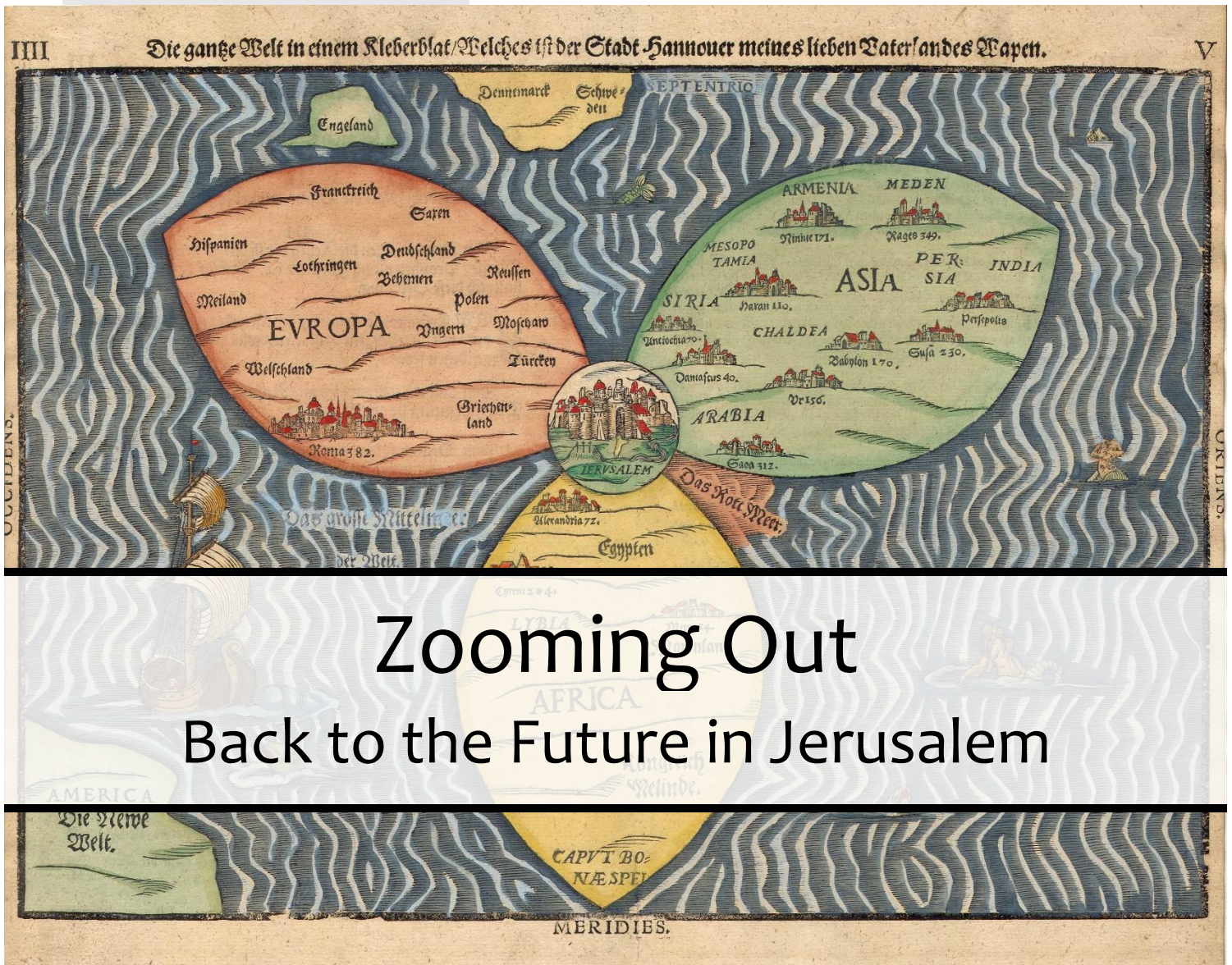


## Policy Brief



# Zooming Out Back to the Future in Jerusalem

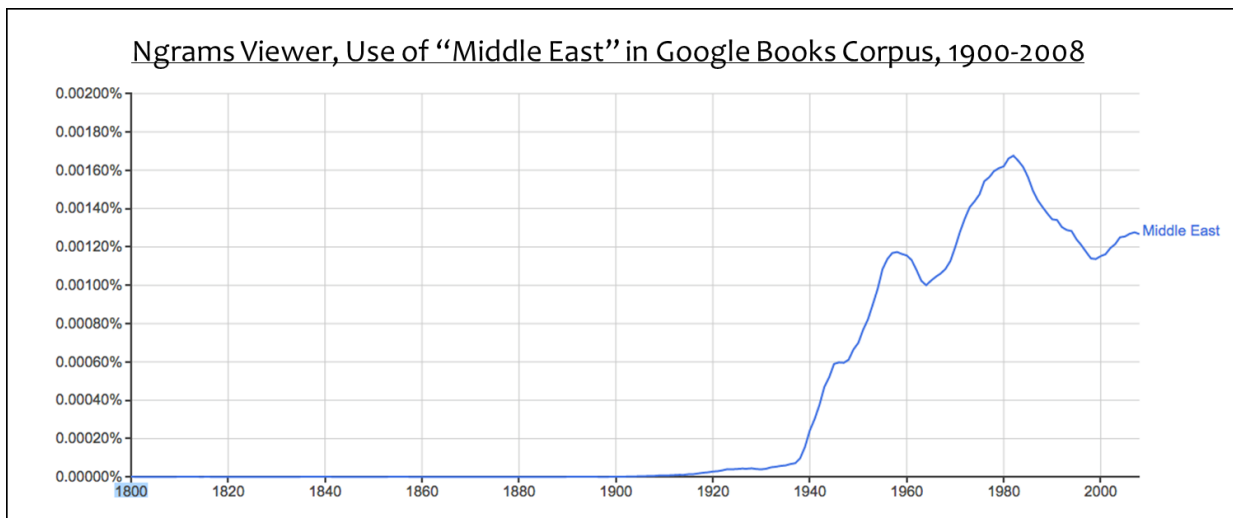
By Glenn Yago

September 2016

**In** the region surrounding Jerusalem, the shared interests and challenges of increasing job creation through trade, energy, water, climate change and the digital world can rapidly replace the arcs of conflict that characterized the last century. However, the now obsolete geographical

neologism known as the “Middle East”, which dominated the last century’s geopolitics of oil and transformed Western Asia into something else entirely, has held the region back and left us confused ever since. American Naval Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan coined the term “Middle East” in 1902 while deployed to the British Navy. The proliferation and expansion of the term “Middle East” over the last century is demonstrated in the *Ngrams* chart below, showing just how recently the term emerged.<sup>1</sup> Why did it arise in the first place? Back at the turn of the last century, Captain Mahan and his naval colleagues designated the Middle East as a strategic area between Arabia and India. Their objective was to maintain an open gateway to India and the East, a dominant priority for the emerging oil-based economy and pursuit of