

Temporal Threads: Unraveling the Texas-U.S. Standoff through Ibn Khaldun's Lens

How to cite: Badawi, H. (2024). *Temporal Threads: Unraveling the Texas-U.S. Standoff through Ibn Khaldun's Lens*. Indian Strategic Studies Forum (ISSF). <https://issf.org.in/2024/02/temporal-threads-unraveling-the-texas-u-s-standoff-through-ibn-khalduns-lens/>

Abstract

This research note, titled “*Temporal Threads: Unraveling the Texas-U.S. Standoff through Ibn Khaldun's Lens*,” delves into the nuanced geopolitical conflict between federal and state governments along the Texas-Mexico border. Drawing insights from the historical lens of Ibn Khaldun, the study explores the intricacies of states' rights, migrant safety, and the cyclical nature of political structures. The analysis incorporates Ibn Khaldun's concepts, such as “asabiyya” and cyclical succession, to interpret the ongoing Texas-U.S. conflict and its broader implications.

Methodology

The research employs a multidisciplinary approach, combining historical analysis, political philosophy, and contemporary geopolitical studies. Ibn Khaldun's works, particularly “*Muqaddimah*,” serve as a foundational framework for understanding the cyclical patterns of political entities and the factors contributing to their rise and fall. The analysis integrates primary sources, including official statements, legal documents, and contemporary news reports, to contextualize the Texas-U.S. standoff within the broader historical and philosophical perspectives provided by Ibn Khaldun.

Keywords

Ibn Khaldun, Texas-U.S. Standoff, Asabiyya*, Cyclical Succession, States' Rights, Geopolitical Conflict, Political Philosophy.

Introduction

In the expansive realm of geopolitical conflicts, a distinctive standoff has unfolded between the federal and state governments along the Texas-Mexico border. This confrontation encapsulates not only a struggle for states' rights and migrant safety but also serves as a canvas upon which historical insights, particularly those drawn from the lens of Ibn Khaldun, craft a unique portrayal of power dynamics and political structures.

At the core of this conflict is a contest over states' rights and the safety of migrants. The deployment of razor wire, the assertive proclamations by Texas Governor Greg Abbott, and the intervention of the Supreme Court collectively set the stage for a more profound exploration through the historical lens of Ibn Khaldun.

Razor wire, a historically employed tool along the U.S.-Mexico border to deter undocumented migration, takes a leading role. Governor Abbott's expansion of its use, coupled with the legal battle initiated by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, adds layers of complexity. The clash between federal agents' rescues and accusations of destruction of state property further entangles the narrative.

Incorporating Ibn Khaldun's concept of “asabiyya*” (*Arabic: عصبية, romanized: 'asabiyya, also 'asabiyya, 'group feeling' or 'social cohesion'*), we delve into the notion that the abolition of this force, acting as a monopoly on power, is paramount for constructing a prosperous and egalitarian civilization. The echoes of this civil conflict serve as a historical

parallel, emphasizing the cyclical nature of political structures. Shifting our focus to the symbolic Shelby Park in Eagle Pass, the tragic drowning incident of a woman and two children becomes a microcosm of the broader conflict. The standoff between the Texas National Guard and Border Patrol agents brings into sharp relief the localized impacts of the larger struggle.

As Governor Abbott asserts a broken compact between the United States and the states, the Supreme Court's decisions, and the ensuing rhetoric, including comparisons to the civil war, intensify the tension. Exploring the historical context of federalizing local national guards adds a layer of complexity to the unfolding drama. Republican governors rally behind Abbott, framing the issue as a federal encroachment on state rights. The involvement of former President Donald Trump, along with calls for reinforcements, adds a political dimension. Historical examples of federalizing national guards are juxtaposed, highlighting potential resolutions.

Ongoing negotiations between the Biden administration and GOP lawmakers reveal a potential border deal linked to funding for Ukraine. The influence of Trump, pressuring Republicans to oppose the deal, injects further complexity into the political landscape. Monitoring groups warn of the standoff attracting right-wing extremists, drawing parallels to the January 6 insurrection. Residents' frustrations with external influences and vigilante groups converging on Eagle Pass underscore the potential dangers.

