian photographers in an international photography festival in Eilat (28 November 2008) was obviated since they received visas only after the event took place. Skål, a professional organisation of tourism leaders worldwide promotes cross-border tourism and organises activities through local clubs of tourist operators in Eilat, Aqaba and Taba. While participation is full in the activities in Aqaba and Taba, the activities in Eilat have taken place without Jordanian members participating due to the visa problem, for example, the event of 18 October 2006.

There seemed to be no pattern regarding visa authorisation. The seemingly arbitrary system burdens the work and drains the resources of organisations and cross-border initiatives. Professor Aaron Kaplan, head of the Director of the Inter-university Institute for Marine Sciences of...
Eilat expressed the frustration and shame he feels towards his Jordanian colleagues who were denied visas to Israel. The policy of limiting visas is a blatant example of the narrowing of the political vision as expressed in the peace treaty, and as manifested today by the Foreign Ministry. This ministry actively provides assistance and funding for cross-border initiatives such as Eilat-Aqaba municipal committees, agricultural training for Jordanians in Yotvata, and Jordanian-Israeli encounters for youth and for women organised by various non-profit organisations. Despite this involvement, which reflects a vision that recognises the contribution of civilian activity to regional stability, the Foreign Ministry is almost irrelevant in determining and changing the visa policy determined and administered by security authorities.

The continual stream of problems described exemplifies how Israel’s border management policy, through the logistics of visa-granting to Jordanians, limits local initiatives and development, and reduces the chance for developing fixed patterns of cooperation and a consciousness of Israeli-Jordanian neighbourly relations in the border region. This is despite their potential contribution in terms of human security, to warming and stabilising relations between the two countries at both the local regional and diplomatic levels.

CONCLUSIONS: DOMINANCE OF THE SECURITY PERSPECTIVE IN MANAGEMENT OF A PEACEFUL BORDER

This case study contributes to both theoretical and practical aspects of post-conflict border management. It illuminates the importance of a local civilian involvement in solidifying and implementing management policy of border regions. This is especially significant in the post-conflict period, given the tendency towards securitisation and lack of societal legitimacy towards normalisation of neighbourly relations. This conclusion arises from a case study of the imbalance between the security perspective and the local civilian view in formulating and implementing a management policy for the Israeli-Jordanian border. At this stage, even sixteen years after the signing of the peace agreement, only negligible tendency can be discerned in Israeli security authorities towards integrating civilian and local interests into said policy determinations.

There are clearly multiple political, economic and social factors to border management policies, especially regarding neighbouring countries with significant economic disparities such as Mexico–United States. Yet regarding this border region it is clearly the security considerations which seek to dominate Israel’s policies and practices. This is evident in the centrality of security agencies determining border management policies, in the marginality of
economic issues in the countries' national discourses as well in the seemingly arbitrary decisions regarding visas, which do not specifically target any economic or social interest group. This securitisation of border-management policies is explained by various aspects of the post-conflict period such as lingering distrust and fear towards former enemies, and a social norm of deferring to security agencies, even regarding civilian issues. Securitisation is further facilitated by the political weakness of the peripheral border region.

The lack of attentiveness that border-management policy exhibits to local needs is explained, paradoxically, by a deep assessment of the parties of the joint security interests that comprise the basis of the peace agreement. In a situation where security interests are so salient, there is insufficient appreciation for the potential contribution of civilian cooperation as a regional stabilising factor. Paradoxically, security-oriented policy makers underestimate the contribution of local civilian cross-border initiatives to regional stability, as is the developing approach in many border areas of Europe. Given the only minimal political or civil dialogue between Israel and Jordan, focussed interactions in the border area are almost the sole manifest expression of the fulfilment of the peace agreement’s vision.