naval superiority in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Jerusalem has been held hostage to this term and the conflicts it produced, as the notion of where the Middle East actually is continually expanded. The inflation of the idea of the “Middle East” began after World War I, when it was used to refer additionally to Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Turkestan, and the Caucasus. By 1957, U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles bloated the definition further, describing the Middle East as the area lying between and including Libya on the west and Pakistan on the east, Syria and Iraq on the North and the Arabian Peninsula to the south, plus Sudan and Ethiopia. In 2004, the Bush Administration met that swollen, politically-driven definition and raised it by identifying the Middle East with most of the regions that have Muslim majorities. This Eurocentric definition now includes areas whose only common characteristic seems to be populations of darker-skinned Caucasians.



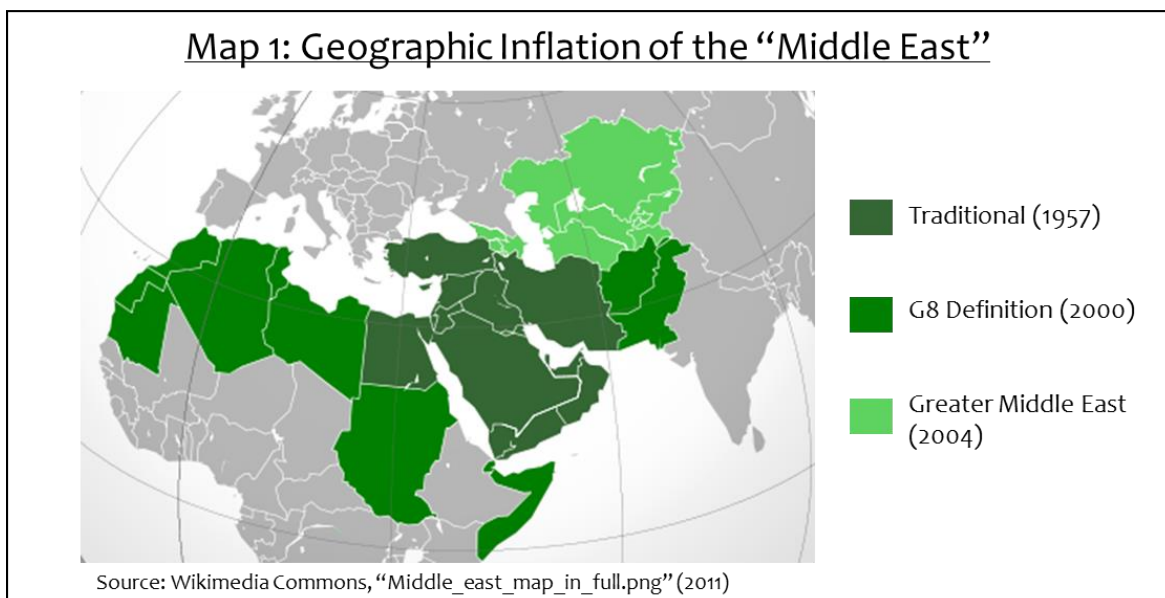
<sup>1</sup> Ngram viewer allows study of words and phrases over time extracted from Google Books digitization to enable historical analysis language and culture through Big Data study of culturomics (using computational lexicology to study cultural trends