In concluding our exploration, we synthesize the historical and analytical findings. The urgency for constructive dialogue, historical awareness, and a nuanced understanding of power dynamics emerges as imperatives to navigate the complexities of the Texas-U.S. standoff. This peculiar intersection of history, politics, and border dynamics unfolds as a microcosm of the

broader challenges facing modern societies. As we dissect this standoff through the lens of Ibn Khaldun, we gain not only insights into a contemporary conflict but also a deeper understanding of the timeless forces that shape our political landscapes.

1- Navigating the Tapestry of History and Philosophy

In the intricate tapestry of human existence, history and philosophy emerge as twin strands, interwoven and inseparable. As we embark on a journey to explore the Texas-United States conflict¹ through the lenses of Ibn Khaldun's profound insights, we find ourselves traversing the corridors of time and delving into the depths of human thought.



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT
January 24, 2024

The federal government has broken the compact between the United States and the States. The Executive Branch of the United States has a constitutional duty to enforce federal laws protecting States, including immigration laws on the books right now. President Biden has refused to enforce those laws and has even violated them. The result is that he has smashed records for illegal immigration.

Despite having been put on notice in a series of letters—one of which I delivered to him by hand—President Biden has ignored Texas's demand that he perform his constitutional duties.

- President Biden has violated his oath to faithfully execute immigration laws enacted by Congress. Instead of prosecuting immigrants for the federal crime of illegal entry, President Biden has sent his lawyers into federal courts to sue Texas for taking action to secure the border.
- President Biden has instructed his agencies to ignore federal statutes that mandate the detention of illegal immigrants. The effect is to illegally allow their *en masse* parole into the United States.
- By wasting taxpayer dollars to tear open Texas's border security infrastructure, President Biden has enticed illegal immigrants away from the 28 legal entry points along this State's southern border—bridges where nobody drowns—and into the dangerous waters of the Rio Grande.

Under President Biden's lawless border policies, more than 6 million illegal immigrants have crossed our southern border in just 3 years. That is more than the population of 33 different States in this country. This illegal refusal to protect the States has inflicted unprecedented harm on the People all across the United States.

James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and the other visionaries who wrote the U.S. Constitution foresaw that States should not be left to the mercy of a lawless president who does nothing to stop external threats like cartels smuggling millions of illegal immigrants across the border. That is why the Framers included both Article IV, § 4, which promises that the federal government "shall protect each [State] against invasion," and Article I, § 10, Clause 3, which acknowledges "the States' sovereign interest in protecting their borders." *Arizona v. United States*, 567 U.S. 387, 419 (2012) (Scalia, J., dissenting).

The failure of the Biden Administration to fulfill the duties imposed by Article IV, § 4 has triggered Article I, § 10, Clause 3, which reserves to this State the right of self-defense. For these reasons, I have already declared an invasion under Article I, § 10, Clause 3 to invoke Texas's constitutional authority to defend and protect itself. That authority is the supreme law of the land and supersedes any federal statutes to the contrary. The Texas National Guard, the Texas Department of Public Safety, and other Texas personnel are acting on that authority, as well as state law, to secure the Texas border.

Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas

1-1- History, with its ceaseless march, serves as the backdrop against which the present conflict unfolds. It is a repository of narratives, a mosaic of triumphs and tribulations, shaping the contours of our

¹ Texas Governor's Office. (2024, January 24). Border Statement. Texas Governor's Office. https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/press/Border_Statement_1.24.2024.pdf

collective identity. The Texas-United States conflict, a contemporary chapter in this grand narrative, draws upon historical precedents, echoing the struggles and aspirations of those who came before.

1-2- Philosophy, the eternal quest for understanding, provides the intellectual framework to interpret the complexities of human experience. Ibn Khaldun², a philosopher, sociologist, and politician of medieval times, extends an invitation to engage in a dialogue across centuries. His ideas, rooted in the historical context of his era, reverberate through time, offering timeless insights into the nature of the state, the dynamics of power, and the cyclical patterns shaping civilizations.

As we embark on this exploration, the intersection of history and philosophy becomes the crucible of understanding. Ibn Khaldun's conceptualization of the state as the “spatial and temporal extension of the rule of a particular faction” functions as our guiding star³. It beckons us to examine not only the events that unfold but also the undercurrents of political rule, societal structures, and the intricate dance between federal and state authorities.

The factors contributing to the fall of the state, as delineated by Ibn Khaldun, form the foundational pillars of our analysis. Monopoly of power, corruption of state fanaticism, indulgence in luxury, lack of production, and defects in essential state elements—these elements become the key to unraveling the intricacies of the Texas-United States conflict. They serve as the threads that weave through the historical context, offering a tapestry of understanding.

