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The Political and Social Problems of the Contemporary Middle East and its Neighbouring Areas

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Preface

The contemporary Middle East is described as an area of tremendous upheaval in the International Relations arena. The first two decades of the 21st century have especially been seen as a period in which the fragile stability of the Middle East has been under the pressure of indigenous as well as outside factors. The terrorist attack against the United States that took place on September 11th 2001 was a watershed moment for the region. The "War against terror" declared by the then American president, George W. Bush, has practically been implemented in the Middle East. Two Middle Eastern states, Iran and Iraq, were labelled 'rouge states' by Bush's Administration and accused of being sponsors of international terrorist groups. Consequently, the White House decided to remove Saddam Hussein from power by force. However, the American invasion against Iraq negatively influenced not only its security situation but also the entire region. Despite the fact that the gory regime of Saddam Hussein had been removed from power, the U.S. has proven to be unprepared to establish new institutions and state authorities. The internal situation of

Iraq steadily deteriorated. The post-Hussein Iraq was an area of Shia-Sunni sectarian conflict, the old regime's military activities against U.S.-led coalition and many other atrocities. Moreover, the state of political chaos allowed for the development of Al-Kaida in Iraq (AKI). Paradoxically, the American invasion of Iraq led not to a decrease but an increase in terrorist activity in the Middle East. Moreover, terrorist attacks also occurred in other regions of the world – predominantly in Europe but also in parts of Asia. The other important consequence of the Second Gulf War was the strategic activity of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Tehran used the situation in post-Saddam Iraq to expand its political influence. The policy of sponsoring radical Shia military and political groups was one of the causes of the notorious lack of internal stability, which in turn, increased the International Coalition's cost of their policy toward Iraq.

At the end of 2010, the Middle East experienced another crisis. The Arab Spring caused crises of an internal, external, political and security nature in the region. The non-democratic and authoritarian regimes were subject to a series of popular revolutionary movements. The origins, course and consequences of the Arab Spring were not uniform in Arab states. Authoritarian rulers of countries such as Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen were forced to resign under pressure from popular movements. In some of these states, it caused internal friction in the form of civil war. Nevertheless, the process of political transition may not be regarded as a success. The obvious example of this situation is Egypt. At the beginning of 2011, President Husni Mubarak, under pressure from widespread unrest, had to resign. During the following months political reforms were introduced. Their aim was to establish a new competitive political system. Consequently, the new Constitutional Law enabled the organisation of the first free elections in Egypt. Nevertheless, the political course taken by the victorious Muslim Brotherhood finally led to the next wave of popular unrest and their rule was ended by a military coup. Three years after the fall of the Mubarak regime in Egypt, the authoritarian rule and influence of the army had been restored. Moreover, the Arab monarchies of the Gulf were able to crush reformist movements without having to initiate changes to their political systems and they were able to avoid internal disruptions. The only state that was able to build a new and relatively democratic political system was Tunisia. The other aspect of the Arab Spring may be observed in the area of international interactions. The chain of events has changed the structure of regional policy and the roles played by external powers. Events such as the civil war in Syria, Libya and Yemen were arenas that saw the creation of new actors, such as the Islamic State, and forced local and global powers to redefine their policies toward MENA. This situation finally led to a new phase in the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran and enabled the Russia Federation to rebuild its regional influence. Seven years after

the beginning of popular unrest in the Arab States, the internal and external situation of the Middle Eastern remains in flux.

This special issue presents the perspective of the research that focuses on the problems of the contemporary Arab World and other related areas. The most important feature of this volume is its interdisciplinary approach. The papers refer not only to political studies but also represent the areas of culture and social studies. Most of the Authors are research fellows from the Department of the Middle East and North Africa at the University of Lodz. There are also contributors from the University of Warsaw, University of Bialystok in Poland and the University of Padua in Italy. One of the Authors is an independent researcher. The issues taken by the Authors are based in the Arab World but two of the papers are connected with other geographical areas. The topics presented in this special issue are different in their substance nevertheless they possess some common themes such as the influence of the Arab Spring on the local and international situation of the region. They try to establish in what manner this period in the history of the contemporary Middle East has reshaped not only the political scene of the indigenous states and their international position but also the impact it has had on their respective societies.

Ewelina Waśko-Owsiejczuk explores the question of the American invasion on Iraq. She focuses her attention not only on the circumstances that influenced the decision of the Bush Administration to put an the end to the rule of Saddam Hussein by force. She stated that the "Freedom Agenda" of President George W. Bush for the Middle East assumed that the liberation of Iraq from the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and the start of political change would trigger the process of democratization of the entire region. The main point of this article is to show that numerous mistakes made by the American administration meant this action was completely unproductive. After the invasion, Iraq did not become a developing democracy but rather an example of a failing state.

An essay of **Jakub Slawek** looks to shed light on the political and security developments in Yemen that ultimately resulted in the Saudi-led military operation in this country. It discusses the political background behind the Yemeni revolution of 2011, its positive outcome in the shape of the results of the National Dialogue Conference and the reasons for the collapse of the efforts to stabilize Yemen.

In his paper **Robert Czulda** examines the security situation in the sub-region of the Gulf. He discusses the question of the defence dilemma of the GCC states. The main goal of this article is to present and assess the GCC's threat perception, which is followed by an analysis of the multilateral and unilateral responses. Another aspect of the paper is to assess the degree to which the GCC states are able to establish a joint and effective military bloc within the Persian Gulf which would enable them to improve their security in the face of symmetrical and asymmetrical threats.

Paulina Warsa discusses the situation in post-Saddam Iraq. She analyses the question of national identity in a state divided along sectarian lines. To make such an analysis, the concept of the 'Post-Almohad Man' by Malek Bennabi is used. The Author looks at whether the Bennabi's theory is applicable to Iraq to describe its internal problems.

The paper of **Alberto Gasparetto** refers to the area of international relations in the Middle East after the Arab Spring. It discusses the situation in Syria, especially the civil war and its influence on the policy of the regional powers of Turkey and Iran. Gasparetto suggests that after the outbreak of civil war in Syria, the policies of the two regional powers towards the Assad regime were different. Turkey has seen the Syrian official government as an enemy while the Iranian approach was to enable its survival. It could lead to geopolitical rivalry between Ankara and Teheran. Nevertheless, the emergence of ISIS and the activity of Kurdish military groups were the main factors that caused the rapprochement of the two countries. However, after the end of the atrocities in Syria the geopolitical ambitions of Turkey and Iran may lead to future tensions in their bilateral relations.

The article of **Marek Dziekan** discusses the novel *2025. An-Nida al-Akhir* [2025. The Last Call] written by a young Egyptian journalist and writer – Mustafa al-Husayni. The novel was published in early 2011, before the fall of Husni Mubarak in Egypt. It describes a revolution against the regime of Jamal al-Mubarak, son of Husni, spurred on by a group of young Egyptians. The story takes place in 2025 and anticipates the development of the political situation in Egypt and the Middle East between 2011 and 2025 in a utopian/dystopian manner. Alongside *Utopia* by Ahmad Khalid Tawfik and the poetry of Usama al-Abnubi and Abd ar-Rahman al-Abnudi, al-Husayni's book is considered to be a prediction of the Arab Spring in Egypt.

Blanka Rogowska explores the question of women's participation in the Arab revolution in Egypt. Her main aim is to describe the influence of the fall of Mubarak regime on the political and social status of women. Rogowska posits that Egyptian women were active participants of the revolution. They were hoping that the change of the political regime would positively change their status inside Egyptian society. The victory of the Muslim Brotherhood in parliamentary and presidential elections disappointed them. This led to them becoming politically active again, this time against President Mursi. Rogowska also analyses the status of women under the Sisi presidency and explains whether the social position of women really improved in comparison to the Mubarak regime

The last two papers geographically extend beyond the region of the Middle East. Their common theme is to take into consideration the relations between the Federation of Russia and the Middle East as well as the Muslim World. **Andrzej Stopczyński** discusses the question of the Russian position towards the Arabs Spring. He suggests that President Putin, as well as the other international leaders, was surprised by the series of events that occurred in the Middle East. After a few

months his administration was able to prepare a solid strategy toward these regional challenges. The conflict in Syria enabled Russia to restore its influence and position of power that may enable it to resolve regional problems in the Middle East. Nevertheless, the Arab Spring was a challenge not only for foreign policy but also the internal policy of the Russia Federation because of the influence on the country's Muslim population. and the dangerous prospect of the emergence of Jihadi movements. Putin's administration was also successful in this field. The steps taken by the Russian Authorities proved to be successful and the danger of the development of Muslim extremism has been overcome.

The essay by **Izabela Kończak** refers to polygyny as one of the most important social issues regarding the civil status of Muslims in the Russia Federation. Since the 1960s, the country's penal code has banned bigamy and polygamy. After Perestroika and the end of communist rule in Russia, this situation remains unchanged. Nevertheless, the rebuilding of the religious aspect of the Muslim population had raised the question of polygyny as part of religious identity. This has caused a contradiction between the religious and civil institutions. This article presents the political and social discourse among the question of polygyny in Russia over recent years.

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American Plans to Build Democracy in the Middle East After 9/11: the Case of Iraq

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Abstract

The "Freedom Agenda" of President George W. Bush for the Middle East assumed that the liberation of Iraq from the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and the start of political change would trigger the process of democratization of the entire region. Encouraged by financial and economic support, Arab countries should have been willing to implement political and educational support, which would lead to the creation of civil society and grassroots political changes initiated by society itself. A number of mistakes made by the Bush administration in Iraq has not only caused the mission of the democratization of Iraq to be a failure, but also influenced the situation that today Iraq is closer to being a failed state than a democracy.

Keywords: United States, Iraq, Terrorism, Extremism, Democracy, Middle East

Introduction

The first signal of the fact that the administration of President George W. Bush had a "Freedom Agenda" for the Middle East was the message he gave in the State of the Union in 2002, in which the president stressed that the US will promote and support democratic values throughout the world, including in Islamic countries (*President Delivers State of the Union Address*). In June 2002, President Bush argued that "the peoples of the Islamic nations want and deserve the same freedoms and opportunities as people in every nation" (*President Bush Delivers Graduation Speech at West Point*).

After the announcements came the time to act, firstly to liberate the Afghan people from the Taliban regime, and then to overthrow the dictator, Saddam Hussein, in Iraq. The purpose of this article is to analyze the declarations and actions of the administration of President George W. Bush in the democratization of Iraq. It also aims to show the errors committed by the Americans, which essentially influenced the failure of the mission to spread democracy and freedom in the Middle East. Here it is important to answer the following questions: What actions did the G.W. Bush administration take to democratize Iraq? What mistakes were committed? Can democracy be introduced by military intervention? Is the American model of democracy so versatile that it can be adapted by Iraq? What mistakes were made during the creation of the Constitution of Iraq? Were the Iraqis ready for the introduction of democracy? At what level is democracy functioning in Iraq 15 years after the US invasion? Did the change of power in Iraq after 2003 contribute to the strengthening of rights and freedoms of Iraqis? There will also be an attempt to answer a final question: what is the future of Iraq – will it transform itself into a democratic state or fall apart?

The American Initiative to Democratize the Middle East

Before President George W. Bush issued an official order to launch the war in Iraq in December 2002, Secretary of State Colin Powell announced a bold plan to build a democracy in the Middle East. For this purpose, the *U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative* – MEPI was created, the aim of which was to carry out economic, political and educational reforms in the region. The results of this program were to be the spread of democracy and a free market in the Middle East, which in turn would bring prosperity, political freedom, women's empowerment and modern education (*The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative: Building Hope for the Years Ahead, The Middle East Partnership Initiative Story*). MEPI was to be based on four pillars.

The first – economic cooperation to fight against unemployment in the region by carrying out economic reforms, increased investment and private sector

development. The second pillar was political, connected with the strengthening of civil society and political systems, and the development of a free and independent media. The Bush administration offered the Arab countries support with the holding of free and fair elections, strengthening democratic processes through training members of political parties and journalists, promoting the rule of law through education on rights and civil liberties, as well as reforms of the courts, which was to contribute to the strengthening of domestic law. The third pillar concerned education – it assumed greater opportunities for higher education, improvement in the quality of education, expanding access to education and development of professional skills, which would result in a decrease of unemployment in the region (*The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative: Building Hope for the Years Ahead, The Middle East Partnership Initiative Story*).

The fourth pillar referred to the empowerment of women in the Middle East, including their increasing participation in political and economic life. Particular emphasis was placed on training in order to increase the competitiveness of women in the labor market. Public awareness campaigns were also to be carried out, promoting gender equality and women's rights (*Empowering Women*).

In addition to MEPI, other programs were introduced in subsequent years, including the *US-Middle East Free Trade Area* – MEFTA[1] in May 2003; the *Greater Middle East Initiative* – GMEI[2] in February 2004 and the *Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative* – BMENA[3] in June 2004. All the programs had a similar goal – to stabilize the economic, political and social situation in the region,[4] and the starting point was to be Iraq. President Bush believed that freeing the oppressed Iraqi people from Saddam Hussein's regime would start a "domino effect" and

1 MEFTA's aim was to focus on cooperation between countries in order to increase trade, investment from the USA and the whole world, as well as to support the internal reforms that constitute the rules of a legal state, protection of private property, creation of convenient conditions for the growth of the economy and the welfare of society. This program was to support the diversification of the economy of the Middle East, to improve its state, to create new places of work in a rapidly growing society and finally to stimulate US export (See more: Bolle 1–16).

2 The main aim of GMEI was to open markets and to export democracy to the Arab world. GMEI realized wide ranged programs that were to solve various regional problems such as: preparation and the conducting of free elections, improvement of independent media, the fight against bribery, increase in the level of education, creation of new places of work, an increase of women rights ,and an increase in the possibility to enter the job market (See more: Lewis).

3 The main assumption of BMENA was to improve the engagement and cooperation between society and regional governments in the scope of economic, social and political reforms. This initiative created conditions to start a dialogue over the direction of reforms between regional government representatives, countries from the G8 group and local business leaders (See more: *Broader Middle East/N. Africa Partnership*).

4 More information about initiatives taken by the Bush administration in the scope of democratization of the Middle East see: Carothers 4–7; Waśko-Owsiejczuk 2015, 24–32.

initiate a process of political transformation in the region. "The establishment of a free Iraq in the heart of the Middle East will be a watershed event in the global democratic revolution" (*Remarks by President*).

The Imposition of Democracy by Force

Believing that the American model of democracy is so versatile that it could be adopted in all circumstances, Americans chose to carry out the ambitious goal of giving the Iraqis an accelerated course in democracy. The plan of the Bush administration was to be carried out according to the following script – after the overthrow of the regime, a liberated and happy nation would prepare a new constitution together with the Americans, conduct elections and elect a new parliament, government and president. As it turned out, the plan to democratize Iraq was much more difficult than originally expected. It didn't help that from the beginning of the invasion many mistakes were made, whose consequences are visible to this day.

The first mistake of the Bush administration was trying to introduce democracy by force. The best chance for adapting a democratic system in a country without a democratic tradition is when the process is evolutionary rather than revolutionary, initiated from the bottom up by society, not by foreign governments. Contrary to the assurances of the US administration, Iraqis did not greet US soldiers with flowers like liberators, but saw them as aggressors (Dziekan 198). Attempts to introduce democracy through military intervention created fertile ground for the development of extremist groups in Iraq, which were able to recruit new members using propaganda with a message that Islam was being attacked by the West, and that Iraqis should stop the imperial ambitions of the Americans (Waśko-Owsiejczuk, 2017).

The second mistake was the lack of legitimacy for the actions of US troops in Iraq by the United Nations. Bush's decision to go to war in Iraq had no basis in international law, so it was illegal in nature. Americans had no legitimate reasons for entering the territory of Iraq. Accusations by the Bush administration of the alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction by Saddam Hussein, and his connections with Al-Qaeda, were not confirmed by evidence provided by the Americans (*Iraq and Weapons of Mass Destruction*), and were not sufficient reason to enter the territory of another sovereign country. It is worth noting that Iraq was not involved at that time in any aggressive action abroad. President Bush was not stopped by the millions of anti-war protesters around the world, nor the lack of consent of the UN Security Council. The lack of legitimacy from the United Nations for the US military operation meant that coalition soldiers not only faced the strength of the Hussein regime, but also that of ordinary citizens of Iraq, who saw the Americans as invaders who came to fight.

How to Control the Chaos in Iraq?

The third mistake of the Bush administration was the lack of developed plans for the stabilization mission in Iraq. The propaganda document outlining the plan was published as late as 2005. The plan was divided into three stages: the first was to build democratic institutions and structures responsible for security and to conduct key economic reforms that would create the foundation for a strong economy. The second stage included the adoption of a constitution and the organization of democratic elections, with a fully constitutional government emerging from the process. This was supposed to be an example for other reformers in the region, who would be encouraged by the effectiveness of political change in Iraq and would follow the example of the Iraqi government. In addition, at this stage, there was suppose to be a fully operational service responsible for the security of Iraq, able to maintain order in the country, and the economy was to be moving in the direction of achieving its economic potential. The last stage idealistically assumed that Iraq would defeat terrorists and insurgents; thus in the region there would be peace, union, stabilization and security, and the democratically elected government would be an equal partner in the global war on terrorism. Americans were to give support to Iraqis in countering false propaganda and manipulation of the public in the election. The US government assumed that America's enemies may want to obtain legal authority in Iraq by being close to local community leaders and influencing them. Moreover, there were plans for the building of sustainable, pluralistic national institutions that would protect the interests of the Iraqis and facilitate the integration of the country into the international community. Support in this area would include the creation of an economic basis for a self-sufficient economy by rebuilding the infrastructure of Iraq, reforming the economy, connecting it to the international business community and improving the living conditions of the inhabitants of the country (*National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*). The long awaited strategy for Iraq was not a breakthrough, nor did it introduce any new solutions. The document was filled with idealistic generalities, and was more in the form of a "wish" list than anything else.

US troops coped with the first phase of the operation, which was to overthrow the Hussein regime, without any major problems. However, the biggest challenge was to control the situation in the second phase, the stabilization mission, due to the fact that liberated Iraq plunged into chaos (Ricks A01). Violence and lawlessness prevailed in the country, with looted shops, government buildings, banks, power plants and factories. Before the Americans invaded Iraq, Hussein released prisoners, who were involved in the destruction of public facilities and the oil industry. They were armed with guns, rocket-propelled grenades and explosives which they stole from weapon storage facilities that the Americans hadn't secured. In many places, the civilian population was deprived of electricity and water, which

intensified social frustrations. This difficult situation enflamed conflicts between nationalities and ethnicities. Problems with bringing order to "liberated" Iraq were mainly due to strategic mistakes committed by the Bush administration. One of them was the assignment of too few troops to control the situation. An army of 150,000 US troops was sufficient to overcome the forces of Hussein, but was too small to bring order to a country of 25 million people (Tanner 249–250).

The fifth error of the Bush administration was the de-Ba'athification of the Iraqi security forces, which consisted of an army of 385,000 soldiers, 285,000 police officers and 50,000 officers in the presidential security services (Pfiffner 80–82). Assuming that the soldiers and police officers from the time of Saddam Hussein posed a potential threat to both the formation of new government authorities, and to American units, it was decided to build Iraqi security forces from scratch (Dobbins et al. 53–55). Even then the Bush administration was warned about the consequences of such a decision. It was strongly suggested that Iraqi soldiers and police officers should continue to be paid in order to gain their support and minimize the risk of them joining the fight against the US coalition. Ignoring this criticism, instead of only removing loyalists to Saddam Hussein from the armed forces, a decision was made to dissolve all security structures, resulting in hundreds of thousands of destitute men left with no means to survive. It is worth noting that this substantial group not only had military training but also weapons, munitions and armored vehicles (See more: Slevin A01; Hirsh). It cannot be considered a coincidence that former officers of the army of Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi Intelligence personnel are currently in the ranks of the terrorist organization called the "Islamic State." They have experience, tactics and useful knowledge in the form of battle plans and smuggling networks, which in the 1990s were used by the regime in order to avoid sanctions, and now make it easier for terrorists to illegally trade petrol (See more: Sly).

Another mistake the Bush administration made was the introduction of a ban against BASS party members seeking employment in the public sector, which during the reign of Saddam Hussein served him as a tool for controlling society and the country. Rather than only depriving the closest associates of Hussein employment, 85 to 100 000 people lost their jobs (*Coaliton Provisional Authority Order Number 1: De-Ba`Athi cation Of Iraqi Society*). A signi cant proportion of this number were rank and file party members who only joined its ranks in order to be able to remain employed. The result of this decision was not only an increase in frustration among the tens of thousands of educated people who could not find employment in Iraq, but also the depriving of sectors such as health, transport, energy, telecommunications and education of competent employees. Many of them joined the ranks of extremist groups, hoping that with the elimination of the occupier in the form of the American coalition, they would be able to play an important role in the new Iraq (Pfiffner 76–80; Swansbrough 146).

Double Standards Used by the Americans an Obstacle to the Democratization of the Middle East?

Another mistake the Americans made that increased the problem of democratization of Iraq and the entire Middle East, was turning a blind eye to the unethical and illegal actions of US forces. Various events, such as the disclosure of information about the torture of prisoners in Abu Ghraib by US soldiers,[5] the use of white phosphorus as a weapon in the battle of Fallujah,[6] as well as the accidental shooting of civilians,[7] resulted in an increase in anti-American sentiment in the region that undermined the credibility of the mission to promote US democracy in the Middle East. As a result, there has been an increase in anti-American sentiment around the world, which in turn facilitated the actions of terrorists who wanted to recruit volunteers to fight in defense of the Muslim world against the domination of the United States (See more: Datta 8; Nasr).

Another mistake made by President Bush was the lack of consistency between his statements and actions, the use of double standards in relation to regimes friendly to the United States, as well as being influenced by particular interests, rather than the common good. When issuing the decision to illegally attack Iraq, George W. Bush wanted to convince the public that this was a mission to free the oppressed Iraqis and bring them democracy. The main message was to show that US soldiers entered Iraq on moral grounds, in defense of innocent women and children from a brutal dictator (*President Bush Addresses the Nation*). An example of the use of double standards by this president of a superpower can be taken from his speech in November 2003 during the celebration of the 20th anniversary of an organization called the *National Endowment for Democracy*. During his lecture, he emphasized the contribution of Egypt in bringing peace to the Middle East. When referring to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he criticized Palestinian leaders for blocking reform and encouraging violence. In Bush's opinion, it was them, and not the Israeli authorities, that "were the main obstacle to peace." He praised the governments of Jordan and Kuwait for the way their elections had been conducted; Saudi Arabia for taking the first steps towards reform; and the government of Yemen for the introduction of a multi-party system (*Remarks by President*).

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5 In May 2004, "The New Yorker" presented various cases of Americans torturing Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghrabi where they were beaten, undressed, raped, electrocuted, led on a leash and had cold water poured over them (See more: Hersh).

6 In November 2004, during the battle of Fallujah, American soldiers used white phosphor not only to light the battle field (which is allowed by International Law) but also as a weapon (See more: Burns).

7 In April 2010, WikiLeaks published records that presented the murder of dozens of civilians in the suburbs of Bagdad by American soldiers (See more: *Collateral Murder*).

This speech is a clear example of double standards, using properly chosen arguments depending on whom the assessment is related to. Consequently, President Bush defended the faithful US ally – Israel, issued an unusually mild assessment of the pro-American governments of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan, where he saw significant progress in spreading freedom and democracy despite the fact that these countries routinely violated human rights, civil and political liberties, and the level of democracy, especially in Saudi Arabia, is not among the highest (*Arab Democracy*). The use of double standards has exacerbated the problems of the legitimacy of the American mission to spread democracy in the Middle East and progress in the process of democratization of the region. Other governments feared that, just like Iraq, they would lose their power through cooperation with the United States, and as a result they were very distrustful of American programs connected to political reform. Most of the population in the region was convinced that the Americans were more interested in their oil deposits than the good of the Iraqi people. Bush's critics accused him of a total lack of credibility in the implementation of US policy to promote democracy in the Arab world, and of creating favourable conditions for the development of Islamic extremism (Achcar).

The Lack of Consistency in the Implementation of Programs Promoting Democracy

Another mistake the Bush administration made was to allocate too little funds for the implementation of political reform programs and the lack of consistency in their implementation. Although the amount of $600 million that Americans have spent since 2002 until today (*About MEPI*) for the implementation of grant programs such as MEPI seems to be considerable, compared to US spending on security in the region, the budget for the promotion of democracy in the Middle East is more symbolic than strategic. For comparison, annual US spending on military programs in Iraq is nearly $400 million (McInerney et al.). The lack of consistency in the implementation of programs promoting democracy, meant that money was spent to support other initiatives than originally expected. For example, the MEPI program was designed in such a way that instead of supporting big government projects, it was to provide funding for smaller initiatives to build partnerships between NGOs and local civil society groups (See more: Yerkes et al.). The idea was that by supporting grassroots groups and building the foundations of civil society, Americans would have a better chance of adapting democracy in Iraq. While the concept was good, its implementation left much to be desired.