through quantitative analysis of digitized texts), see J. B. Michel, et.al. “Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books,” *Science*, 331 (2014): 176-182, 2011.

These inflated and increasingly imprecise definitions left the politics of the region impossible to understand and predict. The ambiguous definition of the region has resulted in a preoccupation with group-based politics over broad economic trends as the driving force of foreign policy. The focus of international policy has been almost exclusively on processes related to elections, sanctions, and negotiations, leaving the economic priorities of job creation, market building and capital formation (the necessary pre-conditions for peace processes) largely relegated to secondary importance to be addressed after “final status.”

Mediterranean. It was from the Eastern Mediterranean – a cosmopolitan region (even during antiquity) whose material and cultural history was always based much more on the diversity and richness of human imagination and human capital rather than the xenophobia and fundamentalism fueled by warring over natural resources – that Jerusalem’s origins emerged over 3,000 years ago. It is from that same force of human imagination and cultural evolution that defines its current and future global competitive advantage.

Remarkably, the spiritual vision of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Bunting Clover Leaf Map, seen on



### Back to the Future

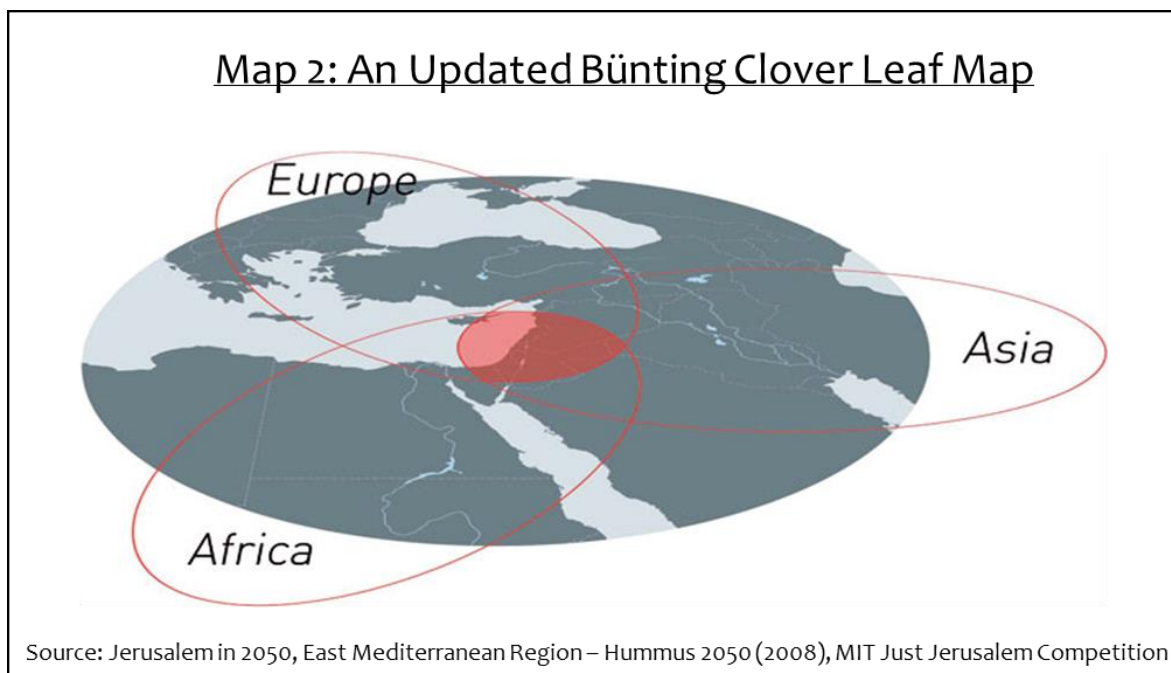
Jerusalem, a deeply Mediterranean city, is not now, nor has it ever been part of the, “Middle East.” In particular, the term “Middle East” never captured the historical and future centrality of the Eastern