Ibn Khaldun's classification of countries into diverse types—the state of the natural order, the state of the Sharia system, the state of the positive system, and the state of the civil system—invites us to contemplate the ethical dimensions of governance. As we examine the conflict, we ponder whether the struggle for authority aligns with principles rooted in serving justice and legitimate rule or deviates into realms devoid of ethical considerations.

The theory of cyclical succession introduces a temporal dimension to our analysis. Through the phases of victory, tyranny, emptiness, contentment, and extravagance, we discern the evolutionary trajectory of political entities. Applying this theory to conflict, we seek to understand the present situation and envisage potential future developments, acknowledging the cyclical nature of political systems.

Ibn Khaldun's analogy between the lifespan of an organic organism and that of a state adds a contemplative layer to our exploration. The notion that any state has a lifespan of one hundred and twenty years, consisting of three generations of forty years each, encourages us to view the conflict not merely as a snapshot but as part of a broader historical narrative.

In this preface, we stand at the crossroads of history and philosophy, poised to unravel the complexities of the Texas-United States conflict through the wisdom of Ibn Khaldun. As we embark on this intellectual voyage, let us navigate the currents of time and thought with curiosity, seeking insights that bridge the gap between past and present and illuminate the path to a deeper understanding of the delicate balance between national and state interests.

² FROMHERZ, A. J. (2011). *Ibn Khaldun: Life and Times*. Edinburgh University Press.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1r25pb>

³ Khaldûn, I. (2015). *The Muqaddimah: An introduction to history - Abridged edition*. Princeton University Press.

2- Ibn Khaldun's Insights and the Texas-U.S. Standoff

In the context of the current Texas-United States conflict⁴, delving into the ideas and perspectives of the philosopher, sociologist, and politician Ibn Khaldun emerges as a paramount undertaking. His comprehensive insights into the conceptualization of the state, its historical emergence, and the multifaceted factors contributing to its decline provide an invaluable lens through which to scrutinize the complexities of the ongoing situation. This analysis will expand upon our previous exploration, integrating additional dimensions to offer a scholarly and historical examination.

Ibn Khaldun's foundational premise is that the state represents the “spatial and temporal extension of the rule of a particular faction.” This conceptualization underscores the inseparable connection between the state, society, and political rule⁵. In applying this framework to the Texas-United States conflict, it becomes essential to evaluate how the dynamics between federal and state authorities are intertwined with societal structures and political rule.

The multifaceted factors contributing to the fall of the state, as identified by Ibn Khaldun, present a comprehensive framework for understanding the challenges faced by political entities during times of upheaval. The dangers of a monopoly of power, corruption of state fanaticism, indulgence in luxury, lack of production, and defects in essential state elements highlight vulnerabilities that, if unaddressed, can lead to the destabilization of the state. As we analyze the

Texas-United States conflict, these factors become touchstones for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of both federal and state governance.

Ibn Khaldun's classification of countries into four types—the state of the natural order, the state of the Sharia system, the state of the positive system, and the state of the civil system—presents a nuanced spectrum of governance principles. His preference for the state of the Sharia system, rooted in serving the Sharia and relying on legitimate rules, adds a layer of ethical consideration to the analysis. How the conflict aligns with or deviates from these governance principles provides insight into the ethical dimensions of the struggle for authority.

The theory of cyclical succession, delineating the five phases a state undergoes—victory, tyranny, emptiness, contentment, and extravagance—introduces a temporal dimension to the analysis. Applying this theory to the Texas-United States conflict, one can trace the evolution of political power, economic organization, and the behavior of rulers over time. Understanding the present situation through the lens of these phases offers a predictive element, allowing for a more informed analysis of potential future developments.

Ibn Khaldun's analogy between the lifespan of an organic organism and that of a state provides a captivating perspective on the temporal nature of political entities. The suggestion that any state has a lifespan of one hundred and twenty years, consisting of three generations of forty years each, prompts reflection on the cyclical nature of political systems. How the current conflict aligns with the phases of this cyclical succession offers a historical and predictive dimension to our analysis.