One of the distinguishing features of MEPI compared to other American programs was to be its refusal to finance government projects for the benefit of citizens'

initiatives. However, the vast majority of the funds, over 70 percent of the MEPI budget, was allocated to government programs, including workshops and seminars for Arab officials. Civil society projects were only allocated 18 percent of the budget. According to Sarah E. Yerkes and Tamara Cofman, this testifies to the fact that under the MEPI funded projects, no immediate controversy arose to question contemporary rulers, hence the American program operated within rules strictly defined by Arab governments (Yerkes et al.), most of which sought to maintain the status quo, and to not introduce major changes to the system (Yacoubian 14–16).

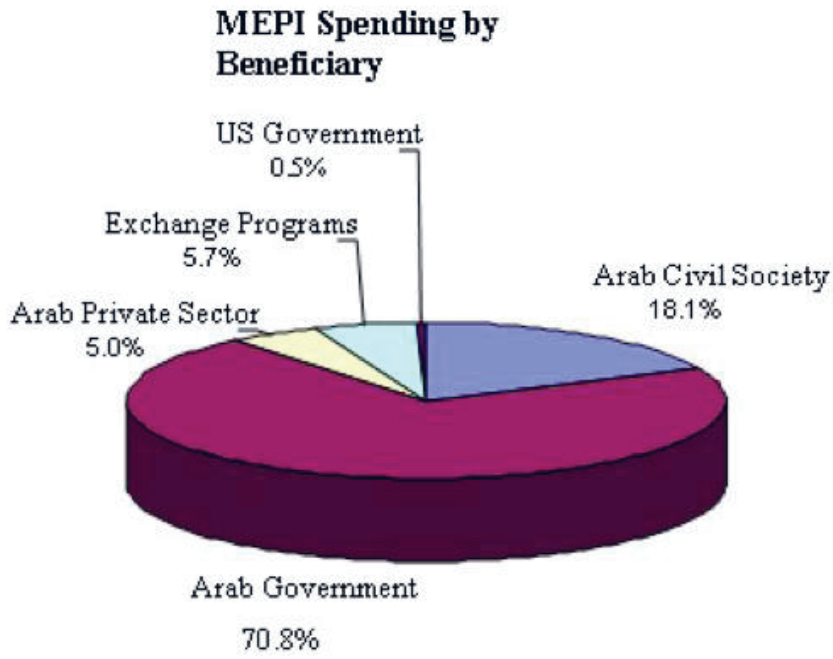

Chart 1. U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative Spending by Beneficiary
Source: Yerkes et al.

The plans of the Bush administration assumed the emergence of local leaders in civil society, which the Americans would provide with financial and technical support, while helping to develop grassroots movements, which in turn would lead to a velvet revolution dissolving the regimes present in the Arab countries. In fact, not much of MEPI funds were spent for this purpose. Most expenditures were earmarked to finance government projects, undermining the idea of the program and increasing mistrust among Arab activists who did not see MEPI as a tool to change the system (Yerkes et al.).

An American Style Democracy in Iraq?

Another mistake of the Bush administration was trying to bring democracy to Iraq, US-style, guaranteeing the right to vote in the new government for all citizens, which had to overcome ethnic and religious conflicts. The idea might have been well-meaning, but is it reasonable to question whether the Iraqis were ready for the introduction of democracy? In 2003, skeptics pointed to the fact that Iraqis were too fragmented a society for democracy to be maintained (See more: Byman). Given the unstable ground for the construction of democracy in Iraq, where after many years of rule by the Hussein regime and the war, the economy of the country was destroyed, fraught with economic sanctions, with no non-governmental political organizations, and enormous distrust between feuding ethnic and religious groups, an American-style democracy in Iraq seemed to be an unrealistic dream. This was confirmed many years later by Donald Rumsfeld himself. Rumsfeld acted as Secretary of Defense for the Bush administration, and was one of the main architects of the plans for the democratization of Iraq (See more: McCarthy). Even if democracy had a chance of being adopted in Arab countries, the Americans failed in its implementation. Assuming that local governments approached the plans of political reforms with great distance and distrust for fear of losing power, showing good practices and the teaching of democracy would not be sufficient. What was needed was also a strong incentive in the form of lucrative deals, such as accession to the World Trade Organization, as well as economic and financial assistance to countries that would decide to introduce political reforms (Yacoubian).

The problem was also the image of the United States, which no longer inspired confidence among the Arab states. The use of double standards in politics, human rights violations, and their use of torture, resulted in the weakening of the meaning, and even undermined the credibility of US initiatives associated with the rule of law, democracy and freedom in the region. Due to the fact that the American administration implemented political reform programs without wider consultation with the governments of Arab States, leaders looked for ulterior motives in the US initiatives, such as the desire to increase the control and influence of the superpower in Muslim countries (*The Greater Middle East Initiative*). This was especially true in the context of US access to oil and local markets, as well as the expansion of its network of military bases in the Middle East (Achcar). Some researchers emphasized that the strategic mistake was in not taking into account the role of political Islam, which could constitute the most powerful force for the proposed political changes in the Middle East (Yacoubian).

Iraq during the Reign of Nouri al-Maliki

Another mistake made by the Bush administration in 2006 was to support the candidate Nouri al-Maliki as prime minister of Iraq, with hope for the establishment of a consensus between the warring ethnic and religious groups in the region. He was to be a leader that would unite Iraq and lead it to democracy. Maliki, who during the Hussein regime was part of the opposition, quickly gained the support of the Iraqis and the Americans, thanks to announcements about bringing consensus between the minority Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish populations and declarations to withhold cooperation with Iran. However, it soon turned out that Maliki's statements about the desire for unity and putting the common good above any special interests proved to have no basis in reality. As indicated by the press, Maliki broke almost every promise he had given after his re-election as prime minister in 2010. Despite declaring a commitment to nominate candidates for Interior minister, Defense minister and Intelligence Chief, he did not fill these positions, and filled this power vacuum himself. He ruled with a strong hand, fighting and persecuting the opposition, breaking the law, and controlled the judiciary, police, army, intelligence services, media, and the income from crude oil. The amount of power he had was not much less than what Saddam Hussein had had. It was noted that "under these circumstances, renewed ethno-sectarian civil war in Iraq was not a possibility. It was a certainty" (Khedery).

Even if in the beginning it might have seemed that the holding of democratic elections, the emergence of government and the adoption of the constitution in Iraq would be beneficial for society, what occurred was that the foundations of a rickety democracy (See more: Kiwerska 2), "were replaced by an authoritarian ruler of several ethnic and sectarian autocrats" (Ghanim viii). Maliki effectively made sure that in the new democratic, sovereign and independent Iraq there would be no respect for civil liberties, the rule of law, and the constitution (Dodge). The withdrawal in December 2011 of American troops from Iraq removed the last barrier Maliki had to face before the introduction of the brutal repression of Sunni political leaders. Elections in Iraq can be described as a farce whose aim is to divide the spoils between the corrupt elites. Instead of the rule of law, the country is torn by corruption, nepotism and despotism. Behind the facade of democracy the most deprived are of course the people of Iraq, where nearly a quarter live in poverty without sustainable access to basic services, electricity or drinking water, while the government draws huge profits from oil exports (Mardini et al.). With all the inconveniences of everyday life, having access to satellite TV, the Internet and mobile networks is of little consolation for Iraqi citizens.

Haste was another mistake of the Bush administration, which wanted to hold elections, form a government and adopt a new constitution as soon as possible.

Writing a constitution was a much easier task than working out a political agreement and the allocation of power between Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds. It was faster to prepare a new constitution and announce "another success" in building democracy in Iraq (*Bush: America's Security Directly Linked to Freedom in Middle East*), than to spend time on difficult long negotiations and talks. Rather than impose its political and economic model on the people, the Bush administration should have tried to understand the internal dynamics of the region. Imposing an artificial institutional framework within an apparent democracy can not solve social problems and is not a way of developing a political agreement based on mutual trust and partnership (Caryl). Some researchers have pointed out that despite the noble declarations of the Bush administration, it was not interested in committing itself to the long and slow process of building democratic institutions in the countries of the Middle East. According to James M. Lindsay, the US President gave a clear signal that the role of the superpower in the process of democratization of the region was reduced to overthrowing the rule of tyrants and giving the public the possibility to develop a democratic system on their own. The theory went like this – "we give people freedom and it is up to them to build a democracy" (See more: Reynolds).

The Future of Iraq – a Democratic State or a Fallen One?

When, in 2002, Iraqis went to the polls to choose a president, there was only one candidate on the ballet, namely Saddam Hussein, who had continuously ruled the country since 1979. Taking into account the statements of the Iraqi government, which indicated that 100% of those eligible to vote had participated in the elections (Trumbull IV et al. 332–333), it is visible that a common occurrence during the Hussein regime was the falsification and manipulation of data, forcing voters to vote under the threat of imprisonment. The next election the Iraqis participated in were held in completely different circumstances, after the overthrow of the Hussein regime, based on the new Constitution of 2005, which in the preamble announced "a new Iraq, an Iraq of the future free from sectarianism, racism, discrimination and exclusion" (*Iraqi Constitution*).

In 2005, Iraqis could choose a minister from six thousand candidates for a seat in Parliament. They invited international observers to monitor the proper conduct of elections. A huge opportunity for improving the situation and status of women in Iraq was the decision to ensure women 25% of the seats in parliament. The high turnout at the next elections in 2010, when more than 12 million Iraqis went to the polls, was declared a "milestone." The media showed images of smiling and dancing people in the streets of Iraq (*Barack Obama hails Iraq election 'milestone'*).

Therefore, can we conclude that democracy has prevailed in Iraq? If democracy was to be represented only by numbers – in this context, the turnout during elections or public support for the government, we could regard Iraq as a democratic country. However, when ranked in the Democracy Index, where the electoral process and pluralism are measured along with the functioning of the government, political participation, political culture and civil liberties, Iraq occupies 115th place out of 167 countries in the world in terms of the level of democracy (See more: *Democracy Index*).

Table 1. Democracy Index 2015

	Rank	Overall score	Electoral process and pluralism	Functioning of government	Political participation	Political culture	Civil liberties
Bosnia and Hercegovina	104	4.83	6.50	2.93	3.89	4.38	6.47
Nepal	105	4.77	3.92	4.29	4.44	5.63	5.59
Burkina Faso	106	4.70	4.42	4.29	4.44	5.63	4.71
Morocco	107	4.66	4.75	4.64	3.89	5.63	4.41
Nigeria	108	4.62	6.08	4.29	3.33	5.00	4.41
Mozambique	109	4.60	4.42	3.57	5.56	5.63	3.82
Palestine	110	4.57	4.75	2.14	7.78	4.38	3.82
Sierra Leone	111	4.55	6.58	1.86	2.78	6.25	5.29
Pakistan	112	4.40	6.00	5.71	2.78	2.50	5.00
Cambodia	113	4.27	3.17	5.71	3.33	5.00	4.12
Myanmar	114	4.14	3.17	3.57	4.44	6.88	2.65
Iraq	115	4.08	4.33	0.07	7.22	4.38	4.41
Armenia	116	4.00	4.33	2.86	4.44	2.50	5.88
			Authoritarian				
Mauritania	117	3.96	3.00	4.29	5.00	3.13	4.41
Algeria	118	3.95	3.00	2.21	3.89	6.25	4.41

Source: Democracy Index 7.

In many cases, reality verified noble declarations, like the greater participation of women in political life. As it turned out, women in Iraq now have less political influence than in the entire period since the US invasion in 2003 (Schmidt et al.). It is a fact that they gained more rights "on paper," but this did not translate into more political participation of women in Iraq. Al- Maliki, who reluctantly cast women in positions of government, made an exception for the Ministry of Women's Affairs, which is seen more as a "ceremonial department" and is poorly financed and regarded as a minor portfolio (Salbi). It is no secret that the rights of women and children in Iraq are not observed, but the government, in violation of the Constitution and international law, wanted to go a step further, disregarding public opinion. In 2014, the Minister of Justice in Iraq put forward a legislative proposal which allows for, among others, the legalization of marriages between children and adults, lowering the age for girls to the age of nine. Up to now the legal age limit was 18, or 15 in the case of parental consent. Another controversial provision of the bill applies to the legalization of marital rape, to be legally permissible in the context of meeting the sexual requirements of a woman's husband (McElroy).

Some people saw the ratification of the Iraqi Constitution in 2005 as "a significant milestone in the journey from Saddam Hussein's authoritarian rule to democratic governance." Theoretically, society gained the distribution and balance of power, elected by universal suffrage in the regular parliament, civil rights and liberties, and an independent judiciary system (Trumbull IV et al. 331–332). As it turned out, the practical application of democratic principles was not that simple. Not everyone saw the new Constitution of Iraq as a success. In contrast to the Americans, some Iraqis believed that "the new constitution emphasized differences and divisive issues rather than focusing on the uniting elements of Iraqi society." Iraqi political scientist Saad N. Jawad gives two reasons for the errors committed by the Americans. The first reason was their obliviousness to the history of the Iraqi state and the Iraqi identity, limiting the Iraqi state to national minorities in the form of Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds. This resulted in the highlighting of differences and social problems instead of focusing on the common elements among Iraqis. As an example, he cites the American Constitution which focuses on unity and freedom as elements uniting and connecting the whole of its diverse society, despite the differences among them. The second reason for the errors made by the US administration was their haste. Because of the resistance of the Iraqi population against the occupation of their country, and a growing number of dead soldiers and civilians, Americans wanted to leave Iraq as soon as possible. They could not do so before the adoption of the Constitution, and therefore introduced an accelerated schedule of work on the document, so that President Bush could announce triumphantly that democracy in Iraq had been introduced. It is worth noting that the document that was to be fundamental for the functioning of society was prepared within two months. According to Jawad, this process completely ignored the fact that previously accelerated processes of constitution-making in other countries, such as Bosnia or Afghanistan, had ended in failure. This rush to draw up the Iraqi constitution meant the document had deep structural, legal and political drawbacks and shortcomings, from which emerged a number of disagreements, divisions and problems in the further process of the democratization of the country (Jawad 4–5).

An example is the situation after the elections of 2010, when the largest party al-Iraqi won the election, and wanted to form a government. The problem was that the Constitution of Iraq did not clearly specify who had the right to form a new government – whether it was the largest party or the largest coalition. At the request of al-Maliki, the federal court was asked to resolve the issue, and after a few months ruled that al-Iraqi had no right to form a new government. Given the fact that the head of the Federal Court was a member of the electoral list of al-Maliki, the judgment may have been very controversial, but not surprising. In this way, the right to form a new government was not given to the party

that won the elections, but to the one who took second place (*Dawa Party*). All because of the lack of clarity in the constitutional provisions and biased interpretation of the court (Jawad 21). Another example is the broad and loose provision in the Constitution giving the government the right to combat terrorism. Using its own interpretation of the rules, this provision allowed authorities to combat any backlash, not only against the political opposition. Examples are social demonstrations in Iraq in 2011 as part of the opposition to corruption and a demand by society to improve basic services. Breaking the right to freedom of expression given by the Iraqi constitution, the protest was brutally suppressed by the authorities. The numerous cases of arrests, and even the disappearance of opposition figures accused of "terrorist activities" (Jawad 23) with no concrete evidence, cannot be forgotten. Jawad claims that "the Constitution of Iraq is a major factor in consolidating this chaotic situation." Given the fact that the war in Iraq occurred over a dozen years ago, after which Iraqis participated in four elections, in theory, the situation in Iraq should be better now than just after the invasion. In contrast, as statistics show, today Iraq is on the top of the list of the most dangerous and corrupt countries in the world (Jawad 21).

The problems of modern Iraq are not only ethnic differences and religious frustrations with a lack of access to drinking water, food, sanitation and electricity, massive unemployment and poverty, corruption, nepotism, lack of rule of law, political and economic instability, lack of respect for civil liberties, but also the low level of security resulting from the presence of the terrorist organization known as the "Islamic State." On the one hand, the problems outlined above, and the last elections of 2014, carried out with the assistance of the army and police, with the deserted streets of Baghdad, closed stores, introduced prohibition of moving cars, dozens of victims of terrorist attacks (*Iraq elections kick off amid threat of bomb attacks, huge security presence*), testify to the fact that Iraq is closer today to a failed state (*Fragile States Index*) than the original vision of President Bush's Iraq as a "City on the Hill" (See more: Byman), which would launch the process of democratic transformation throughout the Middle East.

On the other hand, we have to keep in mind that it took modern democratic societies generations to learn how to function in a democracy. After more than a decade since the US invasion of Iraq, we can only conclude that Iraq today is not a democracy, but it may be that the Iraqis need time to make mistakes, to develop consensus, and even their own form of a political system which will be adequate for their identity and cultural traditions, needs and the possibilities for society.

Table 2. Fragile States Index 2015

	FRAGILE STATES INDEX 2015	TOTAL	DEMOGRAPHIC PRESSURES	REFUGEES AND IDPS	GROUP GRIEVANCE	HUMAN FLIGHT	UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT	POVERTY AND ECONOMIC DECLINE	LEGITIMACY OF THE STATE	PUBLIC SERVICES	HUMAN RIGHTS	SECURITY APPARATUS	FACTIONALIZED ELITES	EXTERNAL INTERVENTION
1	South Sudan	**114.5**	9.8	10.0	10.0	6.9	8.8	9.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
2	Somalia	**114.0**	9.6	9.8	9.5	9.2	9.0	9.1	9.3	9.3	10.0	9.7	10.0	9.5
3	Central African Republic	**111.9**	8.4	10.0	9.6	6.9	9.7	8.3	9.5	9.9	10.0	9.8	10.0	9.8
4	Sudan	**110.8**	8.7	10.0	9.7	8.8	7.9	8.6	9.6	8.8	9.6	9.5	9.8	9.8
5	Congo (D. R.)	**109.7**	9.5	9.4	9.5	7.1	8.8	7.9	9.0	9.7	10.0	9.5	9.5	9.8
6	Chad	**108.4**	9.7	10.0	8.2	8.6	9.1	7.8	9.3	9.7	9.4	8.8	9.5	8.3
7	Yemen	**108.1**	9.2	9.1	9.4	7.5	8.1	9.3	9.3	8.2	9.1	10.0	9.4	9.5
9	Syria	**107.9**	8.1	10.0	10.0	7.4	7.0	7.5	9.9	8.2	10.0	10.0	9.9	9.9
8	Afghanistan	**107.9**	9.3	9.1	8.9	8.1	7.2	8.6	9.7	9.3	8.6	10.0	9.3	9.8
10	Guinea	**104.9**	9.0	8.7	8.7	7.2	7.6	9.2	9.9	9.8	8.2	8.9	9.6	8.1
11	Haiti	**104.5**	9.5	8.2	6.7	9.3	9.3	9.1	9.4	9.1	7.4	7.5	9.1	9.9
12	Iraq	**104.5**	8.2	8.9	10.0	8.1	7.8	6.9	9.2	7.5	8.9	10.0	9.6	9.4
13	Pakistan	**102.9**	9.0	8.9	10.0	7.0	7.3	7.7	8.6	7.9	8.4	9.6	9.2	9.3
14	Nigeria	**102.4**	8.8	7.5	9.9	7.1	8.8	7.6	9.1	9.1	8.8	9.9	9.8	6.0
15	Cote d'Ivoire	**100.0**	8.1	9.0	8.7	6.7	7.9	7.1	8.5	9.0	7.9	8.3	9.1	9.7
16	Zimbabwe	**100.0**	8.7	8.4	7.8	8.0	8.1	8.0	9.0	8.5	8.3	7.9	9.7	7.6

Source: Fragile States Index 35–36.

Conclusions

The plans of President George W. Bush to bring about the democratization of Iraq were wishful in character. He was interested in fast and spectacular effects; every stage of the democratization of Iraq was done in haste and often with a lack of reflection. It was wrongly assumed that the model of American democracy is so versatile that it can be adapted to all conditions. The artificially imposed model meant that the process of democratization in Iraq occurred very superficially, without deeper social change. In the current situation, in the absence of the rule of law, unfair court sentences, no respect for civil liberties, widespread corruption and nepotism, what is happening in Iraq is a democratic facade, with the authorities being closer to an authoritarian regime than a democratic one.

The fact is that the Bush administration did not plan in detail the democratization of Iraq. They started with the assumption that they would perform the hardest part of the job in the form of overthrowing the Hussein regime, and democracy would be implemented by a liberated and happy nation. As it turned out, the biggest challenge was the establishment of order and stability in Iraq after the overthrow of the dictatorship. A number of mistakes made by the Bush administration contributed to the failure of the mission of the democratization of the region. The very idea of democracy by force, imposed by another state was a wrong decision, and it influenced the development of extremism in Iraq and the emergence of terrorist groups like the "Islamic State," which now occupies considerable territory in Iraq and Syria. A lack of legitimacy from the UN for military intervention in Iraq, as well as supporting their arguments with false evidence, only strengthened the argument jihadists had in recruiting new members to fight against the American occupation. Haste in making important decisions played a key role in the mistakes. The lack of properly developed plans for the stabilization of Iraq, the dissolution of the Iraqi security forces and the ban on working in the public service for members of the BASS party, deprived key sectors of skilled workers and expanded the circle of people willing to fight against the Americans. In addition, the implementation of US programs for political reform left much to be desired. Due to the reluctance on the part of Arab states, the majority of implemented programs dealt with economic aid. The reluctance stemmed from two reasons – fear that the example of Iraq in other Arab countries would lead to the overthrowing of their governments by force, and the double standards applied by the Americans in relation to the friendly pro-American regimes whom the US praised for their democratic progress (e.g. Egypt). The key for the growth of anti-American sentiment in the region was the disclosure of the use of torture by Americans against Iraqi prisoners.

Haste also had a negative impact on the shape of the new constitution, which instead of providing the foundation for a functioning democratic system is a tool used by the authorities to interpret laws according to their interests and legitimacy

of their unlawful activities. A mistake of the Bush administration was to trust Maliki, who was to lead Iraq to democracy, freedom and the rule of law, but in fact sought to introduce an authoritarian regime. Rather than solve the problems of ethnic and religious conflict, he exacerbated the conflict which led to the growth of extremism in Iraq. He effectively made sure that civil liberties, the rule of law and the Constitution would not be respected within the country, resulting in the current situation in Iraq, which is closer to a failed state than a democracy.[8]

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Yemen and the New Regional Order

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Abstract

This article intends to shed light on the political and security developments in Yemen that ultimately resulted in the Saudi-led military operation in this country. It discusses the political background behind the Yemeni revolution of 2011, its positive outcome in the shape of the results of the National Dialogue Conference and the reasons for the collapse of the efforts to stabilize Yemen.

Keywords: Yemen, Arab Spring, GCC, National Dialogue Conference, Al-Houthi, Saudi Arabian military operations

The unrest and turmoil in Yemen began in a similar manner as in other Arab states that were affected by the so-called Arab Spring. Yemenis, like Tunisians and Egyptians, although geographically distant from their North African counterparts, took to the streets with the same social and political demand under the pan-Arab claim "the people want the downfall of the system" (Arabic: *Al-shaab yurid isqat al-nizam*). The similarities continued into the next phase of the revolution which can be described as the leader's (Arabic: *za'im)* pertinacity to remain in power as president and the certitude that these demands of the people can be dealt with in soft and shallow measures. However, at this point the parallels between the situations in the aforementioned countries come to an end. The events in Yemen between 2011 and 2013 were dramatic and yet promising. Dramatic – because the then president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, confronted the mostly-peaceful demonstrations throughout Yemen with brutal measures that resulted in more than two thousand casualties in 2011 among both civilians and the military as well as the defection of security officers from forces loyal to the president. The epitome of Saleh's readiness to use violent repression were illustrated by the events of March 18, also known as Friday of Dignity, when security forces killed 57 protesters. It also marked the first major secessions in Saleh's ranks, as many influential politicians and army personnel joined the protesters. The most symbolic and important defection was that of General Ali Mohsin al-Ahmar who was Saleh's strong man in the military. What made the events even more tragic is that Ali Saleh was determined to use every possible means to remain in office, refusing to accept any solution to the crisis or even mediation. His determination to continue his rule reached a certain level of absurdity when he formulated ideas that the United States and the GCC were plotting against Yemen's security and integrity.