In the European context, governmental oversight does not generally conflict with the development of integrative processes in border areas, and even serves to ensure the gradual and steady development of collaborative mechanisms at the local and regional levels. This gradual process of accommodation of local interests is essential in light of the national interests focused on the border. Clearly, the regional context of the Israel-Jordan border is different, but is there nothing to learn from the European experience? Surely there exist reasonable technological solutions to accommodate Israel’s security needs without needing to inconvenience and harass Jordanians through the visa policy. In the name of security, Israeli border management policies actually limit the development of a local perspective of shared interests and interdependency, and in so doing, to negatively affect an important source of regional flourishing and stability.

In practice, the cross-border ties suffer from a lack of publicity and resonance in the public and political discourse in Israel and Jordan. The causes for this are the sensitivity of the Jordanian partner to publicity – a fear of being shunned by the professional associations in Jordan that oppose normalisation with Israel, and the fact that these ties exist in the remote border region, as a local initiative far from Israeli and Jordanian population centres. Hence the lack of public and political resonance of these ties arises from their weakness, but also entrenches it further.

This case study thus provides an important insight regarding post-conflict border management. Despite the proximity of cross-border population clusters and the potential of the border as the basis for local
cooperative initiatives, collaboration does not take place through direct and spontaneous ties between neighbouring communities. Rather, interactions can involve approval and oversight of a convoluted and limiting system. Thus, border-management policy can marginalise local needs and interests of border-region communities and thus reinforce the problematic image of the border region as a remote frontier that is geographically distant from the centre and weakened and removed from the process of political decision making. Therefore, despite the physical proximity between the neighbouring communities, the actual distance between them is effectively greater than the distance between the non-border national centres.

In generalising from the specific case study to other post-conflict border regions where security remains the exclusive focus of national authorities, a vicious cycle is identified. The over-dominance of the security discourse in the post-conflict border region constitutes a stumbling block limiting the development of collaborative civilian cross-border endeavours. The weakness of this local civilian expression in turn further enables continuation of the dominance of the security discourse. A supportive approach could arise from the ground, at the level of the border region, and penetrate the political and public discourse, thereby influencing security authorities to change policies. In reality, limited cross-border interactions are challenged to accumulate sufficient momentum and resonance to influence policies.

NOTES

7. Martinez (note 2).
10. Martinez (note 2).
11. Henrikson (note 2) p. 121.
34. Personal communication with Erez Ron, former director of the “Peace Corridor” project, April 2007.
43. Personal communication with Efraim Halevi, former Mossad director, Nov. 2008.
48. This finding emerged from interviews with Dr. Salim al-Mughrabi, Head of Planning and EIA Section, ASEZA; Samo Samurai, Director of the Eilat Municipality’s Department for Regional Cooperation; Amnon Greenberg, Director of the Southern Arava Agricultural Research and Development Center in Israel, Ari Baranes, former Director of the Inter-University Institute for Marine Sciences of Eilat, Gideon Bromberg, Director, Friends of the Earth Middle East; Dr. Clive Lipkin, Director of Research, Arava Institute for Environmental Studies; Yuval Pirko, former Director of Israel-Jordan Chamber of Commerce; Ahuva Zaid, Resident of the Skål Tourism Bureau in Eilat; and many others.
49. The information regarding the activity of the municipal committees emerged from a series of interviews in Eilat and Aqaba, as well as by observations of collaborative meetings and events held from 2007 to 2008. Most of the information was conveyed by the coordinators of the committees’ work, Mr. Samo Samorai, Director of the Eilat Municipality’s Department for Regional Cooperation, and Dr. Salim al-Mughrabi, Head of Planning and EIA Section, ASEZA.
50. Cohen and Ben-Porat (note 38).
51. Henrikson (note 2).
52. Personal communications with Mazal Katzir, Coordinator for High School Programs in Rabin High School, Eilat, Jan.–April 2007.
53. Personal communication with Amnon Greenberg, Director of the Southern Arava Agricultural Research and Development Center in Israel, Jan. 2007.
55. Personal communication with Glickman (note 54).
56. Personal communication with Greenberg (note 54).
57. Personal communication with Ahuva Zaid, president of the Red Sea Bay branch of Skål, Nov. 2007.
60. Scott (note 12).
61. Scott (note 12).