Accordingly, Ibn Khaldun's profound insights into the nature of the state, its vulnerabilities, and the cyclical patterns it undergoes serve as a rich foundation for interpreting the Texas-United States conflict. The emphasis on justice,

⁴ Badawi, H. (2024). *Eagle Pass Standoff: Unveiling the Border Dispute and Its Implications for Federal-State Dynamics*. International Dynamics Review. <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7158165749344186370/>

⁵ ROSENTHAL, F. (2005). *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History - Abridged Edition* (N. J. DAWOOD, Ed.; ABR-Abridged). Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvwh8dcw>

governance principles, and the organic nature of statehood contributes to a nuanced understanding of the ongoing struggles between federal and state authorities. By integrating these perspectives, our analysis moves beyond a contemporary examination, evolving into a scientific-historical exploration that provides valuable insights for evaluating the delicate balance between national and state interests.

3- Echoes of Ibn Khaldun in the Texas-U.S. Standoff

In tracing the contours of the Texas-United States conflict through the lens of Ibn Khaldun's profound insights, we find ourselves at the confluence of history, philosophy, and contemporary struggles for authority. The intricate tapestry of human experience, woven with the threads of time and thought, unravels a narrative that echoes the wisdom of a medieval philosopher in the context of a modern-day standoff.

Ibn Khaldun's conceptualization of the state as the “spatial and temporal extension of the rule of a particular faction” resonates as we witness the clash between federal and state authorities in the vast expanse of Texas. The state, inseparable from society and political rule, becomes the stage upon which political ideologies, legal battles, and societal aspirations converge.

The factors contributing to the fall of the state, identified by Ibn Khaldun, serve as beacons illuminating the challenges faced by political entities in times of upheaval. The dangers of a monopoly of power, corruption of state fanaticism, indulgence in luxury, lack of production, and defects in essential state elements become touchstones for evaluating the strengths and vulnerabilities of both federal and state governance.

Ibn Khaldun's classification of countries into distinct types invites us to ponder the ethical dimensions of governance. In the Texas-U.S. conflict, we discern echoes of his inclination

towards the state of the Sharia system, rooted in justice and legitimate rule. As the struggle for authority unfolds, we scrutinize whether ethical considerations guide the actions of those in power or if the contest deviates into realms devoid of principled governance.

The theory of cyclical succession, which delineates the phases a state undergoes, adds a temporal dimension to our analysis. Through victory, tyranny, emptiness, contentment, and extravagance, we trace the evolution of political power, economic organization, and the behavior of rulers. Applying this theory to the conflict, we discern patterns that transcend the immediacy of the standoff, offering a historical and predictive lens.

Ibn Khaldun's analogy between the lifespan of an organic organism and that of a state prompts contemplation of the cyclical nature of political systems. The suggestion that any state has a lifespan of one hundred and twenty years, consisting of three generations of forty years each, invites us to view the Texas-U.S. standoff not merely as a snapshot but as part of a broader historical narrative.

As we draw the curtains on this exploration, the wisdom of Ibn Khaldun serves as a timeless guide through the corridors of human history and political philosophy. The Texas-U.S. standoff, with its complexities and echoes of historical patterns, becomes a contemporary chapter in the ongoing narrative of federal and state relations. In the delicate balance between national and state interests, the legacy of Ibn Khaldun offers insights that transcend temporal and geographical boundaries.

Ultimately, as we contemplate the denouement of the Texas-U.S. conflict, let us carry forward the lessons gleaned from Ibn Khaldun's sagacity. In navigating the currents of contemporary disputes, may we strive for governance rooted in justice, ethical considerations, and an understanding of the cyclical nature of political entities. For in the echoes of Ibn Khaldun, we

find not only an insightful guide for the present but a beacon illuminating the path to a more nuanced understanding of the delicate interplay between the state and federal authorities in the pages of history.

4- America's Crossroads: Unity Amidst Diversity

Recent events in the United States, particularly the incident at Shelby Park in Eagle Pass, have thrust profound issues within American society into the spotlight, prompting a crucial conversation about the nation's unity and its historical foundation. Despite the U.S. priding itself on being a melting pot committed to the principles of assimilation, contemporary challenges, and historical realities necessitate a critical examination of the sustainability of this model. As the nation grapples with the aftermath of George Floyd's death, it becomes imperative to delve into the foundations upon which America was built and whether its multi-ethnic population is genuinely bound by shared interests or standing on the precipice of a potential crisis.