The period between January and November 2011 was witness to numerous armed confrontations between forces loyal to Saleh and his opponents. These hostilities and Saleh's absolute rejection of stepping down brought the country to the brink of civil war. It must be underlined that the international community and regional partners exercised political pressure on Saleh. Granting the Nobel Peace Prize to Tawakkul Karman in October 2011 was among the best examples of steps to weaken Saleh's position. The GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) from the very beginning was engaged in efforts to work out a deal between the warring sides. A final accord, rejected three times before by Saleh, was finally reached on November 23, 2011. Although it had obvious weaknesses the accord could be considered a success. The arrangement made it possible for Saleh to step down from office but it never really managed to remove him from political activity. It also did not succeed in diminishing his, his family or closest allies' influence in the political, military and economic spheres. The November agreement, being an important moment in the then Yemeni transition, was seen as too complacent with Saleh as it guaranteed him and his family judicial immunity. Such a step was indeed unique among

the states affected by the Arab Spring, especially when taking under consideration the violent repression of protesters. The GCC at this stage might have been acting in good faith hoping that Saleh will actually leave the Yemeni political scene and allow for a transition.

The Success of Dialogue

The concept of the National Dialogue Conference[1] was admittedly the most significant part of the GCC peace initiative. Moreover, it can still be considered a major success in Yemen's tumultuous transition. Its main intention was to gather all Yemeni political parties, youth movements and other social activists under one umbrella with the goal of developing a new road map for the country. This plan must be looked upon from a wider perspective as its purpose was the proposal for an innovative social contract for Yemen. Such a statement seems to be genuine as Yemen was and still is in need of such an agreement after more than 30 years of Saleh's rule. The National Dialogue Conference was certainly more than just internal peace talks. It should be seen rather as a reconciliation process aspiring to be the decisive factor behind the attempt to politically, militarily and socially redefine Yemen. It is worth underlining that the concept of creating equal representation of the Northerners and Southerners within the Conference working groups illustrated that there was an understanding among the parties for the necessity of conducting talks on the basis of partnership.

The ambitious goals of the conference were to a large extent achieved. The most significant of them was the ability to persuade all the political forces, regardless of the animosities between them, to hold direct talks which involved the Al-Houthi organization and the Salafi Al-Rashad party. The 10-month long meetings brought about substantial recommendations. Among the most important were (1) the arrangement that the zone of Saada, the stronghold of the Al-Houthi family and political movement, would receive some religious freedom, and (2) that issues which led to the beginning of military hostilities between the Al-Houthi movement and the Yemeni government would be addressed. Another issue that was officially proposed was the redrawing of Yemen's administrative system in order to build a bridge between the North and the South. Finally, the Conference did put forward a draft of a new constitution that was supposed to be accepted in a nationwide referendum. The Saada issue and the regional hostilities remain the foundations of the ongoing Yemen crisis, as they embody a threat to Yemen's territorial integrity.

1 The Conference was held in Sanaa between March 18, 2013 to January 24, 2014. Originally the Conference was to conclude its work by September 2015.

The near year-long talks were conducted in a very difficult political and environment because of the security issues. The negotiations were accompanied by a whole series of political murders meant to eliminate politicians and activists from both sides to render dialogue impossible.

What Went Wrong

With President Ali Saleh stepping down and the international community endorsing the recommendations of the National Dialogue Conference, it seemed reasonable to see Yemen successfully implementing its transition and building its future. There were significant gestures from the then transitional authorities that might be seen as acts of goodwill, and understanding the necessity for national reconciliation. These steps were both of a political and symbolic nature which is of great importance in the Arab world. The example of the first being the Qatari donation of 350m USD to the Southern Yemen Fund whose aim was to compensate the Southerners for their discrimination under the former regime. The return of the remains of Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi, the founder of the movement who was killed in the first so-called Saada war in September 2004, to the family in 2013 is the best illustration of the symbolic aspect of this national reconciliation. However, what happened in Yemen during 2014 and later proved that the country was not on the path to peace. Two factors in particular may explain the failure of the reconciliation process. The first being the political and social weakness of President Hadi and the underestimating of the real influence and determination of President Ali Saleh to cling to power. The epitome of the President's Hadi's feebleness was his inability to enforce reshuffles in the army and security apparatus and his incapability of amending the economic condition of the state and society as a whole. Although Yemen had governmental institutions throughout the transitional period they were not only unable to control the whole territory of the state but seemed powerless to stop clashes between Al-Houthi fighters and tribal structures loyal to the Islah party and AQAP structures. Without doubt, the Al-Houthi movement benefitted from the state apparatus' weakness to continue their takeover of provinces in Yemen. This military success would not have been possible without the close cooperation of Ali Saleh and the military structures loyal to him. There is not a particular moment that could be regarded as the beginning of this collaboration. The fact that the former president managed to conclude this long-lasting informal cooperation with the Al-Houthi movement is a peculiar phenomenon. Ali Saleh as Yemen's president is directly responsible for killing the founder of the Al-Houthi movement in 2004 and for conducting six brutal wars against it between 2004 and 2010. If a moment illustrates the cooperation between the two sides it would probably have to be the Al-Houthi takeover of

Sanaa in September 2014 (al-Ahmadi 41–43). From this moment it became obvious that the rebels were not willing to enter any kind of conciliatory policy with the government but were determined for a confrontational strategy as by that time the insurgents had ruled out the possibility of any other state military intervention in Yemen. What is striking in the Al-Houthi's decision to seize Sanaa is not only the fact that it could not be of any political benefit to the movement. It was also, from the very beginning, another destabilizing feature in an already difficult political landscape. It was not possible for the Al-Houthi movement to impose their authority and create a government as their legitimacy and popularity within society was immensely weak. The National Peace and Partnership Agreement[2] can rather be considered as the final phase of demolishing the previous transition efforts as it was an attempt to legitimize the coup. The words of Sheikh Mohamed bin Naser al-Hazmi, a prominent member of the Al-Islah party, "Al-Houthi is a creature that swallowed a prey bigger than itself and if it does not give it back it will be the cause of its death" (al-Subahi 52) seem to be the exact description of the movement's position today and its fate in the future.

Saudi Arabia Takes the Leadership

There were several political steps and regional developments that led to the military intervention in Yemen which can be considered as a major break-through in Saudi and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) politics. Saudi Arabia under the rule of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz (2005–2015) became a state with global aspirations and displaying a willingness to redefine its role as a prominent leader of the Arab and Muslim world. The late Saudi king succeeded in internationalizing his state, the immediate result of which was the gradual emergence of new political partners for the Kingdom.[3] It seems that the decision to launch an operation in Yemen came as result of earlier political and military initiatives taken by the Al Saud ruling family. The first major example of Riyadh's leadership was the readiness to act independently together with other GCC states to militarily defend the regional order against attempts to destabilize it. The best illustration of such a policy was the decision to send National Guard troops to Bahrain in order to defend the legitimate authorities in the Kingdom in 2011.[4] The strongest display of Saudi determination

2 The agreement was signed in Sanaa on September 21, 2014 in the presence of the UN envoy to Yemen, J. Benomar (*Yemeni parties and Houthi rebels sign deal to end fighting, form new government*).

3 The most significant example of such a situation is the status of bilateral Saudi-French relations with Paris which in the last three years has become one of the five most important partners of Riyadh (Barthe).

4 March 14 marked the beginning of the military operation in Bahrain (Henderson).

to build global alliances to counter regional security threats was the successful efforts to form the anti-Islamic State (IS) coalition.[5] In this case, like the events in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia also decided to participate in an active manner by engaging its air force in strikes against IS militants in Iraq. This military combat participation was to a large extent an unexpected decision from the Saudi authorities and as such was a major surprise to the international community. It symbolically showed the military and political readiness of Saudi Arabia and that of the GCC to directly take responsibility for the developments in the region.

Saudi Arabia's military actions in Bahrain and Iraq, due to its engagement in strikes on Islamist positions and likewise the operation in Yemen, must however also be seen from an Iranian perspective. Such an approach is natural, as Iran is seen as the biggest threat to the stability of the Sunni Gulf monarchies because of its history of interference in the region.[6] The Iranian issue only enhanced its importance and became even more urgent when the framework agreement for the Iranian nuclear program was concluded between Tehran and the P5+1 group.[7] The fact that the negotiating parties endorsed this arrangement remains a major source of a serious political distress for Saudi Arabia as well as for its allies in the GCC, although some countries from the council have adopted a different approach to this matter.[8] It must be underlined that for Riyadh and the Gulf capitals any kind of deal which brings Iran closer to becoming a full member of the international community and creates the opportunity of normalizing relations between Tehran and the rest of the world would be seen as a defeat for the West. Defeat because the Gulf states regard the optimism related to the framework agreement as premature and overstated. Such a statement does not imply that Saudi Arabia, or the region as a whole, objects to the agreement with Iran. However, these countries do express scepticism of Tehran's true intentions as to abandoning its nuclear ambitions and discontinuing its intrusive policy in the region. In this context it is worth recalling Steve Coll's commentary: "The Saudis regard themselves as a vital counter to Iran, on behalf of Sunni states and guerrillas, such as those fighting in Iraq and Syria. The royals see the US deal with Tehran as, in the words of Prince Turki al-Faisal, a former Saudi intelligence chief, a historic "pivot to Iran." Obama argues that a deal would not jeopardize Saudi Arabia and could help stabilize the region by preventing a nuclear-arms race" (Coll 23).

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5 Saudi Arabia organized an international conference in Jeddah on September 11, 2014 which was dedicated to fighting ISIS (*US, Gulf and Arab allies agree strategy to counter ISIS*).

6 The evident examples of Iranian intrusion are: the ongoing conflict with the UAE concerning the territorial attachment of three islands in the Gulf, the support of the Al-Houthi movement in Yemen and the backing of Shia political groups in Bahrain.

7 The deal was signed in Lausanne on April 2, 2015. The P5+1 group contains: the United States of America, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia and China.

8 Oman is an example of a GCC country maintaining good relations with Iran and developing bilateral contacts (Ulrichsen).

The decision to militarily intervene in Yemen can also be considered as an unexpected move by the Kingdom. The political foundations of the intervention were based on the articles of the Arab Defence Treaty of 1950 and the Charter of the Arab League. In these circumstances it is important to underline that Riyadh is promoting the concept of creating an Arab Common Defence Force, involving as many Arab states as possible, with Egypt as one of the crucial states in the initiative. The initiative itself was adopted at the Arab League Summit in Charm el-Cheikh in April 2015 when the operation in Yemen was already in its initial phase. This allows for the claim that Saudi authorities, when preparing its political coalition for Yemen, perhaps laid the foundation for the creation of an Arab NATO-style organization (See more: Gaub). There seems to be a political determination to work on the project as army chiefs of staff of Arab countries have prepared protocols on what the joint Arab force should look like (*Protocol drafted for a new joint Arab force*). The result of Saudi diplomatic efforts was the creation of a ten-state coalition combining Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Sudan and Pakistan under the command of Saudi Arabia (Al-Shadadi). It is worth emphasizing that Oman, although a member of the GCC, decided to decline military participation in the coalition forces; nevertheless, Muscat gave its full political support for the decision to intervene. This position of the Sultanate does not mark any rift in the GCC's unanimous position on Yemen, but it rather confirms the Omani strategy of not participating in the global policies of other Gulf states and to maintain a relatively low profile within the GCC.

Operation "Decisive Storm" and "Restoring Hope"

Riyadh stressed that its military intervention came in reply to the request of Yemen's President Abd Rabbu Mansur Hadi who sought help from the Saudi authorities in rescuing the Yemeni people from the Al-Houthi militias. It also appears that the direct reason for the military intervention rests in the fact that two Saudi unofficial red lines were crossed by the Al-Houthi and Ali Saleh insurgents. The first one being the military advance on Aden with the clear intention to capture the city. The second – the rejection of the proposal for negotiations offered by the Saudi authorities in Riyadh. However, it is the former that can be considered the essential reason air strikes were begun against the rebels in Yemen. The fall of Aden, Yemen's second biggest city and a crucial gateway to the Gulf and Bab al-Mandab Strait would have been seen as the complete control that the Al-Houthi rebels would have had over Yemen. It should be underlined that President Hadi's escape to Saudi Arabia at the end of March 2015 marked the end of his political and military capabilities to defend Aden. Nevertheless, there were attempts by Hadi to create a stronghold in this southern city. Proclaiming Aden the provisional capital of Yemen can be

interpreted as an example of such a strategy. The manoeuvre to seek refuge there by the legitimate president might also be considered as an effort to defend the city. Undoubtedly Hadi, being a Southerner, had some political and tribal structures loyal to him in this part of Yemen. Saudi Arabia indulged in a military operation stressing that its intention is to restore the legitimate authorities in Yemen and to push back any threats from its borders , which in turn, would safeguard the security of other Gulf states.

March, 25 2015 saw the beginning of air strikes from the Saudi-led coalition on targets linked to Al-Houthi and armed groups loyal to former President A. Saleh. The majority of the assaults were aimed at the destruction of arms depots, military installations and other vital army and communication infrastructure related to or under the direct control of the rebels. Almost two hundred fighter jets participated in the operation, which lasted until April, 21 2015, with more than 2400 military air operations carried out across Yemeni territory.[9] The coalition forces under the leadership of Saudi Arabia kept the operation as transparent and accessible as possible to court public opinion. Daily press conferences and updates were held in Riyadh. Adopting such an approach to a delicate matter as a military operation in a neighbouring country was almost unheard of in the Arab world. It became obvious that the Saudi authorities wanted to minimize any concerns the public had to its military activity in Yemen. The military operation also combined the use of naval forces from Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Pakistan. The navy, apart from actively taking part in the shelling of al-Houthi and Saleh positions in and around Aden, also imposed a blockade of Yemen ports and guaranteed the protection of shipping routes in this vital strait of the Red Sea. The active role of Egypt in the Saudi-led campaign is something which is worth underlining. Egypt's President Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi even declared his army's readiness to participate in a ground operation in Yemen if it was judged necessary by the coalition. Such a position also undercut any speculation about the more delicate nature of Saudi-Egyptian relations after the death of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz.

In this context it should be emphasized that Saudi authorities also carefully chose the name for its military operation. "Decisive Storm" is symbolically linked to the words of the founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, King Abdulaziz Al Saud: "Decisiveness is the father of firm will, the father of triumph and neglect is the father of absence and the father of sorrow."[10] These words have become even more symbolic if we remember that King Salman bin Abdulaziz refers to the words of his father who is seen as the unifying force and the founder of modern Saudi Arabia. The authorities of Saudi Arabia, when preparing for the operation but also

9 More on the military aspects of the Operation available in bin Muhsin al-Subshi.

10 The text in Arabic reads as follows: *al-hazm abu al-azm wa abu al-zafrat*, *wa al-tarak abu al-farak abu al-hasarat*. Source: http://twasul.info/148481/ (accessed 10 May 2015). The English version is the author's own translation.

during the campaign, spared no effort to bolster its legitimacy from an Islamic point of view both from a political and religious aspect. Riyadh was conscious of the fact that a spiritual legitimacy would not only be helpful but be welcomed by other Islamic countries.[11] The beginning of such a campaign was marked by the pronouncement by the Council of Senior Scholars, widely known as the Senior Council of Ulema that Al-Houthi was a terrorist organization (al-Szadadi). Such a verdict is legitimate and the moment of its approval cannot be judged as too hasty or rash and it is in line with the GCC anti-terrorist policy. The only problematic issue with such a decision is that it basically "closes the door" to any future dialogue between the Saudi, GCC authorities and the insurgents in Yemen.

Operation "Decisive Storm" ended on April, 21 2015 in the same way as it began, upon the request of Yemen's president. The coalition forces immediately stated that the cessation of military activity was possible as the almost month-long campaign had successfully eliminated the threat to the security of the Kingdom and of other GCC states (*Operation Decisive Storm / Determined Storm*). "Decisive Storm" was instantly followed by the second phase of the coalition intervention in Yemen, "Restoring Hope." Although the new operation was announced as a humanitarian mission, the coalition from the very beginning underlined that it reserved the right to pursue military strikes on insurgent positions if they continued hostile activities. From the start, "Restoring Hope" was and remains mainly a military operation although the air operations are in response to concrete aggressive actions from insurgents. The difference between the two operations is that Decisive Storm was purely a military procedure with strategic targets on the ground while Restoring Hope has a strong political dynamic. It can be defined as the determination to convince Al-Houthi and Saleh troops to surrender and to respect international legislation in relation to the situation in Yemen. This can be rather considered as political naivety because Saudi Arabia and the insurgents do not share the same point of view towards developments in Yemen. The rebels drawn from Al-Houthi and Saleh forces do not intend to accept any defeat, lay down their arms or seem willing to conduct any peace talks with Riyadh under any circumstances. For the time being it seems to be the exact opposite. The rebels have decided to intensify the conflict by conducting cross-border raids on Saudi cities which can be considered as a declaration of war against the Kingdom.[12] A clear example of this hostile policy towards Riyadh was the ballistic missile that was fired from northern Yemen and intercepted over Saudi territory by a Patriot missile battery (*Tehran Arming Houthis*; *Al-difa al-jawi yaataridh sarukh scud*).

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11 More on the Islamic aspect of the operation in al-Sudais.

12 The attacks were concentrated on the town of Najran and smaller cities in the province of Jazan. Casualties among civilians were reported in both locations. The first attacks occurred in mid-April 2015 and assaults are still occurring.

Questions remain as to whether Saudi Arabia and the coalition won the war against Al-Houthi and Saleh forces. Surely both military campaigns managed to largely curtail the military infrastructure and combat potential of the rebels but this is not synonymous with having won the war. Indeed the insurgents after more than two months of airstrikes were still able to conduct a missile attack on Saudi Arabia which clearly meant that they still possessed the ability to strike back. Despite the airstrikes, Al-Houthi and Saleh troops maintain their main strongholds of Saada, Aden and Sanaa and refuse any form of surrender. It is appropriate to underline that Riyadh has been politically successful with regards the operations in Yemen. Achievements such as the passing of the Security Council resolution 2216, the nomination of Ismail Cheikh Ahmed as UN envoy to Yemen and the international support for the Kingdom, are proof that Saudi Arabia has managed to convince its global partners that Yemen is in these circumstances a country under its influence. Yet the ongoing strikes are reducing the coalition forces' "victory dividend" in this crisis. Additionally, Saudi Arabia's prolonging of the military operation in Yemen will attract criticism as inevitably the humanitarian situation in Yemen will deteriorate which will reduce the initial support it had from Yemenis at the beginning of operation "Decisive Storm." Furthermore, continuation of military operations will undoubtedly lead to more questions as civilian casualties and property destruction not related to the operation continue to increase. The illustration of such a development is the, most probably erroneous, strike that hit the old town of Sanaa which resulted in criticism from international organizations (*Air strike devastates UNESCO heritage site in Sanaa*). There are also international voices emphasizing the fact that the Saudi-led campaign is "violating the rules of war" and even those describing its actions as "war crimes."[13] Moreover, for the time being, the ambitious goal set by the coalition to restore the legitimate authorities in Yemen by overthrowing the Al-Houthi and Saleh "coalition" forces, seem to be becoming more difficult to achieve. However, the fact that President A. Hadi and the Yemeni government have been in exile in Riyadh since the end of March 2015, was and maybe to a degree still is a strong political message to the rebels that the legal government is still operational and has international support. Yet at the same time its remaining outside Yemen remains proof that there are neither the political and security conditions for its returning to Sanaa nor the tools to implement such a move. The continuation of the authorities in exile will result in the decline of its popularity and will eventually lead to it becoming a political irrelevance.

13 Source: https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/yemen (accessed 29 May 2016); http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/25/civilian-casualties-war-crimes-saudi-arabia-yemen-war/ (accessed 1 April 2016).

Outlooks for Yemen

In political terms there seem to be more than enough solid fundaments to implement a transition scenario. The most important of these being the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference, UN Security Council resolution 2216 and the Riyadh Conference on Yemen that adopted an 11-point plan for the reconstruction of Yemen.[14] The Al-Houthi and Saleh front is for the time being the most serious obstacle to any further talks on the country's future but it is not the only one. The most significant issue that the Yemenis must themselves face is how they will deal with their past in order to think of a stable future. Reconciliation based on the principle of not excluding any sections of the Yemeni internal political scene seems to be the only solution. This philosophy was the basis for the concept introduced at the National Dialogue Conference. This reconciliation would require political concessions from both internal and international actors. The first being Ali Saleh to admit that he cannot be part of a solution to Yemen's transition but to also give his party, the GPC (General People's Congress), the right to participate in the reconstruction of the country. Saudi Arabia would have to accept the political existence of a political movement representing the Zaydi-Shia society of northern Yemen and its role in Yemeni politics. This would require some goodwill from Tehran, meaning it would have to refrain from interfering in Yemeni internal affairs. At the moment this seems highly unlikely. In fact, the Al-Houthi delegation announced that their delegation to peace talks under UN auspices in Geneva, planned for June, 15 2015 would include Iranian political and legal advisors. This could only be seen as a provocative move against Saudi Arabia and a clear attempt to receive international recognition for themselves (Al-Haqbani).

The southern issue is another complex problem that needs urgent attention as it still remains a threat to Yemen's territorial integrity. All three possibilities for the South are under discussion (1) the secession and creation of a separate state (2) a federation with the North and (3) the continuity of the unity of the country. This allows for a conclusion that an internal-South dialogue is necessary in order to continue with national reconciliation.

A relatively reassuring phenomenon for Yemen's transition is the low probability of a sectarian conflict. This is because the lines of divisions were not and are not along Sunni-Shia lines but rather along tribal loyalties and affiliations. However, regular violent confrontations between Al-Houthi insurgents and AQAP structures have the potential to trigger a sectarian conflict. Another danger to Yemen's stability is the possible advance of ISIL (Daesh) in some territories of the country as one of its pillars is to cause incitement against Shiites in Arab states.

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14 The conference was held in Riyadh between May 17–19, 2015. More available at: *Faysal al-Awwadhi*, *Mohamed al-Sunaid*, *Ikhtitam aamal muatamar al-riyadh li-inqadh al-yaman*.

The military intervention led by Saudi Arabia and the coalition was a tragic choice for the Kingdom but in the then conditions it might have been necessary to take such a decision. The operation in Yemen was and to a large degree still is not about winning the conflict in terms of warfare but averting the annexation of Yemen by insurgents which could have unforeseeable consequences. Saudi Arabia has proved its political and military capability to play a regional leader role in challenging moments but what is becoming more necessary now is to work out an urgent political, economic, humanitarian and military plan for Yemen that could be realistically accepted by the Yemenis and have the chance to be implemented.

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Defence Dilemmas of the GCC States – Threats and Military Build-Up

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Abstract

Although regional states don`t seek war, it cannot be ruled out that an unfavourable development in the international arena could lead to an unintended outbreak of a full-scale conflict, which would either directly or indirectly involve the Arab monarchies. In response to several threats within their proximity, these states have, for years, been pursuing several initiatives aimed at increasing their deterrence potential and interoperability in case of a crisis. The main goal of this article is to present and assess the GCC's threat perception, followed by an analysis of the multilateral and unilateral responses. The main research question concerns the degree to which the GCC states are able to establish a joint and effective military bloc within the Persian Gulf.

Keywords: Persian Gulf, security, GCC, defence, military procurements

The Persian Gulf region is very unstable, both from a political and a military perspective. It is where four significant wars have broken out in the past 30 years – Iraq with Iran (1980), Iraq with Kuwait (1990) and an international coalition with Iraq (1991 and 2003). Today, the Persian Gulf region may still be considered rather unstable. The defeat of the Saddam Hussein regime in 2003 eliminated Iraq as a significant threat and a destabilizing force, especially towards states such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. However, the American "Dual Containment" strategy subsequently collapsed, resulting in the strengthening of Iran.[1] As a consequence, the threat related to possible aggression on the part of the United States and/or Israel against Iran continues to rise.

However difficult it may be to believe that Iran is seeking war,[2] the ongoing crisis in the country's immediate surroundings and the high level of mutual hostility may transform itself, without our noticing, into a military confrontation.[3] Such a scenario would be the worst possible for the Arab nations in the region, i.e., members of the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council): Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. Any political-military crisis would have serious consequences not only for the security of these states but for Europe as well. This is because this region holds a considerable part of the world's oil and natural gas reserves. In the event of a crisis and a disruption to the supply of these reserves, many countries in the world – including European and Asian – would face economic issues.