the title page depicting Jerusalem as the midpoint between Europe, Asia, and Africa, has a striking resemblance to the imagination needed to realize the potential of demographic and economic drivers and establish Jerusalem’s centrality in this region by 2050. The shape of the future is always socially constructed by choices, not

simply determined by natural or physical barriers or held hostage by past historical conflicts. Jerusalem is neither now, nor has it ever been, the geometrical center of the physical world. But, when Heinrich Bünting drew his famous map in 1531 shortly after the discovery of the New World, the socially constructed centrality of the Eastern Mediterranean's cultural history was already well understood. This was long before historians and archaeologists uncovered the importance of the region to ancient trade routes, early human migrations and evolution from semi-nomadic wandering to agricultural settlement, and early urbanization and metal processing and commerce throughout the Syrian-African Rift Valley.

connectivity of networks throughout the region. This understanding emerges from studying the Neolithic trails of pre-history, to Iron Age industrial centers extending from Edom to Israel and Egypt, to the later trade routes of silk, incense, and spices from later periods, and to the trade, commerce, and cultural history of later centuries.

As we have learned from the epic historical work of Fernand Braudel, it was from the Eastern Mediterranean that the many dominant forces of trade and commerce, market development, and cultural heritage emerged, each of which blend geographical time with long-term social, economic, and cultural history that continue to define this remarkable region.



The development of the Fertile Crescent 3,000 years ago and the Decapolis of 2,000 years ago were results of the expansion of trade and productivity and increasing

The transboundary Eastern Mediterranean passages high in the hills between the desert and the sea brought the emergence of writing, bookkeeping, agriculture,

monotheism and other social inventions, which accelerated highly dense trade, as well as economic, and social networks. Those networks of trade and migration enabled the transition from semi-nomadic to agricultural settlement and urbanization in antiquity. Later they enabled commerce that led to the New World, and led to the current rise of knowledge-based regional economies connecting Asia, Africa and Europe through this region.

Understanding this past makes it easier for us to go back to the future. Competing claims within and between local, national and diaspora populations obscures the path to imagining Jerusalem from a new and less contested vantage point. By zooming out, we can find points of converging interests in transboundary transportation, environmental resources, cultural heritage tourism, technology and economic zones.

The 20th century's "Middle East" turned its back on the Mediterranean to face the Persian Gulf only during the Oil Era. But, it is the Eastern Mediterranean that defined the region's ancient past, reaching back to when the Sea Peoples first begin migrating westwards in the Bronze Age. Today it is that same Mediterranean Sea that also defines its future.

### **Jerusalem & the Eastern Mediterranean**

The most recent geopolitical events and traumatic realignments in the region in

Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq create the need for a Jerusalem that builds upon its historical, environmental, economic and technological history based upon a multicultural past. By focusing upon the city's transformation based on shared geo-cultural and regional experiences, a new foundation could be laid down based upon out-of-the-box problem solving of issues resolving the virtual and physical Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup>

Jerusalem has a special position in the inter-metropolitan Eastern Mediterranean region that is emerging now, as it did in the ancient past. It is the only large city and urban region situated between the Mediterranean coastal strip and desert hinterland. These non-oil producing areas have in the past suffered from energy and natural resource scarcity, but are now well-positioned to leverage accelerated growth during a period of climate change and knowledge-based technological exports that decouple growth from natural resource use.

This decoupling of economic growth from natural resource extraction allows these previously energy poor regions to weave together diverse populations and areas and open them to growth centers of new economic frontiers. Growth clusters are emerging, derived from creativity in information and communication technology, climate smart agriculture and food production and processing, natural gas and renewable energy, smart water