4-1- Historical Fabric of American Society

The historical fabric of American society is woven with threads of tension between its professed ideals and the harsh realities of discrimination. Despite eloquent statements by leaders like Franklin D. Roosevelt emphasizing allegiance to the country over racial or ancestral ties, historical actions tell a different story. The mistreatment of indigenous people, the exploitation of African slaves, and discriminatory practices against various immigrant groups stain the nation's history, creating a complex tapestry of inequality.

The theory of assimilation, championed by leaders like Roosevelt, rests on the assumption that a common interest will unite all races. However, this idealistic vision faces challenges

as America's history reveals systemic injustices and discrimination. The rhetoric of assimilation often clashes with the lived experiences of minority communities, casting doubt on the strength of the nation's unity.

While America is often portrayed as a beacon of democracy and freedom, it now stands at a crossroads. The fragility of its foundation becomes apparent upon scrutinizing the social fabric that supposedly binds its multi-ethnic populace. The blend of races, devoid of strong cultural and traditional ties, might prove to be a precarious basis for a united nation, especially in the face of contemporary challenges.

Abraham Lincoln, a revered figure in American history, foresaw potential challenges to the nation's unity. His prediction about the decline in progress, particularly regarding racial and religious equality, raises pertinent questions about the sustainability of America's diverse experiment. As Lincoln noted, the nation began with a declaration of equality for all, but practical realities have often fallen short of this lofty ideal.

4-2- Contemporary Challenges

Recent incidents of violence and unrest following instances of police brutality, such as the tragic killing of George Floyd, highlight the simmering discontent within various ethnic communities. The promise of equal treatment for all is being questioned, and the notion of a shared American identity is under intense scrutiny. The existence of ethnic neighborhoods, such as Harlem, Chinatown, and others, raises profound concerns about the cohesiveness of a nation divided along cultural lines.

America's actions, particularly its interventions in various regions and its incitement against ethnic and religious minorities worldwide, may be coming back to haunt it. As ethnicities within America maintain distinct neighborhoods, the

consequences of divisive rhetoric on a global scale may eventually affect the nation domestically. The global perception of America's internal struggles further complicates its position on the world stage.

In drawing parallels with the incident at Shelby Park in Eagle Pass, Texas, it becomes evident that both situations are symptomatic of a larger issue within American society. The Shelby Park incident, with its tensions between federal and state authorities, mirrors the broader struggle seen in the aftermath of George Floyd's death. Both incidents underscore the complexities of governance, constitutional interpretations, and the delicate balance between central and regional powers.

Closure

America finds itself at a critical juncture, grappling with the consequences of its historical actions and the challenges posed by its diverse population. The ideals of assimilation and a common interest that transcends race are being tested in the crucible of contemporary issues. Whether Lincoln's prophecy of a nation in decline will come to pass remains uncertain, but acknowledging the flaws in the foundation and addressing the deep-seated issues is essential for the United States to navigate the complexities of its diverse reality. As the nation grapples with its identity, the path forward requires a nuanced understanding of historical missteps and a commitment to genuine unity beyond rhetoric. Both the incident surrounding George Floyd's death and the events at Shelby Park emphasize the urgency of addressing systemic issues for a more inclusive and harmonious future.

تُعد الدولة عند ابن خلدون الامتداد المكاني والزمني لحكم "عصبية" ما، وتقوم هذه "العصبية" على الدين، أو الولاء، أو الفكر المشترك، أو القومية، أو ما إلى ذلك من مشتركات تصلح انطلاقا لبناء الدول واستمراره.

بهذه بالعصبية القوية "يكون تمهيد الدولة وحماتها من أولها"، ونفس أساس قيامها يسبب سقوطها أيضا، ولا تقوم العصبية إلا بالركون إلى المجتمع/الاجتماع أو بمصطلح ابن خلدون "العمران".

وأكد ابن خلدون بأن الأمم تمر بعدة مراحل عمرية من ناحيتين هما: الأحوال العامة من السياسية والاقتصاد والعمران والأخلاق، والتطورات التي تحدث من ناحية العظمة والقوة والاتساع. ويقرر أن كل دولة تنتقل بين خمسة أطوار وصولاً إلى الأفول بعد القوة.

واليوم في تكساس تتحرك "العصبية الأولى"، فهل بدأ مجد "روما العصر" بالتفكك؟

من بيروت، البروفيسور حبيب البدوي