Characteristics of the GCC States' Armed Forces

Every GCC member is different, in geostrategic and political-military terms. Each has its own set of priorities and diverse threats from which it should defend itself. For example, Iraq has always been a historical threat to Kuwait, however not much of a problem for the distant Oman, which, in turn, has to focus on the safety of water routes through the Strait of Hormuz and the waters of the Gulf of Oman. There is also the perpetual issue of the inflow of terrorists and insurgents from Yemen, a challenge for Saudi Arabia as well (until 2003 Iraq posed a threat to Saudi Arabia, in the form of a possible large

1 See more about dual containment: J.L. Mraz, B. Cory, R.P. Swan, DeCamp and Mulcahy.

2 More about Iranian armed forces and defence doctrine see: A.H. Cordesman, *Iran's Military Forces in Transition: Conventional Threats and Weapons of Mass Destruction*; M. Connell, A.H. Cordesman and Kleiber, M. Eisenstadt, S.R. Ward. Data available also at: *Iran – Middle East Military Balance Files*; *The Military Balance 2012*; F. Wehrey, J.D. Green, B. Nichiporuk and others; O'Hern. About history of Iranian armed forces see also: R.S.N. Singh.

3 Possible war scenarios available at: S. Johnson and E. Chorley, R. Czulda *Czy Izrael podpali Bliski Wschód?* [Will Israel set the Middle East on Fire?].

scale ground war). Currently, Saudi Arabia – apart from the unsolved problem of Yemen – is less threatened by the possibility of facing a conventional war and more by the inflow of destabilization and extremism from Iraq. Qatar, on the other hand – similar to the United Arab Emirates – should fear Iran more than Iraq. However, even attitudes toward Iran vary from state to state. For example, as Brahim Saidy from Qatar University notes, not every GCC state considers "Iran a common menace, because each has a nuanced foreign policy based on its political philosophy and its security alliances. Oman, Kuwait and Qatar maintain relatively good relations with Iran, while Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain's dealings with Tehran are marked by tension, and even hostility" (42–43).

Table 1. Demographic statistics of Persian Gulf states (2014)[4]

Country	Regular	Reserves	Paramilitary	Population
Bahrain	8,200		11,260	1,281,332
Iran	523,000	350,000	2,130,000	79,853,900
Iraq	271,400		236,000	31,858,481
Kuwait	15,500	23,700	7,100	2,695,316
Oman	42,600		4,400	3,154,134
Qatar	11,800		8,000	2,042,444
Saudi Arabia	233,500		15,500	26,939,583
UAE	51,000			5,473,972

The result of both subjective (perception of threats) and objective conditions (geographic location, demographic potential) is that the GCC countries have military forces of differing sizes, with varying equipment and tasks. The largest belong to Saudi Arabia, with approximately 233 500 troops (*The Military Balance 2014*). In comparison, Kuwait (15 500), Qatar (11 800) and Bahrain (8 200) have the least. Not all of the nations in the region have reserves and paramilitary forces. Nevertheless, a common feature is their relatively small capability for operational enlargement in the event of war. Arab states in the region – probably with the exception of Saudi Arabia – would not be able to conduct a long-lasting war of attrition which would force them to mobilize tens of thousands of soldiers, simply because they have no one to mobilize.

4 *The Military Balance 2014*.

Table 2. Total active military power in Persian Gulf states (1990–2010)[5]

Year	Iran	Iraq	Saudi Arabia	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	UAE
1990	504,000	1,000,000	102,500	6,000	20,300	29,500	7,500	44,000
1993	528,000	382,500	157,000	6,150	11,700	35,700	7,500	54,000
2000	545,600	429,000	162,500	11,000	15,300	41,500	11,800	64,500
2003	350,000	389,000	199,500	10,700	15,500	39,700	12,400	41,500
2004	540,000	33,000	150,000	11,200	15,500	39,700	12,400	50,500
2005	540,000	105,700	199,500	11,200	15,500	39,700	12,400	50,500
2006	545,000	134,700	199,500	11,200	15,500	39,700	12,400	50,500
2007	545,000	161,380	224,500	11,200	15,500	39,700	12,400	50,500
2008	545,000	165,800	214,500	8,200	15,500	40,600	11,800	51,000
2009	523,000	190,744	221,500	8,200	15,500	42,600	11,800	51,000
2010	523,000	191,957	233,500	8,200	15,500	42,600	11,800	51,000

There are also differences between the states in terms of the sources of their armament imports. For example, Qatar imported equipment from the United Kingdom during the first period of its independence (1971), then from France (for example AMX-30 tanks, AMX-103P infantry fighting vehicles, Mirage 2000ED/D fighters. Currently the United States (the largest ally of Saudi Arabia until 2003) is Qatar's largest partner in this area. Although Saudi-American relations weakened after 2003, it did not influence the partnerships between Washington and Qatar, Kuwait or Bahrain, which are still incredibly strong today. Oman, on the other hand, is a traditional armaments partner of the United Kingdom, from which it procured, for example, Challenger II tanks, Piranha armoured fighting vehicles and SEPECAT Jaguar ground attack jets. Differences may also be seen in the modernization priorities and directions of their respective build-ups. For example, the United Arab Emirates concentrate on developing a small naval fleet of rapid interception craft, which are able to combat pirates, smugglers and terrorists. Saudi Arabia, however, chooses much larger vessels and armoured/mechanized units.[6] Kuwait limits itself to coastal patrol vessels.

What all the states mentioned have in common is that they are attempting to modernize their anti-aircraft and anti-ballistic missile defence systems (which will be described later using examples in this paper). This is, without a doubt, a reaction to the evolution of modern warfare, which is increasingly based on ballistic/anti-ship missiles. GCC's military modernization is seen as a direct reaction

5 A.H. Cordesman, *The Gulf Military Balance in 2010*, 15.

6 According to various media sources, Saudi Arabia was offered French DCNS's Gowind class corvettes and FREMM frigates, as well as British Type 45 destroyers and US LCS vessels.

to Iran's military doctrine, which assumes a massive use of missiles against various targets in the Persian Gulf region. General Brigadier Yahya Rahim-Safavi, a senior military adviser to the Supreme Leader, confirmed such a strategy in 2012 (*Iran missiles can hit all US bases in ME*, Blomfield, Ferran). As Brahim Saidy noted "the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran with Shehab-3 intermediate range ballistic missiles dismays the GCC states" (40). As he notes, the proliferation of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction are considered as a direct and imminent threat to the P-GCC states.

The GCC states are also developing their own air defence capabilities. In 2001, they initiated a joint command, control, communications programme, and a computers and intelligence (C4I) system called "Hizam al-Taawun" (*Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – The Gulf States*). A tracking and identification system, connected to national air defence systems, established in cooperation with Thales, Raytheon and Ericsson, allows all GCC states to monitor air traffic within the member states' airspace and to cooperate when faced with danger. The most important element is contributed by Saudi Arabia – its system is composed of 17 AN/FPS-117(V)3 long-range radars as well as short-range radars: AN/TPS-43 and AN/TPS-72. An important contribution will be provided by Qatar which has ordered the AN/FPS-132 Block 5 radar from the United States. This will allow Qatar to monitor all of Iranian air space. How Qatar ultimately uses this system will be of great interest to the United States.

GCC states are also making a concerted effort to modernize their air forces' transport capabilities which are crucial for the rapid deployment of troops in case of a crisis in the Persian Gulf area or beyond (for example, as part of a NATO-led operation). This also applies to the procurement of precision-guided munitions ("smart weapons"), which would be essential in any offensive operation. Such weapons would be very useful against Iran.

Common Defence Efforts

States in the region have been trying to increase their security since they first gained independence. The collective defence concept of the Persian Gulf states gives some hope that this strategic objective may be achieved. One of the results of this concept was the creation in 1981 of joint military forces, called the Peninsula Shield Force (PSF), which are to become "the armed forces" of the GCC. During the Iraq – Iran war, they were created in response to the Iranian occupation of the Iraqi Al-Faw Peninsula. In 1990, the PSF began modernizing, and transforming itself into an infantry division. Their formation began with the creation of a common doctrine and procedures (*Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – The Gulf States*). The efficiency of the GCC members was undoubtedly tested in the international coalition's war

against Iraq (1991). Units from these states mainly served within the Joint Forces Command-East (*United Arab Emirates: A Country Study* 147).

The next stage in building a collective defence was the signing of a multilateral defence agreement during the 21st GCC summit in December 2000. A Joint Defense Council and Military Committee was established. What is more, in the Joint Defense Agreement it was concluded that "any aggression against a member state would be considered as aggression against all the GCC states" (Koch 28). In 2001 a joint air-defence project was initiated (the above-mentioned "Hizam al-Taawun"). The GCC states conduct collaborative military exercises in the territory of one of its members every two years. More and more frequently, joint training facilities are being created. For example, the United Arab Emirates has created a training base available to soldiers of the GCC members. Pilots from this region practice at the Dhafra base. With the help of the United States, a new centre for ballistic missile defence training is now being created at the Al Bateen base.

In 2006 – having decided that a joint, standing military contingent was too expensive – a plan to create rapid reaction forces, amounting to no more than 22 000 troops, dispersed across the territories of the member states, under joint command in Riyadh (a Saudi project, precisely formed and formally accepted in 2009)[7] was created. These forces were to possess an aerial and naval component, which the initial idea lacked. It is worth remembering that there were some voices in the past, which called for the complete dissolution of the GCC forces which – according to some – died a natural death in 2006 (Ali Khan).

When, at the beginning of 2011, the government in Bahrain declared a state of emergency in response to lengthy pro-democratic demonstrations by the Shiite majority, an armed intervention by the GCC took place.[8] As a result, representatives of the member states accepted a strategy to enlarge the PSF to as many as 100 000 troops, located within the territory of their respective states (Kermali). This would be an enormous quantitative leap, since these forces totalled around 40 000 troops at the time. Additionally, there is an idea to create a second base in Bahrain (to accompany the base in Saudi Arabia) which would allow for the faster pacification of social unrest. In December 2013, during the 34th Summit (in Kuwait City) the GCC announced the formation of a joint military command.

A larger Peninsula Shield will enable two tasks to be carried out. The first is the creation of effective deterrent forces in the case of a potential war with Iran. Although Tehran does not want a war – like the GCC member states – one cannot rule out the possibility of an indirect threat, i.e., a war between Iran and Israel or

7 Information received from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Defence, July 2011.

8 GCC sent the first group of approximately 1 200 soldiers and security forces from Saudi Arabia (in armoured cars) as well as 600 policemen from the United Arab Emirates to this country. They took up key points within the capital of Manama (officially to "protect critical Bahrain military infrastructure from foreign intervention," not because of the internal situation).

the United States. Tehran could then attack American installations in Bahrain, Qatar or Kuwait. At least, this is what official declarations say (*Iran vows to hit US bases if Israel strikes*). Iran's naval forces could block the strategically important Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Oman, thus confining the GCC members within the waters of the Persian Gulf. Iran could then use mines, coastal anti-ship missiles and submarines to disrupt shipping lanes in the Persian Gulf. Exporting oil would be much more difficult or may even be paralyzed. Iran could also commit covert acts of sabotage against coastal oil and natural gas extraction and processing installations. Such acts would have significant consequences for the economic situation of the GCC states as well as for their national security. Successfully disrupting the Persian Gulf states' production would lead to a decrease in the world's oil supply.

Another task for the PSF is to "extinguish" all sorts of social unrest. Leaders of the authoritarian states in the region do not wish to share the fate of the dictators in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. Such a scenario, however, cannot be ruled out because, although the GCC members went through the Arab spring without any trouble, the situation is still uncertain. If the ruler in Bahrain fell, similar occurrences could spread to other GCC states. The conflicts between the Shiites and the Sunnites also play a large role. In order to explain how complicated the situation is, one should look to the GCC meeting in May 2011 when Jordan and Morocco were invited, neither of which are within the territory of the Persian Gulf (*Morocco and Jordan ask to join GCC*). Both states are mainly Sunnite, have reasonably strong armed forces and could provide significant military support to the PSF, in return for financial aid. The idea was supported by Bahrain, which accuses Iran of interfering in its internal affairs and attempting to strengthen Shiite Islam in the territory of the Maghreb and the Persian Gulf (Mikaïl 2). The idea of inviting Iraq – dominated by the Shiites – was rejected in advance, as the GCC is made up of Sunnite states, all of which oppose Shiite Iran which has a strong influence in Iraq.

It seems that it would be very difficult in practice for the joint forces to carry out the first task. Despite the declarations and the planned quantitative development, the problems remain the same, which are, for instance, a lack of armaments and standardization of procedures, a lack of interoperability, and a small military potential, which is no match for Iran's armed forces. The value of the PSF may be much larger with regard to the other aspect mentioned, i.e., as internal pacification forces.

External Military Support for the GCC

Due to its geographical conditions (the small size of most of the states and their location in a politically and militarily unstable region, the Persian Gulf, surrounded by much stronger states – Iraq and Iran) as well as the lack of strategic depth,

the GCC states are aware that neither their national armed forces, nor the PSF, will ensure their security. That is why they are forced to look for a strategic partner, which would be ready to defend them in its own interest rather than for an altruistic goal. Linking their own security with another, stronger entity's vital interests is one of the basic purposes of the security policy of many states in the region, e.g., Qatar or Kuwait. That is because the GCC members do not have any realistic chance of being an effective opponent to Iran. They may only count on their defence potential to deter an aggressor or, should that fail, hold the aggressor back long enough for international support to arrive.

Neither the United Kingdom, nor France (which established its first military bases in the region in May 2009) will be able to provide sufficient support. The United Arab Emirates plays host to a French naval base, located in Abu Dhabi (Zayed Port), for a detachment of the Armée de l'Air (Al Dhafra airbase) and a "Peace Camp" that could host around 500 troops (*Sarkozy Opens French Military Base in Abu Dhabi; French President Sarkozy Opens UAE Base*).[9] It is worth noting that these are the first new French military installations in 50 years and the first ones in a country which was not previously a French colony. What is more, President Sarkozy signed agreements updating the defence accords from 1975, essentially pledging France's assistance to Abu Dhabi during crises (Cody). It is hard not to notice the influence France has – Paris secured a deal for 380 Leclerc tanks and more than 60 Mirage 2000 multirole jet fighters. Paris also offered 60 Rafale multirole fighter aircrafts to the United Arab Emirates. Although the GCC countries actively cooperate with these European powers (e.g., through joint exercises, naval ship visits, weapon supplies), none of them are strong and committed enough to actively support them in a crisis.

The GCC members keep trying to diversify their security sources. For instance, Kuwait is developing defence cooperation with Bangladesh, and Qatar is doing so with India. Pakistan is a military partner for the states in the region too. Their cooperation with NATO is developing as well. The fact that Qatar – mostly using French and British armaments – designated two Mirage 2000–5 assault jets and two C-17 Globemaster III transport aircrafts to NATO's operation over Libya is worth remembering as well. The United Arab Emirates announced that it would send up to 24 jets (Mirages and F-16s), but eventually failed to do so as a result of the criticism by NATO of Bahrain's activities related to the suppression of the Shiite protests. Kuwait provided financial support for the operation. The GCC members also support the Combined Task Force (CTF 151 and CTF 152), groups within the Combined Maritime Force.

The search for a new and reliable ally, ready to provide a wide and permanent hard security umbrella is accompanied by the growing involvement of the United

9 See also: *Camp de la Paix (Peace Camp), United Arab Emirates*.

States in the Persian Gulf region during the Iraq-Iran war (1980–1988). The beginning of the "Earnest Will" operation in 1987 was a clear signal confirming America's position. The operation itself was aimed at protecting oil tankers against attacks (See more: Zatarain, Tarock, Navias and Hooton). This was interpreted as a clear message of Washington's readiness to support small states in the region and its concern with an unhindered flow of energy.

The First Iraq War (1990/1991) proved to be a turning point, as the GCC members played an active part, fearing that the war may spread and Iraq's potential desire to expand its territory into Saudi Arabia and then to other GCC members. The situation in the region allowed a series of military agreements to be signed which were not disclosed at the request of the Arab states: the United States signed such an agreement with Oman (1980) first, then began close defence relations with Saudi Arabia (1990), Bahrain (1991), Qatar (1992) and the United Arab Emirates (1992) (Hajjar 20).

The defence agreements gave the Americans a permanent foothold in the Persian Gulf and allowed certain strategic objectives to be achieved which the Pentagon had presented at the beginning of the 1990s. The first task was to improve operational capabilities in the region, especially in terms of rapid deployment. Other objectives were closely related with the strengthening of the defence capabilities of the GCC states. It is because of these military agreements in particular that the Americans have their permanent bases in Bahrain (the V fleet), Kuwait (for instance the large Ali Al Salim air force base), Oman (Thumrait base) and Qatar (Al Udeid, the regional CENTCOM command). The American air force has accumulated equipment for 26 000 troops in Oman itself. The GCC states do not advertise this alliance very much as they know that it is necessary, but very socially unpopular.

Trends in the Armaments of GCC States

The Persian Gulf region is currently the location of one of the largest purchasers of armaments in history. The GCC states – which spend a larger part of their GDP on defence than the global average – fear that they will not be able to avoid participating in a war in the coming years. This means as much as 10 per cent of all global military transactions involve them (Solmirano and Wezeman 2). According to "The Military Balance 2014," in 2013, a significant real increase in defence spending occurred in Oman (39%), Bahrain (36.7%) while there was a reduction in Kuwait (-6%) (*The Military Balance 2014* 303).

"Nevertheless, even a massive procurement of weapon systems, no matter how advanced, is no match for Iran's military power and its ability to conduct modern warfare over any length of time" – Yoel Guzansky from INSS analyses – "the basic conditions behind this reality include the Gulf states' inferior geo-strategic

situations, their domestic constraints, their dependence on foreign manpower, and their difficulty in creating effective security cooperation among themselves" (85). The author adds that the distinguishing feature of the GCC states is the diversification of armament supply sources which leads to a duplication of training, supply and equipment maintenance systems. "Gulf states are investing larger sums to equip themselves with parallel systems. So, for example, the air force of the United Arab Emirates is equipped with both American-made and French-made fighter planes, and the Saudi air force operates both American and British fighter jets" (Guzansky 94).

Table 3. Estimated MENA defence expenditure 2013: sub-regional breakdown[10]

State	Expenditure (%)
Saudi Arabia	34.5
Israel	10.6
Iran	10.3
Iraq	9.8
Algeria	5.8
United Arab Emirates	5.5
Oman	5.4
Egypt	3.8
Bahrain + Kuwait	3.4
Qatar	2.9
Libya	2.8
Morocco	2.2
Jordan + Lebanon	1.6
Yemen	1.1
Tunisia + Mauritania	0.5

The United States is the region's largest arms supplier. In 2001–2004, the Americans were a party in 56.1 per cent of all military contracts in the region (Guzansky 89). According to SIPRI, from 2005–2009, weapons from the United States accounted for 54 per cent of all imports, and in the case of Kuwait and Qatar it was more than 90 per cent (Solmirano and Wezeman 3). Americans have offered advanced hardware to GCC allies which has caused surprise in some quarters. Congress surprised many experts when it voted in favour of a $7 billion deal to sell THAAD anti-missile systems to the United Arab Emirates. Like Saudi Arabia, they agreed

10 *The Military Balance 2014*, 303.

to additionally buy advanced JDAM "smart" bombs. Further entries on the list of the largest armament suppliers in the region include states such as France, the United Kingdom, Russia and China, however, the last two countries mostly closed deals with Iran.

Table 4. The suppliers of major conventional weapons to the GCC states (2005–2009)[11]

Recipient	China	France	Russia	UK	US	Others	Total
Bahrain	-	-	-	34	55	11	100
Iran	35	-	65	-	-	-	100
Iraq	-	-	14	1	52	33	100
Kuwait	-	3	-	-	91	6	100
Oman	-	15	-	4	79	2	100
Qatar	-	-	-	-	98	2	100
Saudi Arabia	6	4	-	42	40	8	100
UAE	-	35	2	-	60	3	100

Two states can be considered regional leaders: Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. "The Military Balance 2012" states, that the Saudi "defence budget has more than doubled over the period (in nominal terms), whilst real defence spending in 2010 was 20.5% higher than 2001 levels" (*The Military Balance 2012*, 314). This was possible mainly because of high budget incomes. In 2005, the government noted a record budget surplus of $57 billion. The latest and most important military procurements include: 72 Eurofighter Typhoon multirole fighters, 12 assault AH-64D Apache helicopters, 35 UH-60L Black Hawk utility helicopters, 58 M1A1 Abrams tanks, an upgrade of these tanks, along with its existing 315 M1A2, to create a fleet of 373 M1A2 (Saudi) Abrams configuration, new engines for 70 F-15S Strike Eagle jets, 724 Piranha wheeled vehicles, and six multirole aerial tankers Airbus A-330 MRTT.

This is, however, not all. For example, in October 2010 the US Congress received information that Saudi Arabia was ready to spend another $30 billion on armaments (Ukman). According to the "Military Balance 2012," a package that includes 84 F-15SA jets, together with supporting equipment, munitions (approximately 5,000 AGM-114R Hellfire II, 600 AGM-88B HARM, 400 AGM-84 Block II Harpoon, 300 AIM-9X Sidewinder, 500 AIM-120C/7 AMRAAM and many more) and upgrades to existing aircraft are worth approximately $60 billion. These also include 70 AH-64D Apache Longbow assault helicopters, 36 AH-6i light attack/reconnaissance helicopters, 12 MD-530F light utility helicopters and 72 UH-60M

11 Solmirano and Wezeman 3.

Black Hawk medium transport helicopters. What is more, Riyadh is still interested in procuring between 600 and 800 Leopard battle tanks from Germany (*Saudi Arabia wants to buy 600–800 Leopard tanks from Germany*).[12] No wonder then that in 2014 Saudi Arabia was the biggest arms importer in the world (its arms imports increased by 54% between 2013 and 2014) (*Saudi Arabia largest importer of defense equipment in 2014, and probably 2015*).

In September 2011, The US Defense Security Cooperation Agency announced that Saudi Arabia's had made a formal request for up to $886 million worth of equipment, including 36 M777A2 lightweight 155mm howitzers, 54 M119A2 105mm howitzers, six AN/TPQ-36V Fire Finder Radar Systems, 24 Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data Systems, 17 136 rounds of M107 155mm High Explosive (HE) ammunition, 2 304 rounds of M549 155mm Rocket Assisted Projectiles (RAPs), 60 M1165A1 High Mobility Multipurpose Vehicles (HMMWVs), 120 M1151A1 HMMWVs, 252 M1152A1 HMMWVs and other equipment (*Kingdom of Saudi Arabia – Howitzers, Radars, Ammunition, and Related Support*). Riyadh has also found enough resources to procure 78 additional sets for 78 anti-tank wheeled vehicles LAV-AT, 404 CBU-105D/B Sensor Fuzed Weapons and associated equipment, parts, training and logistical support for an estimated cost of $355 million (*Saudi Arabia – CBU-105 Sensor Fuzed Weapons*), additional 153 LAV vehicles and night-vision equipment. Saudi Arabia is contemplating acquiring new DDG 51 Arleigh Burke-class destroyers with Aegis ballistic missile defence capabilities (Cavas). What is more, Riyadh is still interested in procuring between 600 and 800 Leopard battle tanks from Germany and requested an upgrade of its PAC-2 batteries to PAC-3 configuration (*Saudi Arabia wants to buy 600–800 Leopard tanks from Germany*). In October 2013, Saudi Arabia requested various munitions, including 650 AGM-84H Standoff Land Attack Missiles-Expanded Response (SLAM-ER), 973 AGM-154C Joint Stand Off Weapons (JSOW) and 400 AGM-84L Harpoon Block II missiles.

According to the INSS, the increase in the expenditure of the United Arab Emirates, the largest regional recipient of weapons from 2005–2009 (57 per cent of imports) amounted to as much as 700 per cent – in the same time frame, they rose from $1.9 billion to $15.4 billion (the SIPRI data suggests an increase from $11 billion to $13 billion with this data being closer to the truth) (Guzansky 90; Solmirano and Wezeman 2). During this period, the United Arab Emirates modernized its own fleet for $3.4 billion with 62 French Mirage 2000–9 jets (from the new Mirage-5 class), 80 US-made F-16 F-16E/F Block 60 Fighting Falcon (Desert Falcon) multirole fighters (for $6.4 billion) and 60 AH-64E Guardian assault helicopters. In April 2013, they decided to buy another 25 F-16 Block 60 fighters for at least $4 billion.

12 Germany has already stopped selling the Leopard 2 tanks and G36 Heckler and Koch assault rifles to Saudi Arabia, but it continues to provide other defensive weapons.