---

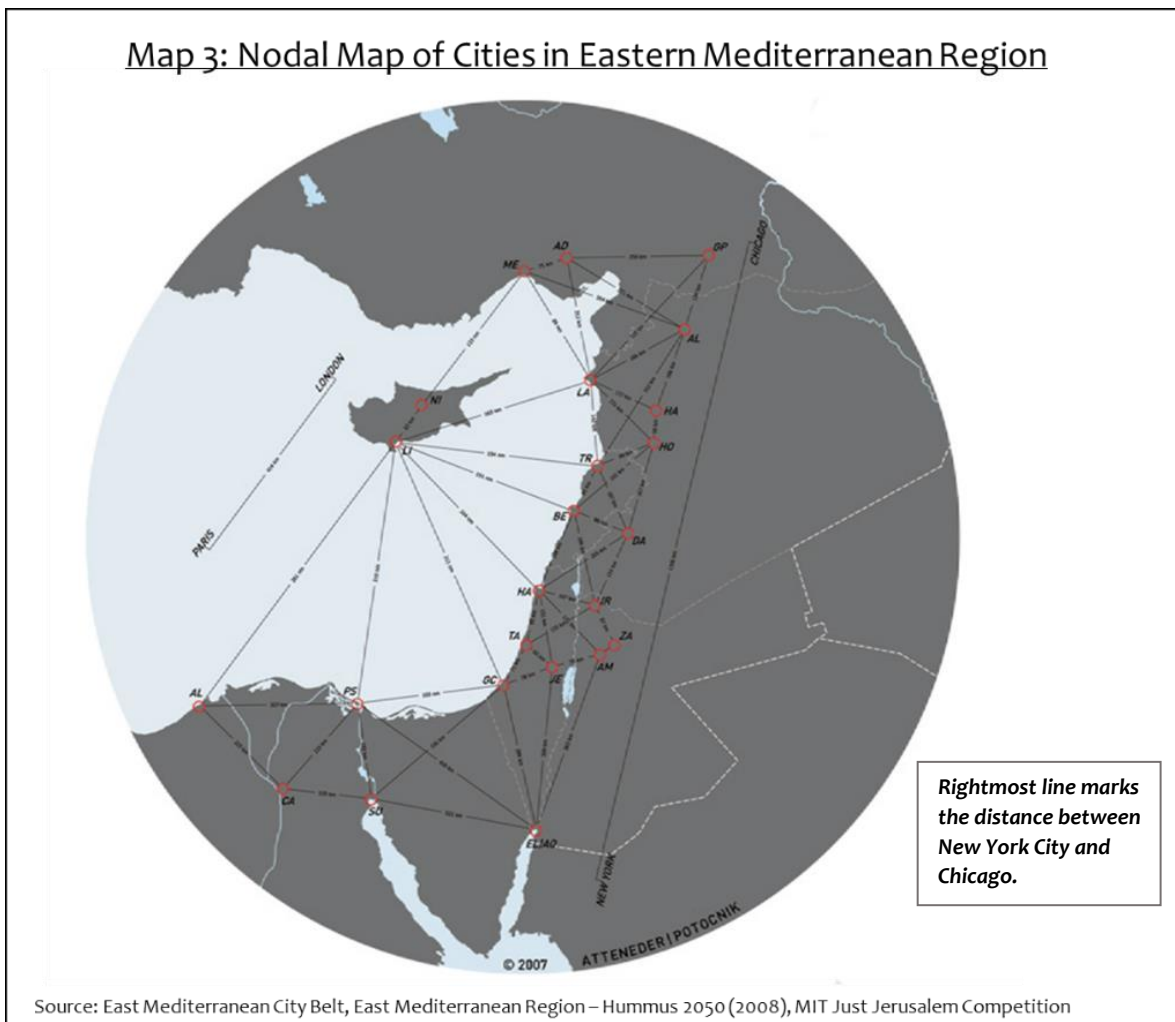
<sup>2</sup> See the excellent work on imagination in conflict cities by Diane E. Davis and Tali Hatuka, "The Right to Vision: A New Planning Praxis for Conflict Cities,"

*Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 20 April 2011.

technologies, breakthroughs in health and education, and cultural tourism and the arts.

Over the next 35 years, the alliance of 20 cities form an emerging corridor of urbanization will coalesce along the Mediterranean Coast from Turkey to Egypt, and include the corresponding desert hinterland. MIT's Jerusalem 2050 Program focused upon this emerging East

Mediterranean Region and its city belt nearly ten years ago. Later analyses of Jerusalem's central node in this transformation only reconfirmed the trade, commerce, and tourism potential of the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>3</sup> As Map 3 below shows, these cities constitute the potential for a densely interconnected region, the farthest distance between them topping out at approximately the distance between Chicago and New York City.



<sup>3</sup> MIT Eastern Mediterranean City Network, 2050 <http://www.hummus2050.org/>. It is interesting to track the striking parallels of this well-researched planning vision of the region which parallels and

updates many ideas from the 1902 utopian novel by Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland*. See “Dreaming of Altneuland,” *Economist*, December 21, 2000.