Table 5. GCC states among top 10 Middle East and North Africa defence expenditures 2010–2011[13]

Country	2010	% of Regional Total	2011 Estimate	% of Regional Total	Real % Change
Saudi Arabia	45.17	38.11	46.18	36.18	- 3.1
Israel	17.17	14.49	18.25	14.30	- 2.8
Iran	10.56	8.91	11.96	9.37	- 3.4
UAE	8.65	7.29	9.32	7.30	+ 5.1
Algeria	5.59	4.72	8.61	6.74	+ 44.0
Egypt	5.43	4.58	5.53	4.33	- 3.2
Iraq	4.19	3.53	4.79	3.75	+ 8.9
Oman	4.19	3.53	4.29	3.36	- 1.6
Kuwait	3.91	3.30	4.05	3.17	- 6.2
Qatar	3.12	2.63	3.45	2.71	8.2
TOTAL	107.97	91.09	116.42	91.21	- 1.01

The United Arab Emirates also ordered, among others, 40–60 UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters, 60 AH-64E Guardian assault helicopters, 12 C-130J-30 Super Hercules and six C-17 Globemaster III transport airplanes, three Airbus A-330 MRTT multirole aerial tankers, six Baynunah class corvettes, up to 50 anti-aircraft artillery weapon systems, two Falaj II class corvettes and one Abu Dhabi class frigate. In November 2012, the United Arab Emirates made an official request to expand its THAAD purchases from 2011 worth $1.96 billion with an additional nine launchers and 48 missiles ($1.4 billion) (*United Arab Emirates – Terminal High Altitude Area Defense System Missiles (THAAD)*). A multibillion-dollar purchase of 60 Rafale jet fighters is still possible, as well as a "Diamond Shield," an air-defence system that could form the basis of an integrated missile shield for the entire Arabian Gulf region (Black). Apart from all this, the United Arab Emirates are willing to procure another batch of fighter jets (25 x F-16E and 5 x F-16F Block 60/61 *Desert Falcon*).

The expenditures of Kuwait and Bahrain are also impressive. They have also bought some modern equipment. Kuwait ordered eight KC-130J tankers, two C-17 Globemaster III transport airplanes and 16 AH-64 Apache helicopters, and made a formal request to buy 209 MIM-104E PATRIOT GEM-T missiles (up to $900 million) (*Kuwait – MIM-104E…*). In July 2012, Kuwait requested 60 PATRIOT Advanced Capability (PAC-3) missiles and associated equipment, parts, training and logistical support for an estimated cost of $4.2 billion (*Kuwait – PATRIOT…*). In March 2014, it ordered two batteries for PAC-3 missiles. Kuwait is still looking for 14–18 new fighters to replace its aging F/A-18C/D Hornet jets. Bahrain

13 *The Military Balance 2012*, 306.

ordered nine UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters, AIM-120C AMRAAM missiles and small Sea Keeper patrol crafts.

Table 6. Recent procurements of aircraft (selected)

NAME	AMOUNT	FIRST DELIVERY	COUNTRY
Combat airplanes			
Typhoon	44	2009	Saudi Arabia
F-15SA	84	2015	Saudi Arabia
F-15SA[a]	68	2015	Saudi Arabia
-	24/36/72	-	Qatar
-	14/18	-	Kuwait
AT-802U	6	2010	UAE
-	60	-	UAE
F-16E Desert Falcon (Block 60)	25	-	UAE
F-16F Desert Falcon (Block 60)	5	-	UAE
-	12	-	Bahrain
F-16C/D Fighting Falcon (Block 50)	12	2015	Oman
Typhoon	12	2017	Oman
Transport airplanes			
C-130J-30 Super Hercules	20		Saudi Arabia
KC-130J Tanker	5	2016	Saudi Arabia
A330 MRTT	6	2011	Saudi Arabia
C-130J Super Hercules	2	2013	Saudi Arabia
C-130J Super Hercules	2	2013	Oman
C-130J-30 Super Hercules	1	2012	Oman
C-295M/MPA	8	2013	Oman
A330 MRTT	3	2013	UAE
C-17 Globemaster III	6	2011	UAE
C-130J-30 Super Hercules	12		UAE
KC-130J Tanker	8	2014	Kuwait
C-17 Globemaster III	2	2014	Kuwait
KC-130J Tanker	3	2013	Qatar
C-17 Globemaster III	4	2009	Qatar
C-130J-30 Super Hercules	4	2011	Qatar
A330 MRTT	2		Qatar

[a] – modernization of currently used jets to SA standard

Qatar is also active (See more: Czulda, *Qatar's Defence Procurement*) – it ordered and has already received four Lockheed C-130J-30 Super Hercules airplanes and 21 AugustaWestland AW139 helicopters for approximately $400 million. In November 2012, they announced their intent to field two THAAD batteries with 150 missiles ($6.5 billion) (*Qatar – Terminal High Altitude Area Defense*). Additionally, in July 2013 Qatar requested one AN/FPS-132 Block 5 early warning radar plus associated equipment and services for USD 1.1 billion. Qatar reinforced its weak and small armoured units (still 30 outdated French AMX-30 tanks in service) with an order for 36 German Leopard 2A4 tanks. Qatar revealed its desire to procure 200 more tanks (*Qatar wants to buy up to 200 tanks from Germany*). In April 2013, Qatar ordered 62 Leopard tanks from the latest 2A7 series and 24 PzH 155mm tracked self-propelled howitzers (as a replacement for French 155mm Mk F3) for a total cost of $2.5 billion (Foss 4). In March 2014 Qatar ordered two multirole Airbus A330 MRTT aircraft.

Table 7. Recent procurements of helicopters (selected)

Name	Amount	Supplier	State	First delivery
AH-64E Guardian	70	Boeing	Saudi Arabia	
MD-530F	12	MD Helicopters	Saudi Arabia	2013
AH-6i Little Bird	36	Boeing	Saudi Arabia	
UH-60M Black Hawk	72	Sikorsky	Saudi Arabia	
AW139	3	AugustaWestland	Saudi Arabia	2013
AH-64E Guardian	60	Boeing	UAE	
CH-47F Chinook	20	Boeing	UAE	2010
UH-60M Black Hawk	40–60	Sikorsky	UAE	2010
AH-64D Apache	16	Boeing	Kuwait	2007
AW139	21	AugustaWestland	Qatar	2009
UH-60M Black Hawk	12	Sikorsky	Qatar	
MH-60R/S	22–28	Sikorsky	Qatar	
AH-64E Guardian	24	Boeing	Qatar	
NH90 TTH	20	NHIndustries	Oman	2010
Super Lynx 300	16	AugustaWestland	Oman	2004
AH-1F Cobra	12	Bell	Bahrain	2005
UH-60M Black Hawk	9	Sikorsky	Bahrain	2009
Bell 421	6	Bell	Bahrain	

Additionally, the authorities in the capital of Doha continue to consider what to replace the Dassault Mirage 2000–5 aircrafts with (up to 72 new airplanes).

As price is not a factor, the best are competing for the contract: Eurofighter Typhoon, Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II, Boeing F/A-18E/F Super Hornet, Boeing F-15E and Dassault Rafale. Oman is not falling behind in any way – it has procured two Airbus A320 aircraft and twelve Typhoon jets, ordered three C-130J Super Hercules (including one in the J-30 version), NH-90 TTH helicopters, twelve F-16C/D Fighting Falcon (Block 50) fighters and three modern corvettes. Such large financial outlays represent great news for the Americans and the Israelis. "The strengthening of the Gulf states' military capabilities serves Israel's interests" – thinks Yoel Guzansky – "especially if they adopt a more aggressive stance toward Iran" (91).

The same author adds: "The massive weapons purchases of recent years, especially missile protection systems, fighter planes, and advanced naval vessels, are intended first and foremost to strengthen the Gulf states' ability to defend their weak point: essential assets, especially oil production, refining, and transport infrastructures, but also desalination facilities (the only source of water in these states) and military infrastructures" (Guzansky 91). Nevertheless, some purchases are made based on political grounds. For example, Saudi Arabia's willingness to procure the Russian S-400 air defence systems to convince Russia not to supply the S-300 to Iran.

Conclusions

In summary, there are many factors which – at least potentially – could facilitate a close political and military integration of the GCC states. Among these are elements such as cultural and religious proximity and existing organizational frameworks (such as the GCC as a platform for cooperation), external threats as well as financial resources. These would allow the GCC states to accomplish even the most ambitious of visions. Nevertheless, in practice, the GCC states so far have been unable to create effective joint military structures or even to adapt a common vision of threats and challenges. The lack of a proper strategic culture and military ethos, strong divisions and rivalry within GCC, an anxiety over domination from Saudi Arabia, and national interests mean that despite declarations and a planned build-up and pooling of military assets, the GCC states are not a monolithic entity and in case of war, a joint military operation under the aegis of the "Peninsula Shield" would be of limited value. Of potentially higher value would be the second contingency presented in this paper – an internal pacification force which requires less operational preparation and is less demanding than a military force used during a conventional full-scale war. The use of the "Peninsula Shield" in such a role is essential for the GCC states because social and economic problems have not been solved and a new wave of

civil unrest is just a matter of time. What is more, the GCC states cannot rely on the United States in this scenario.

If the GCC, as a whole, is not a strong and unified entity, should its strength be considered the sum of particular states? The GCC representatives are attempting to convince the international community that together they are very strong and capable. The PSF commander, General Mutlaq Bin Salem al-Azima, said the following in March 2011: "GCC forces are, after NATO, the best. No country has F-15s, Tornados, Mirages, and Typhoon jets, as well as the various different kinds of modern tanks, and all forms and varieties of naval craft. There is great coordination [between the Gulf States]; and we [the GCC military forces] have military forces that no state or institute in the world can compete with, with the exception of NATO" (al-Saeri).

Such an approach is typical for decision-makers of the GCC, who view their armed forces and deterrence potential, from the perspective of the quantity of equipment they possess and its technological advancement, rather than their real capability to effectively use it. The question of the real combat value of the GCC states, their effectiveness and the ability to cooperate in the face of a conflict remains unanswered. Even hundreds of state-of-the-art tanks and jets are not enough in the face of problems such as frontline personnel potential and a lack of strategic depth. This weakness may never be overcome. As a result, as Omar al-Shehabi (director of the Gulf Center for Development Policies in Kuwait) notes despite a high level of military spending, the GCC states need to "rely on Western countries to provide military protection and security" (*Persian Gulf states 'unable to protect themselves' despite military build-up*).

The dependence on a foreign workforce, not only in economic terms, but also for their respective armed forces, is another vulnerable point of most GCC states. The indigenous societies of most of these states are small and inactive because of their wealth, and enlistment is not compulsory (it was in Kuwait not long ago).[14] A large percentage of the soldiers are foreigners who cannot make use of the wealth, prestige and privileges of the indigenous population. This makes maintaining such an army expensive and its loyalty in case of war would be questionable. Who would die for his employer after all? In the event of a political-military crisis or a full-scale conventional war, the governing bodies of the GCC members may have to resort to praying and asking the United States for assistance.

14 In January 2014 the United Arab Emirates announced that they will introduce compulsory military service for all men over the age of 18 or those who have finished high school and are under 30 (Bayoumy).

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National and Cultural Identity in Iraq in the Face of the Formation of the New Order in the Middle East. Philosophical Reflection and the Political Reality

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Abstract

After Arab Spring many hopes were dashed. However historical change must be happening now in the area of social awareness. The rise of extremism limits awareness and also endangers the Arab identity. The Arab revolution has to be more than the overthrowing of dictators. Bennabi created the concept of Post- Almohad Man and its "Colonsability" – a tendency to be colonized which allows the aggressor to be transformed into the colonizer. Is Bennabi's theory applicable to Iraq? Should killing a Post-Almohad Man be the aim, as Bennabi postulated, and only this will allow society to develop? Although Bennabi rather had in mind liberation from auto-stereotype and reconstruction of identity, many still interpret his words literally.

Keywords: Iraq, colonisability, national identity, self-awareness, civil war, national reconciliation

Conflicts in the MENA region are frequently seen as ethnic and religious not only by external observers, but also by societies for whom ethnic, tribal or religious loyalties, are often the strongest mobilizing factors. This is in spite of the fact that these affiliations can be, and often are treated instrumentally and used for political purposes, and thus have a devastating impact on security and social order. In fact, multi-level identity of MENA residents does not constitute *per se* the causes of conflicts. Actually, often the source of tension, is inequality, whether in access to power, resources or the possibilities of self-realization. These forms of exclusion results in the marginalization of certain religious and ethnic groups often through insufficient political representation. Breaking this vicious cycle is extremely difficult because at least for some Muslims: "The Shia-Sunni conflict is a struggle for the soul of Islam" (Nasr 20). This conflict between philosophical, theological concepts and alternative versions of shared history seems so archaic, and yet it is so vital since it is reminiscent of historical tribal and ethnic animosities which are fundaments of many regional identities.[1]

The dynamics of the events in Middle East can be perceived through a prism of delayed recovery from the colonial system, and its consequences, such as the need for revision of the borders and spheres of influence. In this postcolonial perspective, subsequent wars, the Arab Spring, the creation and success of ISIS etc. are interrelated steps of creating the post-colonial order in the region. After the Arab Spring, there has been no pan-regional change in terms of the nature of political systems or social structure. However, historical change may and must be happening now in the area of social awareness. The rise of extremism limits awareness and imagination. The Arab revolution has to be much larger than the overthrowing of dictators. It must lead to the elimination of a deficit, not only in economic terms, but the deficit of education and aspiration, which allows civil societies to flourish as well.

Iraq is often described as the most illogical experiment of the British Empire. Even occupation zones and areas of responsibility, as a result of the war in 2003, corresponded to the ethnic divisions, and many regarded the division of the country into three parts as a reality. What is the impact on the formation of the Iraqi identity in the absence of the principle of congruence, congruence of the nationality, legitimized by a specific culture, and state territory, as well as ethnoregional aspirations? The phenomenon of borderland culture and cultural conversion (Iraq is a borderline area of Arab culture, and adjoins Persian and Turkish ethnoses) and, above all, the geostrategic position of Iraq (the Iran–Iraq border region is defined in geopolitics as a shatter-belt – the area especially conflictual, of strategic importance for stability in the region. Furthermore, the former regional power has become an arena for proxy wars between states, as well as armed groups.), all have a major influence on the formation of the Iraqi identity.

1 See more about meaning and dimensions of Shia-Sunni conflict in Nasr.

Historic Mesopotamia is the home of numerous ethnic and religious groups, including: Bahia, Jews, Yezidi, Kurds, Turkmen, Kyrgyz, Assyrians and of course the Arabs. For decades during conflicts and changes in regimes that ruled Iraq, various groups experienced changes in status. The demise of Saddam Hussein's regime led to the revival of dormant ethnic animosities in a similar manner as was the case in Yugoslavia after Tito's death.[2] Iraq was de facto in a state of civil war. Cultural, ethnic and religious differences, were used to justify violence and discriminatory policies of the state towards particular groups. Affiliations based on confessional and ethnic divisions have replaced the idea of national identity in Iraq, for years holding back the process of national reconciliation. In Iraq primordial tribal ties, ethnic and religious divisions overlap, which in many cases makes it difficult to clearly determine the dominant identity and depending on the situation, a person may shift by selecting the one that would guarantee the best economic or social position (IILHR). In the public discourse in Iraq, has any ethnic, religious or cultural identity been politicized, which, from a social perception, increased the importance and scale of existing divisions. The terms "ethnic" and "ethnicity" for the most part are used to describe the activities of political groups, membership in which is based on real or imagined historical ties, which supposedly have a continuous and significant impact on the political and socio-economic position of their representatives (IILHR). The Iraqi media and politicians consciously use these terms to describe reality. Former prime minister Nuri al-Maliki has repeatedly described the violence as being caused by ethnic hatred, although not saddled on the responsibility of a particular group. For the recipients of this message responsibility was obvious led to a further deepening of the atmosphere of distrust and tension. Despite the fact that most of the Iraqi political parties are largely multiethnic,[3] for Iraqis ethnicity continues to be one of the motives of support for a specific group. Although after the first parliamentary elections in the post-Saddam Hussein era, the main parties, including Maliki's party changed their names in order to not be associated with a specific religious denomination, they nevertheless continue to operate in this way in the social imagination. Although the Iraqi constitution emphasizes the multiethnicity and freedom of religion, the legislation still needs to be consistent with Sharia law, which is particularly evident in family law, guardianship and inheritance. The law prohibits discrimination based on language, age, disability or gender, but lacks specific provisions dedicated to the protection of ethnic groups (IILHR).[4]

2 Some scholars are predicting the development of a "balkanization process" in Iraq.

3 For example Ayad Allawi a Shia'a, chairman of Al-Irakijia who enjoys the support of Sunni, is not concerned when referring to the terminology of modern secularists.

4 The Institute of International Law and Human Rights published a report on Iraqi minorities, it emphasizes that the representatives of the different ethnic groups as well as women and sexual minorities, are vulnerable to discrimination, both de facto and de jure. http://www.iilhr.org/iraq.html.

The smallest groups such as Assyrians, Yezidis, Mandeans are still vulnerable to direct attacks.[5] One must remember that modern animosities often originating from a historical background was politically motivated, not ethnically (Dziekan, *Historia Iraku*, 157–158).

Iraq is often described as the most illogical experiment of the British Empire. Even the occupation zones, or areas of responsibility, as a result of the war in 2003, corresponded with the ethnic divisions, so many predicted that the division of the country into three parts was a probability (Dziekan, *Irak, Religia i Polityka*, 30). The fundamental challenge facing Iraqi society is redefinition, or rather self-realization of a shared identity. Iraqi nationalism, a common identity essential to the functioning of a civil society, had been constituted, like throughout the Middle East, in response to foreign rule, (in this case Turkish and British). A sense of unity is therefore largely superficial and for an individual, clan, ethnic, religious affiliation continues to have the greatest significance. The emergence of a new oppressor, a culturally alien enemy – the Americans, have forced Iraqis to try to overcome local divisions. However, the only secularideas, to which Iraqi society could refer to, such as the ideology of Arab socialism, has been devalued over previous decades. In the political arena only groups with their rhetoric of ethnic and religious identity, that support existing animosities remain. The fall of the secular regime, devolution of all state institutions, the dismantling of the army, the economic collapse and a humanitarian crisis has resulted, naturally, in the revival of religious and fundamentalist sentiments in society. Civil society *in statu nascendi* has lost all of its modern capabilities and people have instinctively turned to traditional tribal and religious structures, because they are the only forum where they can articulate their needs and aspirations. As a consequence, modern political parties have been replaced by religious ones which face the challenge of incorporating modern concepts of civil society into the Islamic worldview. The ideologues are trying to prove the absence of conflict between religion and civil society.

The Americans have faced a fundamental challenge – they wanted to bring democracy to Iraq, and they perceived civil society as its main catalyst. However, the Iraqi political tradition has made a tool of domination and propaganda out of civil society institutions, which the Americans were aiming to make an active political player. Out of those institutions the main problem was the overwhelming lack of public confidence in the concept of civil society as a whole.

5 In 2007, attacks on the Yezidi community in north of the country killed more than 400 people. Ethnic animosities were used politically long before the occurrence of the Islamic State. A striking example of this is the situation of the Iraqi Assyrian population. In 1933, in northern Iraq, there was a massacre of the Assyrians, in which Kurdish troops actively participated. The slaughter was carried out by the Iraqi army without the decision of the government. The action was justified in press releases because of suspicions of an English-French-Assyrian conspiracy against the Iraqi authorities (Dziekan, *Historia Iraku*, 157–158; Deutsch).

There is a one fundamental difference between British colonialism and the American presence, which is often perceived as neo-colonialism – for the British civil society was the source for the modernization of the state (Saeed 4). According to the Americans, Iraqis would benefit from the weakening of the state (Saeed). Americans consciously brought to ruin any regime institutions, and, to some extent, allowed for the plundering of national heritage, hoping that *"starting from scratch"* would be the beginning of the development of a civil society in Western terms.

The fall of the Al Ba'ath regime created an urgent need to rebuild all the structures of the state and the political system. International actors, particularly international organizations have drawn attention to the need of creating a functioning civil society as a precondition for long-term stability. During the 35-year rule of Al-Bass (1968–2003), all forms of mass civil activity were controlled and treated as a propaganda tool by the regime, and any independent initiatives were eliminated. However, in the 1990s, along with changes in the internal structure of Arab authoritarianism, several noticeable papers were published. For example, "Civil Society in Iraq and its role in the creation of democracy" (1992), "Civil Society in the Arab World" (1994) (Saeed 2), "Civil Society in the Middle East" (1995), "Civil society in post-war Iraq" (2006) (Saeed 5). The only pre-2003 mention of the civil society in Iraq appears in a book by Tawfeeq al Moraine: "Civil society and the political state in the Arab World" (1997) (Saeed 2–5). According to the author the most important manifestation of the activity of civil society in Iraq was the functioning of the political parties. The ultimate goal of social activity should be to build the unity of the nation. According to Mudaini: "Civil society in Iraq begins with the end of tribal and ethnic conflicts" (Saeed 4). Because of the strength of the tribal identity's role in Iraq, it is virtually impossible that a civil society in the manner corresponding to the times of the British colonialism, in which social activity was accepted and even encouraged as long as it was in the metropolis' interests can be created. Social masses perceived that activity was usually at the behest of the anglophile elites' whim.

The reign of the Hashemite monarchy (1921–1958) led to the creation of the modern middle class, and when many organizations and associations such as the Women's Revival Club (1923), Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS) (1932), Al-Bayt Schooling Association (1950), Women's Rights League (1952), Muslim Sisters Association, Muslim Boys Association were funded (NCCI 8).[6] Members of the royal family, the colonial authorities and the wider establishment often fulfilled the role of patron for these types of institutions.

In the Republican period (1958–1968), during the reign of General Abd al-Karim Kasim, known as Az-Za'im – the leader, activity in the public sphere was an element

6 Read more about Iraqi civil society structures in an NCCI – NGO Coordination committee for Iraq report from 2011.

of political confrontation between the parties of socialist, communist and Muslim provenance. Keep in mind that in fact it was also a time of military rule (Dziekan, *Historia Iraku*, 172).

During the rule of Al-Bass (1968–2003) civil society structures played the role of an ideological base, helping to educate new activists. The system was based primarily on mandatory membership in trade unions, youth, students and women's organizations. Arab Socialists often invoked the idea of civil society in terms used by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, where civil society was the area of social mobilization against dictatorship. In fact, however, broad social activity was subjected to constant surveillance and had only one role, to be a tool of propaganda for the regime.

Famous Iraqi historian Abd-aziz ad Duri (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 105–120) has presented an accurate analysis of the stage at which there is a sense of national identity and civic national movement of Iraqi society – "It is evident that, in many cases, national thought has not risen to the level at which there is a national movement and in many cases have a general character, which is sometimes romantic" (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 115). This is the core and the root cause of all the challenges facing civil society in Iraq.

Ad Duri postulated a revival of Arab awareness, *wa'i Arabii*, which constitutes an expression of the spirit of community (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 117), enabling its emancipation. *Wa'i Arabii* is realized through the ideology of Arab nationalism – al-qawmijja al-Arabiyya. Arab nationalism is therefore the final manifestation of the Arab consciousness. Arab nationalism has many of the characteristics of imagined nationalism, to paraphrase the theory of B. Anderson (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*). What connects the Iraqis are now mostly romantic feelings: the memory of past glory, a post-war sense of humiliation and a constant renewal of national martyrdom. This is the core and the primary cause of all the challenges facing civil society in Iraq *in statu nascendi.* Other researchers, with whom Ad-Duri argued believed that the ideas and goals of Arab nationalism are already nearly fulfilled, so there is a need, therefore, to reevaluate the current outlook. They have seen causes of past failures in external factors (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 14), while Ad Duri urged Arab intelligentsia to conduct introspection and self-criticism, which until today is regarded as avant-garde among large segments of Arab intellectuals. He claimed: "There are people who would like us to abandon history, and head towards the future. That's what has passed, therefore it is no more important, the more that we are burdened with it, the more difficult it is for us to follow the present. While others would prefer us to live in the past, clung to her heritage (…). We all feel that Arab nationalism is going through a very serious crisis, resulting from the delay of thought in relation to activities and various turbulences in action. (…) This explains the absolute need for the renewal of a philosophical basis for Arab nationalism. This will not be a purely theoretical exercise. The first step here should be to examine the historical roots of pan-Arabism. Such an analysis will identify factors that

combine trends of nationalist movement with the history of the *ummah* and will show to what extent they arise from the development of the community and its progress." (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 114–116).

Ad- Duri, a pan-Arabic thinker, however, gave the Arabs, and perhaps himself, hope for a speedy revival: "I believe that Arab nationalism has already exceeded its pre-World War II romantic stage. We began to realize, after the experience of the mid-twentieth century, that the construction does not start with the roof, but the foundations and that this type of experience requires a new look at the past and reflection on plans for the future" (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 116).

The idea of secularism is known in the Arab world, but it hasn't been widely accepted in its original form, European thought can provide a methodological frame, but its "secularist core will always be rejected. Everything will be Islamized which often means far-reaching re-evaluation" (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 61). Even the Arab modernists such as Al Azm and Abu Zayd often found themselves with their views in a vacuum, so to know reality through religious truth is still more important than the experimental sciences. Arab secularists are often seen by their countrymen, with different ideological orientations, as uncritical followers of Western ideas and a tool in the hands of authoritarian regimes. Among ordinary Iraqis these associations were supported by the memories of the old, supposedly secular, regime.

Sadik al Azm sees the ideological causes of the crisis and a return to fundamentalism *after al-hzimia* of 1967 [The defeat] (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 116; Dziekan, *Historia Iraku*, 309–310) in traditional Arab education, where the most important thing is honor. According to him the structure of the Arab personality: *al-szahsija al-fahlawijja* (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 50) is a major obstacle to social and political progress in the Arab world. "The personality of pahlawi is characterized by the constant search for the fastest and easiest way to achieve a goal. Pahlawi does not care to execute a task correctly, their only concern is that no one can accuse them of wrong doing. It's about appearances – everything has to look nice and make a good impression, regardless of the actual value of the activities and achievements" (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 50). A quick resignation from activities that require considerable, systematic efforts also have a pahlavis feature. To further, their personality they trivialize the other and enhance the sense of inferiority, reveling in negative self-exaltation (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 50–51). According to Al Azm "A contemporary Arabic young man is usually revolutionary in political matters, but in the depths of his heart remains conservative on social, religious, cultural, moral, and economic issues" (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*). Also the vast majority of Iraqi society, after its "al-hazimia" – the defeat of 2003, seems to be mired in a pahlawi mentality.

Another Arab thinker, criticized by al-Azm is Adonis, who sees the attachment to tradition as a strength of Arab culture not a weakness. To this idea he devoted one of his most important works, a study of approaches to the Arabic tradition and

modernity, "Constants and Variables": "Society based on the revelation in its essence is a community of tradition. It is not only the traditional with reference to the past, in the sense that it stores and nurtures the revelation, but also in relation to the future, in the sense that it is a society living in anticipation of the Resurrection. A society that finds its foundation and reference point in the revelation, is associated with what is permanent and eternal, in the 'Face of God,' and not with what is variable and transient. The change means imperfection. So it lives outside the historical movement, suspended between the past, which is a revelation, and the future, which is the resurrection. Creation, revision, renewal, only move away from the foundation. It is important to constantly looking at religion or revelation, as if they were revealed today, and keep them in the original form until the end of the world. (…) In this context, the change becomes negative – it becomes a deviation from what is good" (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 75) the reflection of Adonis is full of concern for the future of Arab thought. For a thinker the disregard for the truth by the Arab society, and above all by the intellectuals is the source of crisis; "The constant is what constitutes the identity of Arabs" (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 85).

One of the most prominent contemporary Arab philosophers, however, who remains relatively unknown to the wider public is Malek Bennabi (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 189–211) who also saw the causes of "the crisis of thought" in internal factors. He created the concept of Post-Almohad Man (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*) and a society which has a tendency to be colonized – the theory reflecting the moral condition and the stage of development of civilization in contemporary Arab societies. The foundation of society is its culture, which the researcher compared to blood (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*). Ignorance of one's own culture leads to a loss of identity and the collapse of civilization. The catalyst for the development of each civilization, including the Muslim one, is religion (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 198–200). However, Bennabi, who was educated in the West, did not deny the need for the achievements of other civilizations, and advocated passing it through a filter of Muslim culture, what would allow "for the adaptation of only some of its appearances – 'the body', but does not allow for the penetrating of the 'spirit of culture'". Historical perspective is extremely important in this context: "achievements of Western civilization are not 'timeless' and 'ahistorical' They are a product of long development in certain socio-political conditions" (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 209). In the modern socio- political discourse that takes place between Islam and the West, both sides seem to forget this. Civilization is not given once and for all, society must be able to first recognize and then cherish its value (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 199). According to Bennabi, the crisis in Islamic civilization began with the emergence of Shia, people who have chosen reason over spirituality, causing the spirit to now be in crisis and guided only by instinct.

The collapse of Almohad marked the start of *inhitat* [the decline] in the political aspect, and in a spiritual sense with the death of Ibn Khaldun (Dziekan, *Złote*

Stolice Arabów, 203). "A new type of man was no longer under control of the spirit (Arab. *run*), or reason (Arab. *akl*), but only guided by instinct (Arab. *ghariza*). On the first and second stages of development, man only listens to the dictates of the spirit and reason – they are somewhat hidden and therefore undetectable. In the third stage, the spirit becomes impotent, while the natural impulses are fully released and become the ruling force of society. This is the last cycle of civilization" (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 201).

According Bennabi (in the 50s), the society of the Maghreb was mentally still in the year 1269. "There has been no evolution – neither social nor cultural, nor mental. Bennabis' theory not only refers to the Maghreb, but to the whole world of Islam, he wrote about how the big cities, like al-Qayrawanwere reduced to small villages, while Baghdad, and Samarkand also falling into decline. The fall of the Almohad caused chaos in the Maghreb, exacerbating the chaos already being felt from the fall of Baghdad in the east of the Arab world" (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 203). According to Bennab, post-Almohad man brought germs, which became the cause of all social and political problems of the Arab world since the fourteenth century. This is why it is so difficult now to find forces for the revival (Arab. *an nahda*). "Muslims revere the post- Almohad man through their social heritage, the ingrained habits and customs" (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 203). This applies to everyone from the simple farmers, pseudo-elites, to the elites. "Obtaining a diploma from a university does not diminish colonosability" (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 203), and therefore, in fact, even educated society groups are not liberated from legacy of post Almohad man. According to Bennabi, so long as society does not find enough strength to eliminate this negative burden that has overwhelmed it for several centuries, and as long as people will not be able to reconstruct the identity based on true Muslim principles in conjunction with the achievements of modern science, all efforts to balance one's life will have no meaning.

"Man in a Muslim society is not able to progress, to move away from old patterns, is not able to accept new stages of development, create new thoughts, or things. This conservatism is not due to his own will, but is the result of deficiency. The Arab world now needs to put more emphases on morality, sociology and psychology than on the experimental sciences, (which Bennabi describes as "material"), as these, as long as man does not know himself, can inflict a lot of damage. A person must recognize in themselves a "post-almohad man" and have it all the time in mind, striving to solve all the problems besetting the Muslim world. (…) This new type of man is characterized by a helplessness and lack of self-confidence, self-depreciating value, it all adds up to porn to be colonized. (…) Post-Almohad man is only waiting for the colonizer, who will be able to instruct him to play any role (…)" (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 204–205).

What are the implication of Bennabis theory for Iraq? "Colonisability is not limited in the strictest sense to the colonial experience, but rather it is the state of

a collective consciousness of social impotence. This term is now also used in relation to the countries of the Global South, which were never colonies" (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 208). The situation of the occupied countries is much different. Colonisability means: emptiness, vacuity, moral decay, fragmentation and dirt. Such features of a society allows for the aggressor's transformation over time into the colonizer. In turn, the lack of "a tendency to be colonized," means the attacker becomes the occupier, which is associated with the existence of external factors such as invasion and an internal resistance force as well as discord towards foreign domination. Thus, for the completion of the tragedy of colonialism there needs to be an external factor (force striving to colonize) and an internal factor. So, according to Bennabi, the colonization of Algeria by France, which began in 1830, was a kind of "destination" – an event that had to occur, because they were satisfied all conditions were favorable (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 205). The causes of the crisis of Arab national thought lies therefore in the internal factors, reflecting the moral condition and the stage of development of contemporary Arab societies. Is Bennabi's theory applicable to Iraq? USA and the UK under international law were occupying powers, but in the public consciousness did they become colonizers? Has colonisability survived in the mentality of Iraqis since the time of the British Mandate, or perhaps earlier? Among Iraqis there is certainly a strong resistance and opposition to foreign domination, however, over the years, in the absence of significant changes in the internal situation, the sense of resignation, powerlessness and inner emptiness has increased. Should "killing a Post-Almohad Man" (Dziekan, *Złote Stolice Arabów*, 205) be the aim of Arab societies as Bennabi postulated, and only this will allow these societies to develop? Although Bennabi had in mind liberation from auto-stereotype and reconstruction of identity, many still interpret his words literally.

Franz Fanon wrote about the phenomenon of "colonized intelligence." Fanon, perhaps to a greater extent than Bennabi, was aware that he himself is a "product" of the colonial system, however, through his personal drama, unlike the others, he was "sentenced to conciseness." For Fanon, during the Algerian War, the armed struggle was the only way to awaken national consciousness, liberation, especially its spiritual aspect has had its price of blood, – "The aim of the colonized man, involved in a fight, is the removal of foreign domination, liberation (…). Independence is not a word connected with exorcism, but the condition without which there can be no really free people. Holders of all natural resources allow for the reconstruction of society" (Fanon 180).

The West and the Orient remain hostage to mutual stereotypes and auto stereotypes spanning colonial times. According to Edward Said's radicalization in the Muslim Middle East is largely an attempt to find "own self and not-self", in the condition of subordination to Western cultural supremacy in the world, and the effect of propaganda (the so-called "collision of civilizations," endless, irreversible) (Said 1). Among Muslims, the view that only Islam can provide universal peace

and democracy in the true meaning of the sovereignty of states and societies free from foreign influence is common especially among fundamentalists.

For the West, since Napoleonic times, the Orient has been a quasi-mythological formation, which can be possessed, and one should aim to dominate and manage it. There is a dichotomy between the world of "our" civilization and culture, and the world of "others." Iraq was the victim of just such a perception of reality. According to the colonial paradigm, those others could not yet present achievements equal or superior to our own. Therefore, in neo-colonial categories the devastation of Iraqi cultural heritage and devolution of institutions was not seen in the eyes of the perpetrators as an act of cultural vandalism, but an exigence which allows for the construction of a new and better Iraq. Iraq's interim government has been accused not only by the Iraqis, but also by American politicians and scientists, of not preventing the escalation of looting, as well as being unsupportive and lacking inspiration (*No end in sight*). There were only five people speaking Arabic in the interim authorities. Any advice and appeals of numerous experts from the field of national heritage protection were ignored. Those facts only fuel mutual distrust and regrets. According to Said we are dealing with a massive and "aggressive stigmatization of Arabs because of their backwardness, lack of democracy and disregard for women." At the same time these values are being simplified and treated in a one-dimensional-manner (Said 2). According to its adversaries, the West with their actions in the Middle East, are betraying all the values that they are aiming to promote. Despite this, the belief that Western democracy is the only desire of the Arab world is still common. Humanity is stuck in the rhetoric of "the collision of civilizations." Categorical and generalized categories such as "West" and "Islam," has led to the creation of an artificial collective identity for a number of significantly different individuals who are thus deprived of their true identity and potential (Said 7). The Middle East is often seen as a pariah of the globalized, democratic world. Therefore, Said called for a profound respect "for the energy and ability of all people of the region who are fighting for what they are and what they would like to become" (7). Even if this fight would result in the ultimate sacrifice. According to Said, Humanism is the only means of resistance against the inhuman practices and injustices.

Like the West, the world of the Orient fell into the trap of the negative effects of globalization, such as social exclusion and the disintegration of traditional structures, which has resulted in the necessity of redefining identity. The importance of cultural heritage for a sense of identity and national unity is not to be underestimated in the face of the overwhelming homogenization of global culture. There is an urgent need for a kind of cultural emancipation. The search for individual and collective identity should be an act of liberation. This process should be conducted voluntarily with respect for the pluralism of cultures and ethnic groups of the region. The culture is an expression of national identity. This collective responsibility is undeniably the foundation of prosperity and freedom. The deficiency of

responsibility is fuelling a culture of fear and anger. The lack of coherence between the social, political and economic systems, as well as the insufficient communication between the ruled and the rulers were what damaged the foundations of authoritarian regimes during the Arab Spring; a simultaneously and multidimensional social deprivation has strengthened the ties of local societies to religion and tradition, often in extreme forms.

Iraqis are still looking for the appropriate forms of expression for their aspirations. "Believers do not rise to pray during the night in order to find themselves and forget the world; they do so to find themselves, to fill the daylight hours with meaning, and to reform the world" (Said 7). Arab and Muslim societies require a "cultural Arab Spring." This kind of awakening is only possible in a society that is responsible, free from illusions, self-critical, introspective, but not deprived of optimism and imagination. Often this means going through the painful process of national reconciliation, which leads to the liberation from intellectual and cultural colonialism but can frequently be stigmatizing. "The rebirth of Arab existence is possible only if one breathes new life into the forgotten patterns, symbols and cultural landscapes. However, the Arab world is now undergoing another crisis, which limits awareness and imagination, and endangers the Arab identity" (Ramadan 3). The Arab revolution has to make acts much larger than just the overthrowing of dictators, it must get rid of "shackles forged in the smithy of the human soul" (Said 4). Iraqis often claim that with the improvement of the security situation in Iraq, the Arab Spring will come to Mesopotamia. The question is, whether "the revolution will not devour their own children." According to Franz Fanon any postcolonial revolution, including the struggle for identity, is carried out by the means of armed struggle, but at the same time "any act of aggression is an act of suicide" (Fanon 180), also for the Iraqi people.

Paraphrasing the words of Abd Al Aziz Ad Duri, we can say that, still, despite the grassroots efforts of the population, the Iraqi national movement, and with it civil society, are at the romantic stage. Iraqis seem to be overwhelmingly aware of the negative phenomena in their country – such as nepotism, corruption, poverty – but they seem to ignore their implications for future generations and tolerate their existence. Continuously living in life-threatening situations, through the past three wars, has led to indifference to violence and emotional and mental problems that affects entire generations. Deprived of the opportunity to meet their basic needs, Iraqis have significantly reduced their expectations of politicians. Increasingly, you can feel the longing for the former regime, Iraqis sometimes even publicly state that Iraq needs a dictator.

Pervasive violence effectively limits the aspirations of the Iraqi people. Although national awareness may have been transformed, there is a need for outstanding individuals or so called "positive deviants," ready to initiate these changes. The society in Iraq after *al-hazima of 2003* needs its own *an nahda*.

The main barrier for the development of civil society in Iraq is a lack of political maturity among the establishment. Iraqi society needs to go through the process

of national reconciliation, but it is impossible as long as the priorities of people are not priorities of elites The Iraqi government seems to duplicate the patterns of the past, treating the ideas of civil society and democracy and playing of the cards of sectarianism. Conversion requires the political landscape of Iraq to have efficient institutions, not based on religious and ethnic divisions. Above all, citizens need to feel at least a modicum of economic security. Social change must be linked to political reform. The biggest obstacle to the development of civil society in Iraq is the sense of responsibility to the family or tribe and not to the community, a lack of awareness of the common destiny and finally, most importantly, a lack of civic courage. As long as the Iraqis do not overcome the difficulties of daily life, it is impossible to re-awaken aspiration, and with it the transformation of mentality, and the social and political manners necessary for the effective development of civil society structures.

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Iranian–Turkish Relations in a Changing Middle East

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Abstract

After the outbreak of the Arab Spring and, above all, the intensification of the Syrian crisis with Ankara starting to engage in a political confrontation with Assad's Syria, Tehran tried to exploit its historic strategic alliance with Damascus in a search for projecting its influence abroad. As Turkey has been facing more and more hardships and experiencing political isolation, Iran seemed to be more comfortable with its external environment, benefiting from a convergence of interests with Russia. However, the advent of ISIS created further disarray in the region, presenting opportunities for countries to cooperate especially for Erdogan's new Turkey which was still focused on fighting Kurds.

Keywords: Iran, Turkey, Middle East, Syria, ISIS, Kurdish issue, Russia, Erdogan, Khamenei

Introduction

It was only eight years ago when Turkey managed to sign a joint declaration with Iran (and Brazil) to solve the nuclear issue (May 2010). This agreement on the transfer of nuclear fuel was then dropped because of Western pressure. However, the international community was given a jolt as Turkey succeeded in emerging as a power broker in Middle Eastern affairs and the Davutoglu doctrine based on "zero problems with neighbours" seemed to have reached its peak. While its relations with Israel were starting to sour, Turkey was in a honeymoon relationship with Syria – having created a visa-free regime for the movement of citizens – launched political and economic relations with Barzani's KRG (still current at the moment), emerged as a champion for the Palestinian cause after the Mavi Marmara incident, and was the only Muslim country to be able to create a stable dialogue with Iran. Iran itself, having experienced what King Abdullah of Jordan, as a warning to his Arab neighbours, dubbed "the Shiite crescent" in the Middle East, was facing increasing international isolation due to sanctions.

However, after the outbreak of the Arab Spring and, above all, the intensification of the Syrian crisis, things drastically changed. Existing relations came under severe strain. The IR deck of cards had been completely reshuffled. While Ankara started to engage in political confrontation with Assad's Syria, Tehran tried to exploit its historic strategic alliance with Damascus in order to project its influence abroad and recreate the myth of the Shiite crescent. As Turkey has been facing more and more hardships, Iran seems to be more comfortable with its external environment, benefiting from a convergence of interests with Russia. Nevertheless, the advent of ISIS created further disarray in the region, presenting both opportunities and constraints for cooperation, especially for Erdogan's Turkey. The historic nuclear deal between Iran and the international community, reached in July 2015, put Turkey under further pressure, as Ankara launched military strikes against the Kurds.

This paper aims to assess the current state of relations between Turkey and Iran, taking into account the Kurdish issue and the ISIS threat against the backdrop of the ongoing war in Syria.

Historical Background

The emergence of the ISIS threat appears to have created a convergence of interests in Turkish and Iranian foreign policies. Both Ankara and Tehran are interested in preserving their geopolitical positions as well as their political influence in the region and the security of energy routes – which were under threat from Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's caliphate. Indeed, the ongoing war in Syria has shown that

the two regional powers have significantly different and opposing goals to the extent that they have embraced competing strategies and formed opposing alliances throughout the region. If in an economic perspective, Iranian–Turkish relations remain stable, the political-military arena has seen the two countries adopt differing strategies. Iran has been seeking Russian cooperation as both countries benefit from a simultaneous convergence of interests. On the other hand, Turkey has slowly been attempting a rapprochement with Israel. Iran has been supporting the Shiite-power-based elite ruling in Baghdad while Turkey has preferred tightening its relations with the Kurdish Regional Government in Erbil (KRG). Finally, Iran has been focusing on the ISIS threat almost from the onset, as Turkey appeared willing to confront the PKK's military challenge in south-eastern Anatolia.

Historically speaking, Turkish–Iranian relations have been characterized by a bitter political rivalry in their approach to Middle Eastern issues, mainly due to cultural and ideological differences as well as competing ambitions in the Middle East. Long before the establishment of their respective current regimes, the Middle East witnessed competition between an Ottoman-Sunni empire based in Istanbul (1453–1923), and the Shiite empire under the Safavids (1501–1736) as well as the Qajar dynasty (1791–1925). Deep religious differences as well as competition for power in the Middle East were inherited by subsequent regimes during the 20th century.

The last decades have a seen a greater level of cooperation in the energy sector alongside the ongoing ideological-political rivalry. The march towards integration in international markets encouraged by Turgut Özal (Turkish Prime Minister between 1983 and 1989 and then President of the Republic till his death in 1993) contributed to increasing economic cooperation between Ankara and Tehran, especially during the Eighties when Iran was engaged in the Iran–Iraq War and required significant imports (Özcan and Özdamar 105–106). Both countries benefited from the opportunities created by the international conjuncture.

The Nineties represented a turning point in defining alliances in the Middle East. The dissolution of the USSR gave Turkey a new impetus to strengthen relations with countries from the former "Soviet empire," due to cultural and linguistic affinities. The ominous threat the USSR had posed to Turkey throughout the Cold war finally disappeared and a number of opportunities opened up for Ankara (Robins; Hale). Turkey had a great opportunity to boost economic cooperation in the energy sector, taking advantage of the oil reserves in the Caspian and Black seas in order to emerge as an important hub for oil and gas supplies shipped to Europe (Bacik; Bilgin; Winrow). After the military intervention against Iraq in January 1991, the United States (US) promoted a new line of foreign policy to cope with Middle Eastern issues, based on the concept of "dual containment," aimed at containing both Iran and Iraq. The cornerstone of this approach was the encouragement of an alliance between Turkey and Israel; under the auspices of Washington, Ankara

and Tel Aviv secured a military pact in 1996 (Benjio). With this international development, Iran began to suffer from its imposed isolation. To overcome this situation, Iranian leaders tried to reach out to Russia. The main problem after the eight-year war against Iraq was the country's reconstruction and the relaunch of its economic recovery. The Rafsanjani administration (1989–1997) received a positive response from Russia in the shape of the Yeltsin Presidency's 1993 adoption of a new foreign policy concept based on a multidimensional philosophy with the assumption that Moscow would prioritize its own economic and security interests through a more pragmatic approach (Aras and Ozbay 50). This was exemplified in 1996 with the refurbishment of a 1970 abandoned German project for the construction of a nuclear reactor in Bushehr. So while in the Nineties the US tried to fill the new power vacuum in the Middle East caused by the dissolution of the USSR, Russia and Iran found converging interests in counter balancing Washington's hegemony.

The 2000s were characterized by some important events, both at the international and state level, which again reshuffled the deck in the Middle East. It was not because of the ideological affinity between the AK Parti and the theocratic regime in Iran that economic cooperation has continued to flourish throughout the last decade and up to today. Indeed, one has to highlight the huge difference between a party claiming Islamic roots within a republican state that has secular institutions where minimal democratic and pluralistic conditions are met, and a regime that has been founded on a religious framework where there is no room for freedom and pluralism. The main driving force of Turkish economic expansionism abroad was the Anatolian bourgeoisie, the religious-oriented middle class that formed the grassroots of the AKP and had said it had encouraged Turkey's openness to international markets (Yavuz). What was more in rhetoric than in practice was that under the AKP's rule, Turkey had exploited Islamic solidarity in order to reach out to Middle Eastern markets and peoples, especially with regards to relations with Iran.[1] In reality, Turkey was really interested in becoming an energy hub for the transportation of hydrocarbons from the Middle East to Europe, and finding an accommodation with Iran was a strategic tool in this regard. Pragmatic considerations, rather than ideological ones, dominated Turkish policymakers' calculations from 2002 to 2011, before the Arab Spring; it is under these circumstances that Turkish–Iranian entente against the PKK and the PJAK (an offshoot of a Kurdish terrorist group operating in Iran) has to be understood (Karacasulu and Askar Karakir 117).

Analyzed through a political-security lens, with their peak in 2011, relations between Ankara and Tehran soured in the same year against the backdrop of the Syrian crisis which was beginning to morph into a civil war. In the previous

1 Large segments of the Turkish society harbour feelings of skepticism towards the Iranian establishment.

decade, the Kurdish issue itself was key to Tehran's policy change towards Ankara: the insurgency campaign of PJAK prompted Iran to approach Turkey and to accept the PKK as a terrorist organization as well (Ehteshami and Elik 653–654). Actually, despite continuing good diplomatic relations up to the onset of the Arab Spring, Iranian officials have generally been skeptical and apprehensive of Turkey's growing influence in Middle Eastern affairs over the past decade. Turkey's increased engagement in the region included its activism in the Palestinian issue, its deepening relationship with Hamas, a pragmatic approach towards Israel, a softening in the role of ideology in favour of authentic diplomatic tools in nurturing Israeli-Syrian détente – the "shuttle diplomacy" that Turkey undertook in the second half of 2008 (Ehteshami and Elik 655).

The Current Political-Military Dimension in Turkish–Iranian Relations: The Case of the War in Syria from the Kurdish Issue to the ISIS Threat

At the onset of the Syrian uprising in March 2011, Turkish officials' attitude was to exhort Assad to adopt internal reforms in order to assuage rioters' dissatisfaction with his regime. The "reform package" announced by Assad in April received Iranian backing. Even Turkish officials, such as the Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and the head of Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (MIT) were often sent as envoys to Damascus in order to lobby Assad to introduce reforms (Barkey, *Turkey's Syria Predicament*, 117). However, Assad was not eager to accommodate the opposition instead cracking down on the demonstrations, exacerbating an already dangerous situation that soon threatened to spill over Turkish borders. It was at this time, around six months after the beginning of the revolts, that Turkey's foreign policy approach towards the Syrian upheaval drastically changed. While Iran unconditionally supported the Assad regime, Turkey began to host meetings of the Syrian opposition on its soil, including the Syrian National Council as well as the leaders of the Free Syrian Army in exile, who established their headquarters in Istanbul (Barkey, *Turkey's Syria Predicament*, 117; Sevi 2; Sinkaya 152). Reciprocal accusations were thrown at each other in an incipient and renewed political rivalry for control of competing groups in an inflamed Syria. The pragmatic and pacific approach initially adopted by Turkish officials was justified on the basis of very good relations Ankara and Damascus had been building during the previous ten years. In the Nineties, the two countries were at odds with regards to the Kurdish question and to the bloody campaign of terrorist attacks perpetrated by Abdullah Ocalan's Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). However, once Ocalan was captured, Turkey and Syria developed a deeper political and economic relationship. Toward

the end of the past decade, Turkish–Syrian relations substantially improved, comprising a framework envisaging the approval of a free-visa mechanism for their respective citizens, the creation of a free-trade area and the preparation of frequent high-level official meetings. Such an improvement of relations with the Assad regime was the cornerstone of Ahmet Davutoglu's long pursued "zero problem policy with neighbours." Apart from its relations with Israel souring, after the Mavi Marmara incident occurred on May 31, 2010, Turkey's external influence was at high; Erdogan, Davutoglu and the AK Parti could benefit from a real supportive regional context in which to chase their strategic goals.