The high concentration of people, money, services, trade and production will create a strong backbone by 2050 of nearly 200 million residents. The metropolitan region of Jerusalem and its surroundings (including the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem and the Palestinian Jerusalem Governorate extending also to Ramallah, Jericho and Bethlehem) is the center of this emerging regional alliance of cities that will spread from Cairo to Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem to Amman to Istanbul.

By skipping the present paralysis and working backwards from this not too distant future, we can see how an alternative future can emerge. Regional cooperation of this new social construction of the future differs from past cultural maps and narratives that, as we've learned from Jerusalem philosopher, Moshe Halbertal, overlap and compete to exclude each other. In its place, new social, technological and environmental maps zoom out to build upon financial inclusion between the new global growth poles linking Asia, Africa, and Europe through the Eastern Mediterranean.

### **The Eastern Mediterranean of Today**

Transboundary economic development work is already beginning to happen in many post-conflict projects, which center around cooperation in digital industries, environmental problems, health and energy and agricultural challenges. Points of conflict fade by imagining ourselves into a common gateway based on Jerusalem's centrality in this re-emerging Eastern Mediterranean metropolitan region.

Growing technologies around food, energy, health, water, information, clean tech infrastructure (and the cyber security to protect them) are the shared needs of the re-emerging Eastern Mediterranean. These areas are also the growth drivers for economies searching for job creation and economic stability. Green shoots of economic promise are increasingly obvious in the region, and go far beyond the "conflict" dominated by headline risks:

- Israeli and international R&D centers outsourcing and tech investment in Ramallah has generated over 10% of Palestinian West Bank's GDP and is beginning to generate a technology ecosystem for the Arabic language internet and high value exports.
- A 200-kilometer underground pipeline from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea will provide 65-85 million cubic meters of water to Jordan and the Palestinian Authority through desalination. Already, Israeli water technology through desalination and irrigation provides additional benefits of trade and agricultural innovation.
- Israel and Jordan have agreed upon a \$15 billion gas supply contract from the Leviathan Gas Fields. Building a bridge from natural gas to renewable energy technologies will transform the distortions of the oil economy for non-oil producing regions and ensure climate change resilience in the decade ahead. To that end, \$150 million of investment has been committed to the building of 10 Palestinian solar fields in the West Bank and Gaza.

- The recent agreement signed by Palestinian Civil Affairs Minister Hussein al Sheik with Israeli Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon creatively restructured over a half a billion dollars of Palestinian debt owed to the Israel Electric Corporation, and also provides Israeli assistance in reforming and developing the Palestinian electric grid and energy sector by transferring power lines that supply energy to the West Bank to Palestinian control.
- The expansion of Jordan's railway along the North-South Corridor from the Syrian Border to the Port of Aqaba, along with later rebuilding of the old Hejaz Railway links through Nablus through the Gilboa Region to Haifa, would accelerate an inter-regional Mediterranean trade network and lower export costs throughout the region.
- The construction of a new railway from Haifa to Beit She'an and onward to Jordan (through Irbid to Al Mafraq to Amman to Baghdad, with branch lines to Afula and Jenin) passed the initial screening process and pre-feasibility study by the European Union. The results confirmed the importance of links which will create a Mediterranean transport infrastructure network with enormous implications for Jerusalem and outlying regions.
- Growing industrial trade and manufacturing to Egypt and Jordan through qualified industrial zones has already generated hundreds of

millions of dollars annually for exports and serves as a model for further inter-regional trade expansion.

Shared interests in renewable energy, water, health, Internet-of-Things (IoT), and climate smart agriculture generate additional aggregate demand and spur development from Cairo to Turkey and the Gulf States. All of this less reported economic news focuses on the narrow land bridge and sea lanes that unite the region through Israel to Europe, Asia, and Africa, as it did centuries ago.

### **Beyond Negotiations and into Economic Development**

Jerusalem's problems, as a key to resolving conflict in the region, cannot be solved by microanalysis, isolating Jerusalem neighborhoods, or restricting metropolitan flows of labor and capital. A review of all scenarios emerging from Israel-Palestinian negotiations,<sup>4</sup> from the Camp David Summit through the Clinton Parameters on to the Taba Talks, Sharon and Olmert Era to the final dead-end of the 2014 talks, consistently pointed to the unsettling conclusion that plans that fragment the Jerusalem metropolitan region (rather than linking it together) only recreates the negative conditions for economic, employment and innovation led growth. It appears that all existing scenarios would return Jerusalem to the periphery it was

---

<sup>4</sup> Lior Lehrs, "Peace Talks on Jerusalem: A Review of the Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations Concerning

Jerusalem," Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2013.



until 1967 and most likely lead to massive exodus of residents and businesses.<sup>5</sup>