Throughout the course of its modern history, Turkey has always adopted an official stance towards Kurds, based on the notion of "Turkishness" (Cagaptay; Hale and Ozbudun). Kurds were denied basic rights such as speaking their own language, having Kurdish names, or even calling themselves Kurds. This attitude emerged as a natural consequence of the "Sevres syndrome," resulting from the arrangements of post-World War I and had to do with both the safety of boundaries and the integrity of the national identity. The denial of Kurdish identity is best exemplified by the notion of "mountain Turks," an idiomatic expression under which they are also known. However, from the time the AK Parti came to power, Erdogan and his governments started to embrace a new worldview envisaging the prospect to finally include Kurds within Turkish society and the state. This attitude was represented a break with the past. While the CHP espoused the official ideology of Republican Kemalism, which was based on a very restrictive notion of national identity (sacrificing whatever ethnicity or alternative national group within the cadre of Turkishness), the AK Parti found it useful to include Kurds within the framework of their common Muslim identity with Turks (Yavuz and Özcan, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey's Justice and Development Party* and *Turkish Democracy and the Kurdish Question*; Gunter; Müce-Göcek). The strategy of integrating the Kurds, which was supposed to culminate in the recognition of a number of fundamental rights for the Kurds, was not wholly possible until 2007. This was when the AK Parti was reconfirmed as the ruling political force, while Abdullah Gul's election as President overtly challenged the power of the military (the guardian of Kemalist principles). However, it must be underlined that the inclusion of Kurds, as part of the implementation of Davutoglu's principle of "zero problems with neighbours," was conceived as a pivotal moment of the AK Party's strategy to start its accession process to the European Union. The limitation of the power of the military within a civilian framework was also a fundamental principle of Davutoglu.

As the Syrian situation worsened because of Assad's unwillingness to carry out political reforms in his country, and his crackdown on protesters, Turkish officials decided to cut diplomatic ties with Damascus. From their point of view, there are three main problems that the Syrian civil war has produced: a) a humanitarian crisis potentially affecting Turkish security, likely resulting in a huge refugee influx;

b) a dangerous situation of political and societal disarray near the Syrian-Turkish border that might be exploited by terrorist groups, such as the Turkish PKK and the Syrian YPG (PYD's official militia); c) Kurdish groups' quest for autonomy, or even independence that could bring about more chaos in the territory. Nevertheless, key factors such as the inability to intervene directly and to declare a no-fly zone on the Syrian skies, as well as the threat from Syrian Kurds gathered under the umbrella of the PYD (the main Kurdish Syrian party which was thought to be aligned with the PKK) prompted Erdogan to officially declare the end of the peace-process with the Kurds and to use an 'iron fist' approach after a terrorist attack was carried out in Suruc on 20 July 2015.

One of the main hindrances to stifle Turkey's leeway in managing the Syrian question was its faltering relations with Washington. US officials were unwilling to be involved in another war in the Middle East, having in mind the negative outcomes America had been experiencing after its double engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq for over fourteen years. Ankara had pushed Washington to be involved in Syria several times, and to receive the necessary support for establishing a no-fly zone along the Syrian–Turkish border. It became clearer and clearer to Turkish officials that their US partners had different and indeed conflicting interests in Syria. While Turkey was intent on stifling a well-organized Kurdish movement, the US' main goal was to contain the threat from the Islamic caliphate; and to do so, Washington exploited the Kurdish forces on the ground – the People's Protection Units (YPG) *in primis* – an action that increased Turkish anger and frustration (Peerzada). The event that probably helped to consolidate cooperation between the YPG and the US was the American decision to back the Syrian Kurdish militia during ISIS' siege of Kobane in October 2014. Turkey started to be very much concerned with the ongoing cooperation between the YPG and the US, and the possibility of establishing an independent Kurdish entity from the ashes of the Syrian turmoil. When ISIS was at 'the gates' of Mosul, Turkish officials did not seriously take into account such a threat, underestimating the will of ISIS fighters to besiege the Iraqi city. By the time Islamic jihadists took over the consulate in Mosul on June 11, 2014 – capturing 49 individuals as hostages – it was too late (Johnston). When a Western coalition was set up at the NATO summit in Wales in September 2014, Turkey did not agree. Its attitude towards the Islamic State remained ambiguous at least until the summer of 2015.

Empirical proof that the Kurdish population is considerably divided[2] is evident (Larrabee 68; van Wilgenburg), and reflected in the Kurdish forces involved in the war against the Islamic State. Notwithstanding this split among competing political forces within the Kurdish Diaspora – a key factor that prevents

2 Official statistics are not that precise in estimating the real extent of the Kurdish people – the largest one to be without a state – but many agree on roughly 30 million individuals spread within the territory of four states, Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran.

the attainment of concrete military goals on the ground – Turkey's main strategy to damage Kurdish forces was not to be directly involved in the international coalition against the Islamic caliphate. This is far from saying that Ankara militarily cooperated with ISIS (besides some speculation concerning the smuggling of oil barrels between Turkey and the Caliphate).[3] However, Turkey made all the necessary efforts to hinder Kurdish forces on the ground by not overtly opposing the ISIS forces in Syria and Iraq. To not completely alienate the US, in July 2015 Turkey allowed the use of the strategic Incirlik air-base in order to help Washington carry out strikes against the Islamic State, even if most Turkish air-strikes were directed to the PKK and not to ISIS itself.

When the AK Parti returned to power in 2007, after winning a majority of 46% in the Parliament, and Abdullah Gul was finally elected President of the Turkish Republic, Erdogan could better pursue his design to shape state institutions to his vision. First of all, the curbing of military power in domestic politics, both to consolidate the government's power base at home and to better meet the necessary political criteria to obtain admission into the EU. Secondly, it entailed managing the Kurdish issue in a total different manner to the past. Herein lie the main reasons that boosted the then Prime Minister Erdogan both to launch what is known as the Kurdish opening (officially started in 2009) and to establish strong and sound relations with Massoud Barzani's KRG. Improving relations with the KRG has been beneficial in two ways for Turkey: a) to loosen dependence from Iranian and Russian flows of energy, that would put Ankara at the mercy of Tehran and Moscow at times of tense relations; to appease Kurds' desire for independence that would be unacceptable for both Ankara and Baghdad (Morelli and Pischedda).

Tension between Iran and Turkey increased after Ankara decided to host the deployment of a US radar system on its soil within the framework of the NATO missile defence shield program in September 2011. This move alarmed Iranian officials as they thought it was set up to contain Iran and was aimed at striking infrastructure related to its ongoing nuclear program. In fact, in spite of official statements by Turkish policymakers aimed at dialling down tensions, the fact that the system was installed in Latakia, some 200 km away from the Iranian border, confirmed to Iranians that their fears were not unfounded. Even for this reason,

3 There's a large amount of sources on the web supporting the thesis of oil smuggling between Turkey and ISIS through Syrian and Iraqi routes. ISIS, it is claimed, engaged in smuggling oil, trafficking drugs and selling antiquities in order to self-finance its own terrorist activities. President Erdogan has been accused by both the opposition in his country and from abroad, especially Russia. In December 2015, he said he would resign if activities of oil smuggling, in which he or members of his government were implicated, were proven. See, for example, http://theiranproject.com/blog/tag/turkey-daesh-oil-trade/ (accessed: March 29, 2017). Henry Barkey (*Turkey's Syria Predicament*) reports some references proving illegal oil smuggling, involving even the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH, the same which led the flotilla at the time of the Mavi Marmara incident, 31 May 2010).

Tehran has been looking at Ankara's moves in the Middle East with great suspicion, considering Turkey is always more an actor engaged in promoting foreign interests and acting as a Western surrogate in the Middle East. However, the Kurdish issue had brought Turkey and Iran together after 2004, with Tehran having decided to proscribe the PKK as a terrorist organization, in response to the spread of violence perpetrated by the Party of the Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK), a PKK offshoot operating on Iranian soil (Ehteshami and Elik 653–654). Although Ankara and Tehran still had differences in attaching importance to the Kurdish question (with the former viewing it as the greatest threat to its national security), the issue itself has shown that a high degree of cooperation in their bilateral security relations is possible.

One of the two prominent issues Iran and Turkey had to cope with from the outset of the Syrian uprising in 2011 was the resurgence of *jihadist* activities perpetrated by what remained of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), then re-named ISI (Islamic State of Iraq). AQI was established in Iraq after the collapse of the Saddam regime in 2003 by a Jordanian terrorist, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Although he officially swore allegiance to the core of the Al-Qaeda organization sheltered in the Hindu Kush, along the Afghan-Pakistani border, his group in Iraq often operated beyond the official decrees issued by Ayman Al-Zawahiri and Osama Bin Laden. The opposition groups in Iraq were very heterogeneous and extended from Sunni Arabs to Sunni jihadists, from criminal bands to insurgent groups from the majority Shi'ite community. The Shi'ite population in Iraq makes up the majority of between 60 to 65% of the inhabitants. Al-Zarkawi's approach against the US invasion in Iraq was influenced by a prominent scholar during his detention in prison. Among his terrorist activities, he used to hit not only US but also Shi'ite targets, especially exploiting the deep ethnic and religious divides that spanned Iraq. Shi'ites were selected among his priority targets because of the widespread belief among Sunni fundamentalists that the Shi'a represents a deviation from the original faith (Holbrook; Kavalek).

The Iranian leadership has always considered Sunni *jihadist* terrorism as one of the most serious threats that the country faced. The overthrow of two geographically adjacent regimes namely the one of Saddam in Iraq and the Taliban in Afghanistan put Iran in a situation of encirclement. In less than a couple of years, Tehran found itself jeopardized by two threats, US troops and Sunni *jihadists* ready to cross over the Iranian border to spread disarray. In response to the deteriorating situation ensuing from the Syrian quagmire, Iranian leaders exploited Shi'ite connections to build an alliance with as many Shi'ite organizations as possible throughout the Middle East. Because of this action, King Abdullah of Jordan in 2004 had formerly referred to the projection of Iranian influence abroad as a "Shia crescent" in the region (Barzegar 87). However, even if religion is an important driver in shaping Iranian posture in Middle Eastern affairs, material factors – such as geopolitics,

economics and security – have historically been of paramount importance. The fear of encirclement, a sort of paranoia for the integrity of its borders, which is to say a constant perception of a need for survival, stems from the times of the Safavid Empire (Ramazani). This is more evident today with regards to the outcome of the more than five year-long Syrian civil war. Its strategy to defend itself is deeply rooted in the exploitation of Shiite connections in the Middle East with the Lebanese movement of Hezbollah, the Syrian regime under the al-Assad dynasty and the post-Saddam Iraqi regime.

The strategic importance of the Iranian-Syrian axis has already been "put under the microscope" (Hinnebush and Ehteshami). Tehran-Damascus ties have been forged over the course of past decades, by exploiting religious commonalities with the Assad family (who belong to the Alawites, a branch of Shia). Syrian territory was of vital importance to Tehran's geopolitics to the extent that it could take advantage of its territorial proximity with Lebanon where Hezbollah, an Iranian offshoot set up early in the Eighties, operates against the state of Israel.

From the Iranian leadership's point of view, one of the scenarios to be avoided is the Islamic State's territorial expansion to the extent that the al-Baghdadi caliphate would create a barrier between Tehran and Damascus. A second threat would be the dissolution of Iraq and the resulting flow of refugees that could cross over the Iranian border. In this scenario, Iran would face the potential restart of a Kurdish uprising for independence. Iran has always backed a unified Iraq under a centralized regime. For this reason, Tehran has been giving Baghdad all the necessary aid to protect the Haider al-Abadi's[4] regime from ISIS by training and funding Iraqi militias and providing weapons; furthermore, Brigadier General Qassem Soleimani (chief of the al-Quds brigade of the IRGC) was recalled from Syria on June 2014, which coincided with the ISIS conquest of Mosul (Akbarzadeh 45–46). All these operations have been possible inside a framework of tacit coordination with the US against a backdrop of long-standing efforts to overcome the nuclear issue, culminating in a deal signed in Vienna on July 2015. This does not mean that immediately after the signature of this historic accord (poised to gradually lift sanctions that were crippling the Iranian economy), Tehran and Washington were ready to define themselves as "friends." The ancient foes remain exactly the same – and the Leader Khamenei wants to keep the United States as an enemy – although there is now room for more cooperation than in the past, even to confront the common military threat coming from ISIS. Furthermore, the Kurdish issue, however relevant, was not as important as the jihadist one, since Tehran has always perceived Saudi Arabia's hidden *longa manus* of exploiting Sunni-Shia rivalries in the region, and aware of the renowned Sunni fundamentalist hatred nurtured by jihadists operating in Iraq – as the military

4 He succeeded Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki in August 2014.

activities against Shia perpetrated by Jordanian Abu Mus'ab al-Zarkawi, above all, very well showed (Barkey, *Turkish-Iranian Competition after the Arab Spring*; Karmon; Kavalek).

Since the onset of the Syrian uprising in the spring of 2011, Turkish and Iranian goals have seemed to be diverging. The good level of cooperation achieved just a few months before (May 2010) with the attainment of a nuclear agreement in cooperation with Brazil – later abandoned – was something that belonged to the past. New priorities were opening a new round of rivalry between the two countries. Long before the ISIS threat started to be a priority for the international community, the main concern for the Turkish leadership was to avoid the destabilization of the Assad regime which could foster a Kurdish insurgence. Indeed, from the beginning of the Arab Spring, the real issue at stake in Turkey–Iran ties was about political influence through which to champion a model to export abroad. While Erdogan, through illustrating the economic performances that Ankara had achieved over the previous decade, tried to sell to Arab constituencies Turkey's "successful" experiment of merging Islam and democracy, Khamenei overtly spoke about an Islamic awakening, depicting the Arab revolutions as a successful result of exporting the Islamic Republic's principles abroad (Mohammed).

Sources of tensions in Iran-Turkey relations also stemmed from the evolving situation in Iraq and from the Shiite upheaval in Yemen against the legitimate government led by Abd Rabbih Mansur Hadi last year. A sectarian conflict between the Shiite Huthi, backed by Iran, and loyalist forces sponsored by Saudi Arabia and an international coalition pushed Yemen into a civil war in 2015. President Erdogan lashed out at Iran, warning Tehran to withdraw both from Iraq and from Yemen, stating Turkey may consider providing logistical support to Saudi Arabia and Sunni forces if requested: "Iran and the terrorist groups must withdraw." He went on to say: "the aim of Iran is to increase its influence in Iraq. Iran is trying to chase Daesh from the region only to take its place" (*Turkey supports Saudi mission in Yemen, says Iran must withdraw*). Such fierce rhetoric against Iran merely shows Turkey's uncertainties and hardships in facing the evolving situation in the Middle East, from whose affairs it feels both isolated and negatively affected; indeed, Turkish policymakers know full well they need Iran for strengthening economic cooperation and overcoming hurdles in managing Middle Eastern affairs.

In this regional scenario, a major role is assigned to Russia. While Ankara and Moscow were at loggerheads after the downing of a Russian military jet on November 24, 2015, for crossing over Turkish airspace, Iran has been working with Russia over the past twenty years, building a strong economic relationship; by now, the two have found a convergence of interests in supporting Assad's fight against jihadists and terrorist activities from opposition groups in Syria. This has led to tactical military cooperation in Syria, deepening links based on energy and trade relations and going beyond the strategically relevant issue of the S-300 missile defence

system that Russia delivered to Iran. The two countries in fact have claimed to have experimented in a joint operation of bombing Syrian territories inhabited by terrorists (Milani).

Concluding Remarks

The aim of this work is to take a snapshot of the evolution of Turkish–Iranian relations through the years and to assess how this kind of relationship could be defined. By describing it as a strategic relation, it lacks the suitable features of a typical strategic alliance, just like, for example, the Iran-Syria alliance (Ehteshami and Hinnebusch).

The most important impediment limiting the formation of a strategic is their regional power status. In addition to this, identity has proved to be more a hindrance than a catalyst for improving ties. While Turkey is a Sunni country, Iran espouses Shia, the minority branch of Islam. Historically, this has led to disputes over the hegemony on the religious message to deliver to Middle Eastern groups and movements, in competition with at least one other regional power, Saudi-Arabia. The Palestinian cause is an enlightening example – partly because of the incident of the Mavi Marmara in 2010 and thanks to improving relations in the nuclear field: through projecting their respective influences in the Palestinian territories – Iran providing Hamas with weapons, financing and training, while Turkey supplying it with aid and political support in order to let Hamas legitimately stay within the political arena (ICG 11) – each of them tried to champion the "cause of causes" within the Islamic World.

Secondly, while Turkey has tried to emerge as an unparalleled and successful model of "Islamic democracy" at least by the end of the previous decade, Iran has continued to export the Islamic revolution abroad. Khamenei himself often states that the Islamic Revolution did not finish in the Eighties but still operates as a pivotal principle in Iran's foreign policy.

Thirdly, from a strategic point of view, the Syrian crisis has placed the two countries on opposing sides. Even if, at the beginning, it has yielded similar interests concerning the emergence of the Islamic caliphate, different views came to light at a later stage concerning which actors to support in the midst of the Syrian quagmire.

Iran's rising power, combined with its converging interests with Russia in Syria, along with strong economic ties with both, has worried Turkish policymakers over the past few years. Turkey and Russia have clashed over competing priorities in Syria and disrupted diplomatic ties after the former downed the latter's jet in November 2015. Finding themselves politically isolated from Middle Eastern affairs as a consequence of the overt failure of Davutoglu's early foreign policy principles,

Turkish policymakers have been recently forced to reconsider the situation. President Erdogan pledged in person to mend fences with both Israel and Russia. He and Israeli Prime Minister Benjiamin Netanyahu decided to follow Barack Obama's recommendations dating back to March 2013 to restore ties – when the US President highlighted the geopolitical importance between Ankara and Jerusalem – and recently signed a deal built on Turkey's purchasing of Israeli gas, exploiting large Israeli offshore reserves (*Israel and Turkey reach deal to restore relations*); Erdogan himself sent Vladimir Putin a letter, apologizing for downing a Russian jet, on November 24, 2015, asking him to undertake the necessary efforts to restore a "strategic" and "friendly" partnership (*Vladimir Putin Receives a Letter from President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan*).

Despite recurring claims by respective policymakers that bilateral relations are strategic and friendly, Turkey and Iran have experienced geopolitical competition for a large part of their history. A supportive regional environment unfolded after the US military campaign against jihadist terrorism, combined with a new foreign policy established by the AKP brought the two countries closer. This and a friendlier dialogue with some neighbours, as well as the need to overcome the hardships caused by an exacerbating regime of sanctions pulled the two countries together in order to find a solution to most of their own problems with the Middle East as well as the increasing US involvement in the region and beyond. Strengthening economic cooperation, while tightening energy relations in particular, provided them with a spirit of mutual trust, notwithstanding their historic political rivalry and the competition connected to projecting their respective influences and religious messages abroad.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) could boost their bilateral economic relations to a higher degree but it makes no sense if it is not beneficial to overcoming competition and to find an accommodation in the Syrian civil war. Neither Iran or Turkey can do much in solving one of the bloodiest recent conflicts and they probably need to work in a more cooperative way with the great powers, the European Union, Russia and the US above all. Recent moves by Turkey have seen a desire to re-emerge as a regional power whose importance in Middle Eastern affairs can be underpinned by restoring its prominence on the regional chessboard. If the great powers fail to achieve a grand bargain in Syria (and the ongoing situation is far from reaching this very outcome) it is likely that Iran–Turkey relations will continue to remain characterized by geopolitical rivalry in the near future. To ease Turkish–Iranian tensions over Syria, Erdogan should probably look for a political compromise with Putin, as suggested by a new political agenda established in Astana in January 2017. Turkey, Iran and Russia managed to arrange a tactical agreement under which Ankara accepted to turn a blind eye on Assad's stay in power (as intensely demanded by Tehran and Moscow) in change of having free rein on the Kurdish-populated region. In fact, in the light of the increasing

role of Russia in the Syrian theatre, and considering Moscow's strategic interests in the country, Turkey has played its card of temporarily dismissing its insistence of Assad's removal in exchange for (direct or indirect) support not only for its fight against Kurdish terrorism but also towards any Kurdish quest for more political autonomy in the region.

This was made possible under a new economic, energetic and military understanding with Russia so that Turkey directly engaged the Syrian quagmire with the Euphrates Shield Operation in August 2016 and the Olive Branch operation in Afrin in January 2018. Those were officially intended to fend off the islamic state threat but also to deal the Kurdish insurgency a final blow.

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Egypt: Revolution 2011/2025. Dystopia, Utopia, and Political Fiction in Mustafa Al-Husayni's Novel *2025 An-Nida Al-Akhir*

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Abstract

The article discusses the novel *2025. An-Nida al-Akhir* [2025. The Last Call] written by a young Egyptian journalist and writer born in 1982 – Mustafa al-Husayni. The novel was published in early 2011, between the fall of Zayn al-Abidin Ibn Ali in Tunisia and of Husni Mubarak in Egypt. It describes a revolution against the regime of Jamal al-Mubarak, son of Husni, spurred by a group of young Egyptians. The story takes place in 2025 and anticipates the development of the political situation in Egypt and the Middle East between 2011 and 2025 in a utopian/dystopian manner. Alongside *Utopia* by Ahmad Khalid Tawfik and the poetry of Usama al-Abnubi and Abd ar-Rahman al-Abnudi, al-Husayni's book is considered to be a forecast of the Arab Spring in Egypt.

Keywords: Mustafa al-Husayni, Egypt, Arab Spring, revolution, utopia, dystopia, political fiction, politics, literature

All around the world, literature has always followed social and political change. The literature of the Arab countries, swept by the Arab Spring, has also produced a response to events which took place in Tunisia and Egypt – and in this paper I shall focus on Egyptian literary works. Poetry, which dominates in Arab literature, tends to be the genre that first responds to current events. Shortly before the memorable events in Tahrir Square (Arabic: *Sahat at-Tahrir*) in Cairo, a short collection of verse was published by a then little known Egyptian poet – Usama al-Abnubi – titled *Al-Baradi'i wa-al-Himar* [The Saddler and the Donkey]. It miraculously slipped through the tight net of censorship and, after the outburst of protest which led to the fall of Husni Mubarak, was lauded as the collection of poems which foretold the revolution – at least according to the authors of numerous articles and reviews. The poems depict the atmosphere in Egypt in 2010 quite accurately: the general mood was less saturated with rebellion than with resignation. A similar tone was present in the works of Abd ar-Rahman al-Abnudi, who writes mainly in the Egyptian dialect, and who has recently published poems criticising present-day Egyptian authorities.

In this early twenty-first century political context, prose writers have also begun to employ devices such as utopia, dystopia (negative utopia), and political fiction.[1] Among the utopias, two Egyptian novels immediately come to mind – Ahmad Khalid Tawfik's *Yutubiya,* published in 2008,[2] and *2025. An-Nida al-Akhir* [2025. The Last Call] by Mustafa al-Husayni, published in 2011, which will be the main focus of this paper. Outside the utopian formula, the prose prophets were joined by Khalid al-Khamissi with his novel *Taxi* (2007).[3] All the above authors are believed to have predicted the coming of the Arab Spring and the revolutionary changes in the Near East; obviously each treated the subject matter in their own way.

The term *utopia* has little significance in the Arab-Muslim culture, if any significance at all. The term was introduced into European philosophy and into wider circulation – culture – in the sixteenth century and its creator was Thomas More, the author of *Utopia* (1516). In More's time, European civilisation had almost no influence on the Arab world. Few in the Arab and Muslim world had heard about the English philosopher's *Utopia* back then, and an Arabic translation was not

1 There is a wealth of literary theory devoted to utopia, dystopia, and political fiction. The works of e.g. Mumford, Kumar and Bann, Moylan 2000; Booker; Hassler and Wilcox, Segal, Steinmüller, Szacki, Zgorzelski.

2 The novel by A.Kh. Tawfik should also be viewed as a dystopia – compare with my analysis in the article "Egipska dystopia. O powieści Ahmada Chalida Taufika *Jutubija* ('Utopia')", [Egyptian dystopia. On the novel of Ahmad Chaid Taufik *Jutubija* ('Utopia')]. English translation of the novel by Ch. Rosetti (Towfik 2011).