An examination of the various potential scenarios that have led to dead ends of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations reveals a way of thinking dominated by “crackpot realism.” As sociologist C. Wright Mills explained, “crackpot realism” is where, “high-flying moral rhetoric is joined with an opportunist crawling among a great scatter of unfocused fears and demands (where)... the main content of ‘politics’ is now a struggle among men equally expert in practical next steps—which, in summary make up the thrust toward war.” It is hard not to read the accounts of the regression of even the most recent negotiations and not associate them with “crackpot realism” driven by policy processes not rooted in emerging economic realities.<sup>6</sup> The results of over two decades of negotiations concerning Jerusalem prove Wright Mills’ conclusion that “crackpot realism” leads to a place where, “instead of the unknown fear, the anxiety without end, some men of the higher circles prefer the simplification of known catastrophe.”<sup>7</sup>

Each failed negotiation about Jerusalem signals to its residents the next round of violence. The continued demand to include Jerusalem’s status as a precondition to the end of conflict only magnifies the differences in the conflict, masking the underlying uniformity of the region’s

significant environmental, energy, health, transportation, communication, and human capital opportunities. Zooming out gets us outside the box that limits rather than expands Jerusalem’s promise of regional and global integration as an Eastern Mediterranean hub.

Solutions to Jerusalem’s problems will be a result of, not a pre-condition for, resulting economic prosperity that emerges from economic growth. Only by establishing Jerusalem’s centrality and connectivity to the emerging economic drivers of change, will we be able to accelerate the productivity and prosperity to reinforce national economic security (Palestinian, Israeli, Jordanian, Egyptian, and others) and establish regional physical security.

### **The Eastern Mediterranean of the Future**

What is needed now is not another round of Jerusalem negotiations, but a massive, regionally-financed IT communications, transportation, and tourism infrastructure program linking those parts of the region that wish to opt into this promising future. Already during the Syrian and Iraq Wars, activation of these links began as trading and transportation increased between Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Israel and Egypt. Intensifying and hardening these ties and the trade, transportation and tourism

---

<sup>5</sup> Amiram Gonen, “Jerusalem—How to Strengthen and Connect the Disintegrating City,” *Amirav* (2000): 162. (Hebrew)

<sup>6</sup> See Ben Birnbaum and Amir Tibon, “The Explosive, Inside Story of How John Kerry Build an Israel-Palestine Peace Plan—and Watched it Crumble,”

*New Republic*, July 21, 2014. Erick Lipton, Brooke Williams and Nicholas Confessore, “Foreign Powers Buy Influence at Think Tanks,” *New York Times*, September 6, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> C. Wright Mills, *The Causes of World War III*, 1958: 86-88.

infrastructure that support them will accelerate further growth.

Here are the structural forces shaping the region that allow for Jerusalem's primacy and leadership to emerge in the Eastern Mediterranean now, as it did in the past:

- The size and shape of the global population (from 6.7 billion today to over 9 billion in 2050) will occur almost entirely in the developing regions of the world, but mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, which are linked through the Eastern Mediterranean. Jerusalem and the surrounding region are located in the center of that new wave of growth in aggregate global demand;
- Dense infrastructure nodes (both physical and digital) will drive growth from increasing traffic from highways, airports, sea travel and railroads, the internet-of-things and beyond. This infrastructure will follow the main North-South corridors consistent with natural and historical movements that include the scenic highway along the coast, the desert hinterland, and the cultural road and trails along the Syrian-African Rift Valley;
- The recent discovery and development of natural gas as a transition fuel to a low-carbon future is another game-changing potential for the Eastern Mediterranean. The Eastern Mediterranean seabed contains up to 122 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Many geologists now think that the Levant Basin area could add considerably more to that total.

Aside from Israel's gas finds, Cyprus, Gaza, Greece, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and eventually Turkey as a distribution point could all benefit;

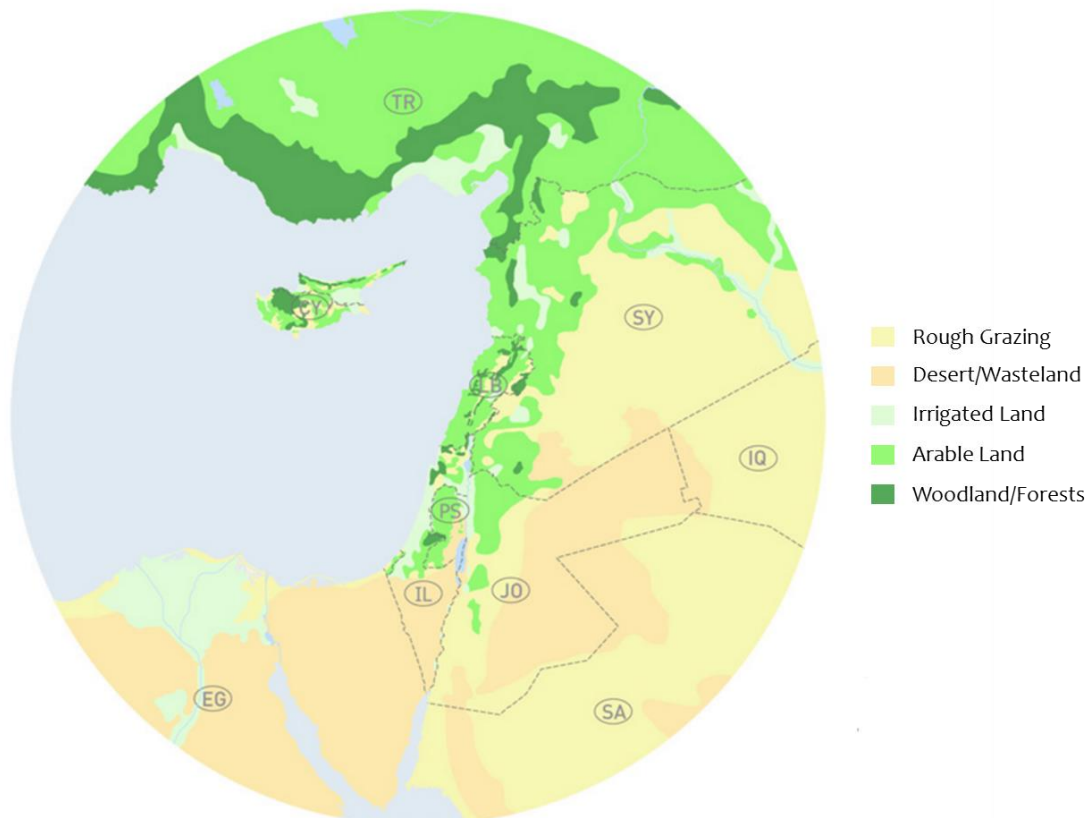
- As described above, natural gas, as a transition fuel, also enables the simultaneous growth of renewables, biofuels, and battery storage to end the age of oil's monopoly power as a transportation fuel and move to a more competitive and ultimately climate-friendly energy future;
- While population densities run high (3,000 /km<sup>2</sup>) from the Nile River Delta, Eastern Mediterranean shoreline, and hinterland-city axis from Aleppo to Amman, population density drops dramatically to near zero 150 km on the Desert Hinterland Corridor running parallel to the Eastern Mediterranean shore. The ability to transform the desert that Ben-Gurion first foresaw in the Negev becomes increasingly central to the region as population can also grow eastwards in newly sustainable desert environments;
- Over 30% of all arable land and irrigated land is concentrated in the Coastal Corridor of the Eastern Mediterranean (See Map 4). Plant and soil science enabling extension of food production and climate smart agriculture to water-stressed regions along with further storage breakthroughs in post-harvest food distribution will enable greater resilience and food security in the region;
- The Eastern Mediterranean will drive tourism development for recreational, eco- and cultural

heritage tourism (from both western and eastern countries) that will rival and surpass tourism in Europe and the Western Mediterranean. With cultural heritage as the fastest growing part of the global tourism industry, the Eastern Mediterranean can become a showcase for the potential of cultural heritage for urban and rural regeneration involving local and regional authorities along with businesses to create new markets and jobs.

can learn so much more from the archaeological sites and trails that provide the region with its greatest common heritage and endowment. We can return to the thinking of the great historian of the Eastern Mediterranean, Fernand Braudel, who observed at the conclusion of his long career studying the region that it shares a, “common destiny, a heavy one indeed, with identical problems and general trends if not identical consequences.” What is clear from recent and coming economic trends is that what can be said of the region’s past can also be said of its future.

The Eastern Mediterranean’s past is not a foreign country. We know it now well and

Map 4: Agricultural Land Use in the Eastern Mediterranean



Source: Land Use, East Mediterranean Region – Hummus 2050 (2008), MIT Just Jerusalem Competition

Milken Innovation Center  
Jerusalem Institute  
Radak Street 20  
Jerusalem 9216804, Israel  
Phone: +972-2-563-0175  
[www.milkeninnovationcenter.org](http://www.milkeninnovationcenter.org)  
[www.jiis.org.il](http://www.jiis.org.il)



Jerusalem Institute  
**Milken Innovation Center**