3 English translation by J. Wright (al-Khamissi 2008); Polish translation by Michalski (al-Khamissi 2011).

published until 1974, therefore the idea could not spread to the south and east of the Mediterranean Sea.

More's concept had its roots in European philosophy, going back to Plato's *Republic*. Medieval Muslim political philosophy drew significantly from the works of ancient philosophy – the best example of this inspiration are possibly the reflections of Abu Nasr al-Farabi (9th-10th century), especially his treatise *The Virtuous City* (Arabic: *Al-Madina al-Fadila*).[4] Despite that, I would not be far from the truth if I stated that the type of thought that can be described as utopian was in general foreign to Arabs and Muslims. Admittedly, the philosophical novel *Hayy Ibn Yaqdhan* by Ibn Tufayl (twelfth century) is often mentioned in this context,[5] but this work (which may have provided inspiration for Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe)*[6] has little in common with utopia as the term is understood in Europe. Utopias are sometimes merged – transcending the purely philosophical meaning of the term – with fantasy narratives. As neither Arabs nor Muslims ever lacked fantastic imagination, this literary genre continued developing – for instance, in various versions of the *Arabian Nights*, also known as *One Thousand and One Nights*. Another example is the cosmography describing "marvels of creatures and strange things existing" (Arabic: *aja'ib al-makhluqat*) (Abu Deeb), which is part of Arabian adventure fiction – and includes a characteristic, although not indispensable feature of a Utopia: a traveller arrives into an unknown city and gets to know the local customs. However, even that does not entirely display all characteristics of a utopian narrative understood from a European perspective. One could conclude that utopian narratives did not exist in Arabic and Muslim literature, even if some works display indistinct utopian features. This applies to the Middle Ages as well as later centuries and to related philosophical ideas and literary genres such as *science fiction* (Khayrutdinov, Morgan). The latter began to emerge as late as the twentieth century, undoubtedly under the influence of the West.

The cultural mismatch of utopia and the world of Islam is demonstrated by the fact that this world did not produce an adequate term for this literary device and settled on a direct borrowing: *yutubiya*. In the words of A.Kh. Tawfik, author and translator of science fiction literature, utopian narratives have not become popular in the Arab world until today; there are, however, rare examples of novels in both the east and the west of the Arab world that employ themes reminiscent of SF motifs known in Western culture. For a political context, one should look to the 1994 novel *As-Sayyid min Haql as-Sabanikh* [The Lord from the Spinach Field] (ash-Sharuni) by the Egyptian author Sabri Musa. It would be interesting

4 English translation by R. Walzer (Al-Farabi 1985); Polish translation by J. Bielawski (Al-Farabi 1957).

5 English translation by R. Kocache (Ibn Tufayl 1982); Polish translation by J. Bielawski (Ibn Tufayl 1958).

6 About utopian contexts of D. Defoe's novels, compare James.

to examine why such narratives did not fall on fertile turf in Arab and Muslim culture; however, it is not the aim of this paper – within its scope I can only present facts and ask tentative questions to be explored in future research.

*

Mustafa al-Husayni was born in 1982 in Al-Manufiyya in the north of Egypt. An engineer by education, he graduated from the October 6 University (Jami'at 6 Uktubir) in Giza; he is mainly a journalist and a writer. He founded and is the co-owner of the Dawwin publishing house and another one, which publishes e-books. The novel analysed here was his 2011 debut, which was followed by a collection of short stories titled *Muthir wa-Muflit al-Intibaq* [The Sexy and Eye-Catching One] published later the same year.

Al-Husayni's novel was published in March 2011, shortly before the overthrow of Husni Mubarak. The author himself emphasised in one of the interviews that although he had been writing the novel for some time back then, the factor that drove him to finish it quickly was the fall of Zayn al-Abidin Ibn Ali in Tunisia (al-Husayni, *Shabb al-ladhi…*). The popularity of the novel among the readers (I did not manage to find many opinions of literary critics) led to the book's nomination for the Arab Booker Prize in 2012 (Isma'il).

In the first years of the twenty-first century, tension in Egypt was rising; this led to official recognition of the opposition group, April 6 Youth Movement, and the activity of other groups, such as Kifaya. Despite that, the Egyptian public did not believe in the possibility of change. Most people expected events at the top of the power ladder to unfold in a way resembling the situation in Syria in 2000 – a presidential dynasty would rise to power and Husni Mubarak would be replaced by his son, Jamal. Al-Husayni's novel, although it discusses contemporary events and was published after the first riots in the at-Tahrir Square, is set in the year 2025. It seems that the writer did not believe in the power and determination of Egyptians (as subsequent years have shown – quite correctly) and therefore moved the novel's setting 14 years into the future – to when Jamal Mubarak would rule.

The plot of the novel is rather uncomplicated. As a literary work, the novel may not stand the test of time, despite a second edition. However, this paper does not analyse it as an eminent literary achievement, but as an example of purely political fiction and a description of a certain state of mind representative of young Egyptian intelligentsia. The emerging picture is rather pessimistic and has been confirmed by actual events which took place in Egypt after 2011.

It is the year 2025 in Egypt. A band of young people form a group called Al-Ya'isun (The Desperate Ones) and decide to overthrow the current political system through a revolution – I shall return to this term, as it is central to both the novel

and the most recent events in the Near East. Egypt and the Near East in the novel are going through an unstable period of chaos and disintegration. The author has provided a calendar of events leading up to the revolution. Starting in 2012, religious conflict between the Muslims and the Christians continues; the first call for freedom for Egyptian Christians in the south comes in 2013; similar demands are then voiced by the Nubians and Bedouins. In 2014, Israel decides to take Sinai in order to separate itself from the social unrest which shook Egypt. In 2015 the government in Cairo becomes so weak that it can only control the capital governorate – in fact, the weakness of the government leads to a complete loosening of the social structure, and in late 2015 a group of officers decides to stage a coup d'état. This is unsuccessful and all the participants of the plot are executed. In 2016, the son of the president (Husni Mubarak) is elected for another term. 2017 sees another violent attempt to overthrow the regime, this time with the help of Iran. In 2018, Israel first threatens Cairo with occupation, while the American air force bombards Alexandria in order to protect the US fleet on the Mediterranean. In 2019, the Matruh governorate declares its incorporation into Libya; in the same year many buildings in the capital are burned by insurgents from the south, who demand autonomy for Christians. In 2020, under pressure from the USA and Israel, the president disbands the army due to suspected activities of fundamentalists who formerly belonged to the armed forces. The group Al-Ya'isun is formed, led by Ahmad Jabr; in 2021, millions take to the streets to demonstrate support for the postulates of Ahmad Jabr. In 2022, the president flees the country but soon returns and attempts to compromise with the opposition, which brings no results. In 2023, A. Jabr declares the beginning of an armed struggle against the authorities, and finally in 2024 – Al-Ya'isun take up arms against the Israeli occupation of Sinai (24–28).

On April 6, 2025 the revolution begins and the young people led by Ahmad Jabr put their plan into practice. One of them turns out to be a traitor who feeds the government detailed information on the location of revolutionary cells in Cairo and – very importantly – the location of their headquarters in the city centre. However, the traitor is prevented from achieving his goal; on the contrary – government soldiers fall into traps the revolutionaries set in the disclosed locations. However, the president is alerted and calls his aide Sharqawi Bek, a retired specialist in liaising with US intelligence, to help neutralise insurgents' activities. One of the revolutionary groups manages to kidnap Sharqawi. There are spies on both sides. In the Al-Ya'isun group, a young man involved from the very beginning turns out to be the son of an important government official. In a plot twist, as the espionage activities are discovered quite early, the armed forces are directed to areas apparently deserted by the revolutionaries and consequently eliminated by much more poorly equipped and significantly less numerous insurgents. In one of the scenes the author describes how policemen join the revolutionaries (21–22). Al-Ya'isun is quick to declare the victory of the revolution and read a proclamation to the people

(41–42), but the president remains in power. The novel's ending is somewhat unresolved and ambiguous. The author writes:

> "Reader, you have now reached the end of the story. Yes, you understood me correctly. This is the end. No, I will not tell you what the revolutionists did, if the president escaped or committed suicide (…). No, I will not write what you expect me to and let you close the book with a sense of self-satisfaction and contentment with the world. It will not be so, because I did not write these pages for this end. I wrote them because I am waiting for you. I am waiting for you there… in the time of revolution… in the street!" (151)

The American writer and orientalist Sofia Samatar refers to the novels by A.Kh. Tawfik and M. al-Husayni as dystopias (Clarke), thus this term appears in the title of this paper. However, I am not entirely convinced of the validity of this classification in case of *2025*, especially because Samatar does not justify her opinion further. While al-Husayni's novel can surely be considered a form of utopia, ascribing dystopian features to this novel is somewhat problematic, to which I shall return below.

The key term in the novel is of course *revolution* – in Arabic *thawra*. Its participants surely regard it as such. However, it is worth noting that this word – as used in the novel – is closer to Muslim tradition than to Western political theories. In the novel we observe a mixture of terminology, very characteristic for modern Arab thought and resulting from a relatively unreflective, sometimes purely lexical adoption of terms – and a consequence of the worldwide domination of Western thought. The concepts of revolution in Muslim philosophy have been comprehensively discussed – among others, by the Palestinian scholar Ibrahim Abrash in his work titled *Ilm al-Ijtima as-Siyasi* [Political Sociology].[7] Abrash points out that since February 2011 the term *revolution* has dominated the Arab political discourse. He also emphasises the intermingling of terms which I mentioned above. This is not a modern phenomenon – approximately from the mid-twentieth century Arabs have been using that term to refer to all types of revolts and revolutions as well as military coups, which occurred in successive countries in the region. At the same time he acknowledges that the term *revolution* applies only to Palestinian actions against Israel and the events of 2011 in Tunisia and Egypt – the Arab Spring. Abrash stated that the events in Egypt were "the end of [old? bygone? – M.M.D.] history and the beginning of a new one" (Abrash, *Ilm al-Ijtima as-Siyasi,* 299). This perspective was also adopted by the researcher ad hoc, nevertheless in an article from 2014 he admitted that, in fact, this was not about any revolution at all, and that it was only a struggle for power and wealth (the word play on the meanings – *thawra*

7 For another perspective on revolution, compare with Al-Jabiri 21 and others; also compare with Ayalon.

– "revolution," *tharwa* – "wealth") (Abrash, *Sira ala as-sulta*…). The Palestinian emphasised a close relationship of this term with the political, social, and religious events – from this point of view, for instance, the appearance of new monotheist religions was a form of revolution. Revolution is to effect a global qualitative change (Abrash, *Ilm al-Ijtima as-Siyasi,* 277 and further) – not just in one sphere of life, as some definitions of revolution in Western science dictate. In the case of al-Husayni's novel, from among numerous definitions and aspects of revolution, there is only one that matches: the overthrowing of a government by the citizens of a country.

For al-Husayni, the fomenting of a revolution is the essence of his futurology. The most important goal of a revolution is to overthrow a dictator; however, it seems that society is not ready for a real revolution – therefore it is effected by a group of "revolutionists" who hope to bring people out onto the streets (43).[8] However, the majority of people are still lethargic and unaware of their situation – at least that is the impression given by the characters in the novel. The revolutionaries also lack a clear vision for the future of the country, except for vague promises of democracy and the role of the people as the ones who – imitating the classic political theory in Islam – will demand that the government enforces the rule of law (50).

The Egyptian president is somewhat lethargic, or at least seems unaware of the reality (which may also be read as a deliberate attempt to ignore it). In his conversation with a confidant, he discusses the overthrow of Zayn al-Abidin in Tunisia and concludes that after all the events of 2011, he must remain strong and not allow his people to take a single breath of relief – the people must remain weak so that they could be ruled absolutely (93). In order to attain this goal, a special program is implemented called *At-Taghayyub* (Arabic "Alienation"), which employs all available psychological and technological methods to manipulate people, who as a result stop paying attention to essential matters and instead focus on insignificant details (106–110).

It is surprising that in this vision of the future the author almost does not attempt (except what was described above) to predict the directions of social developments in Egypt, quite unlike A.Kh. Tawfik in his *Utopia*. Society remains *outside time* and unchanged. The year 2025 is a direct representation of 2011. The leader plays a game with society – a game identical to that played by Husni Mubarak; members of society fight back in the same manner as they have in 2011. The role of the Muslim Brotherhood, to which one of the novel's protagonists belongs, is also very similar to the one it played in 2011. It seems interesting that al-Husayni has predicted the manner in which this group would join the revolutionary movement – not directly, during the main events, but somewhat from a "back seat." Political groups listed above, which already existed in 2011, are still

8 References to the novel are placed directly in the text.

active players on the political scene 14 years into the future. The insurgents also include Christians (118).

The revolutionaries do not generate any new ideas, social or political visions or programmes. Their idols are still Che Guevara and Malcolm X (Goldman), and from among historical figures – the nineteenth-century Syrian social and religious reformer Abd ar-Rahman al-Kawakibi (Rahme; Jamsheer) and martyrs from the early history of Islam – the third Shia imam, Al-Husayn (died 680) (Vaglieri), who fought with Abbasids, Mohammed an-Nafs az-Zakiyya (died 762) (Buhl), and above all, the anti-Umayyad *heretic*, Ghaylan ad-Dimashqi (died before 743) (Pellat). The biography of the last of these heroes is described in the novel in great detail (125–133), as he is lesser known than the others. This *revolutionist* opposed the government and was sentenced to death by crucifixion by the ruling caliph.

In a conversation between the president and his men, the revolutionaries are also referred to as *Kharijites* (Arabic: *khawarij*), which has clear religious and political implications.[9] The revolution is to be a Muslim revolution. The heroes of the first centuries of Islam have remained role models for the Egyptians; there is no mention of – for example – the revolution of 1952 by the Free Officers Movement. Another interesting factor is the total absence of women from the imagined revolution – which is not reflected in reality. Although it would be hard to speak of a pivotal role of women in the Arab Spring, the female voice was very well heard both in Tunisia and Egypt, as well as in Yemen (Shihada). In al-Husayni's novel there is only one female character, and her role is entirely marginal. It is as a matter of fact a men's revolution. Therefore the Egypt of 2025 is still a country of tradition and patriarchy.

In the novel, society is not coming of age, maturing into democracy (regardless of specific definitions of that term), and the outcome of the revolution is most likely to be just the trading of places. Evidence of this is to be found when a former collaborator with the security forces is interrogated – the revolutionaries deny him just as Sharqawi's men used to do only a few years earlier. "The time of ultimate revenge has come," says one of the torturers bluntly (61). According to Sara Salem, "Torture and brutality stemmed from a culture of abuse that functioned as a disciplining measure" (Salem 29). Freedom is barely mentioned in the novel and there is no mention of equality or happiness. Another interesting issue is that al-Husayni does not predict any technological development – and it seems that not just in Egypt, but also in the world, as Egypt does not exist outside of the global context. Kalashnikov rifles are widely used (148), RPG (19) as well as mobile and cordless phones. The year 2025 is now…

9 *Khawarij* – a puritan Muslim sect created in mid-7th century by the followers of Ali Ibn Abi Talib in conflict over the caliphate with the secularised Umayyad dynasty; their doctrine in its political aspect could be reduced to fighting any government lacking God's mandate (compare: Levi Della Vida).

Although – as I mentioned above – the author describes changes to the political situation, the presence of the enemies of the Egyptian people (yet not necessarily enemies of the Egyptian government) – the Americans and Israelis – is a constant factor (compare with the outline of events after 2011 and p. 35). The former are faithful defenders of the dictator and are ready to quash the insurrection (83), while at the same time they are one of the main causes of Egypt's downfall (120). The presence of these two main enemies also characterises the dystopia created by A.Kh. Tawfik.

For the above reasons, al-Husayni's utopia is the present transported a dozen years into the future. In terms of the utopia/dystopia categories, one can only conclude that the utopia here is an escape from a dystopian reality as drawn by the author in his depiction of the political situation in Egypt of 2015. In that sense, the presumed victory of the revolution forms the utopian vision.

The text is saturated with a sense of hopelessness which resembles the general mood in Egypt in the early twenty-first century: the passage of time does not seem to change it – at least not from the imagined perspective of a dozen years into the near future. Setting the story, whose beginnings were witnessed by the author, in the future, may signify a certain degree of social and political awareness in the young generation of Egyptians, who in fact do not believe in the possibility of change. Paul Danahar quotes the blogger Iyad El-Baghdadi: "It really felt like this state of stagnation was permanent. (…) A lot of us thought that something has got to give at some point, but we didn't really think it was going to happen for another twenty years. We thought it was not going to be our generation but the next generation that would be doing it" (15, quote from *The Arab Tyrant's Manual*). These words clearly confirm my conclusions from the novel. Looking at Egypt four years after the events of the Arab Spring, one could say that perhaps this was a justified reflection and that the novel is a prediction of revolution for which time may come in ten years.

How can Mustafa al-Husayni's novel be categorised? Can it be called a utopia? Dystopia? Political fiction? Without doubt it bears the markings of dystopian thought, which is clearly demonstrated in the outline of events after 2011 presented in the novel. And how did the events unfold in real life? Freedom gave the Egyptians a president coming from amongst Muslim fundamentalists, Muhammad Mursi, who was chosen in democratic elections in 2012. However, the following year he was overthrown by the army, and in 2015 sentenced to death by the Egyptian court. At the time of writing, the country is led by the Field Marshal, Abd al-Fattah as-Sisi, who barely differs from Husni Mubarak, overthrown in 2011, and seems fairly similar to Mubarak's son as described in the novel. Therefore the dictatorship has returned. There is no real chance to abolish it permanently, at least not for some time. Is this not in fact a dystopia? As Rolf Schwedter accurately pointed out, little is needed for the imagination to transform a utopia into a dystopia

(Schwedter 24). One could add that sometimes there is no unambiguous distinction between the two. However, very few features of utopia can be seen in al-Husayni's novel – its reality presents quite a probable turn of events.

Andrzej Juszczyk, Polish scholar specialising in utopian and dystopian literature, defined dystopia as a "pessimistic vision of the future, structured along an attempt to present negative consequences of current reality" (Juszczyk 91). From this standpoint, *2025* can partly be considered a dystopia – if the *predictions* made by the novelist for the course of events in the Near East in 2011–2025 can be considered dystopian. Looking at the novel's plot in 2015, the depicted events do not seem overly pessimistic or improbable. So is the Egyptian novel utopian? A distinct characteristic of utopian narratives is the indeterminacy of location; meanwhile in the novel analysed here the story is set in Egypt, a very real place. Moreover, utopian stories offer visions of a happy society – al-Husayni provides no such depiction. Perhaps the revolution of 2025 can be seen as an introduction to shaping a new society, but that is not certain. Therefore it seems that Mustafa al-Husayni's work is not a utopia either. Still, quite obviously it is not intended as a realist novel – it shows a vision of the future. It appears therefore that that it is closest to political fiction, or maybe a political prediction.

In their presentation of methods of political forecasting, Tadeusz Bodio and Andrzej Chodubski considered extrapolation to be the simplest one – and one that does not reach out too far, but aims to show an approximate direction for the development of events (compare also: Tuzovsky 52). However, they emphasised that a revolution cannot be predicted (Bodio and Chodubski 275). It seems then that the concepts presented by al-Husayni can be defined – using the term proposed by a Russian scholar, Ivan D. Tuzovsky – as "future-oriented presentism" (32).

Certainly this novel remains a great literary and political question mark.

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Did Egyptian Women Win or Lose by Overthrowing the Regime of Hosni Mubarak?

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Abstract

Egypt is a place with a long tradition of female participation in revolutions. After years of Mubarak's despotism, women joined the revolution once again. As a result, they had to deal with the violation of women's rights. When Morsi was removed, women were again at the top of political topics. The new constitution was described as the most progressive for women. Sisi has been a president for short time but he is already called the president of women. However women still face problems. They defended themselves from the Muslim Brotherhood's rules by supporting Sisi, but did they really win by overthrowing the regime of Mubarak?

Keywords: Arab Spring, Women's rights, Egypt, Mubarak, Sisi, Morsi, Muslim Brotherhood, Muslim Sisterhood

Egypt is the motherland of Arab and Muslim feminism, where Qasim Amin published such crucial works as *The Liberation of Women* and *The New Woman,* and where Hoda Sha'arawi created Mubarrat Muhammad Ali and the Union of Egyptian Women Education. Women have advocated for their rights under the Egyptian Feminist Union banner since 1920. In 1952, the Egyptian revolution took place under slogans about social egalitarianism, and in 1962, the National Congress promised gender equality (Rogowska). After 30 years of despotism and corruption under Hosni Mubarak, women joined the revolution as regular citizens with similar hopes: a better Egypt for everyone including, of course, them. In the post-revolutionary reality they have had to deal with rising social conservatism, violations of women's rights and at the same time their huge inheritance of feminism. Did Egyptian women win or lose by overthrowing the regime of Hosni Mubarak?

The last years of Mubarak's presidency could be seen as a continuous erosion of gender inequality. Since 2000, the government had been submitting changes to national law. Women received the right to get married to foreign men, and to pass on their nationality to children. The law started to support the security of children whose mothers did not have Egyptian husbands. The regulation which stated that women needed their husband's permission to travel was abolished (Dawoud). In 2008, the Supreme Judicial Council agreed that women could become judges and sit on the bench, the minimum age of marriage was raised to 18 and female genital mutilation (FGM) became a crime (Tadros). In 2009, Mubarak's last decision pertaining to women's rights was the adoption of a women's parliamentary quota (Dawoud). According to many these changes weren't effective and new regulations were only theories and did not reflect what went on in practice. FGM has been openly practiced, sexual harassment has been a real plague, and the penal code has given lenient sentences for committing honor killings.

Women were present on Tahrir Square during the 2011 revolution. It is estimated that women made up 40–50% of the protestors in the days leading to the fall of the president. Many charismatic female revolutionary leaders became acknowledged even outside Egypt, topping global rankings of influential women such as *Newsweek's* list of *Women Who Shake the World* (March 2012) or *Guardian's Top 100 Women: Activists and Campaigners* list (March 2011) (Moushira). Pictures of Arab women who were fighting for freedom and democracy started to be become popular in Western media. Women from different social, political and religious backgrounds who actively participated in the revolution refuted the common stereotypes that Muslim women were passive and submissive. "Tahrir Square became a utopia where respect and unity prevail" (Wael 483).

Parliamentary elections brought the victory of the long banned Islamist party, the Muslim Brotherhood, which reduced hopes for gender equality. The Research Center claimed that in May 2012, one year after the revolution, 40% of the respondents thought that women would have more rights under the Freedom and Justice

Party-led government than they had in Mubarak's time and 27% had the opinion that they would have fewer rights (Faiqa). There were opinions that many legal rights which women had received under Hosni Mubarak, were threatened because the Muslim Brotherhood would almost certainly be seeking for solutions based on an extreme interpretation of *shariah* law. Others pointed out the long history of the Muslim Brotherhood and their ability to survive under dictatorship, which in their supporters' eyes proved that the Brotherhood were mature enough to take care of the entire society (Faiqa).

Even before the revolution, the growing role of Islam and conservatism in women's movements could be seen. Many secular NGOs had worked with Islamic principles (Abdellatif and Ottaway) and we can't forget that Egypt is the homeland of Muslim feminism – a movement whose principles of gender justice are taken from the *Quran*. In these circumstances, the concepts of religious ideas mixed with women's rights could be seen as quite logical. Many enthusiastic pro-female slogans were sung by people from the Brotherhood (Gehad).

The topic of women's rights divided people, including women. We can talk about opinions represented by secular activists, and by Muslim feminists and Islamic activists as members of the Muslim Sisterhood who reject any similarities with Western feminism. Secular activists wanted to make women's lives easier by reducing the influence of religion on society. However, Muslim feminists and Islamic activists believed that the solution was to promote the *right* Islam. At this time, NGOs with a secular attitude had been run by educated women who had limited influence. The majority of the conservative society saw them as part of a Western agenda. The Sisterhood has proved to have many followers (Rosefsky). They mobilized significant numbers of women during the revolution and with the Brotherhood's victory gave hope that their female voices would finally be heard.

Today, criticism of the Muslim Brotherhood is mainly because of the place women occupy in their ideology. Many figures from the organization, including President Morsi, believed that women aren't made to have *the great leadership role* (Bohn). The Muslim Brotherhood had always needed women who did *dawah* mission, running charity projects, and mobilizing groups of people. They also needed women because women were voters. According to Fatma al-Zomor (a member of the Sisterhood), brothers didn't allow women to be active under Mubarak, using the argument that they were afraid about their security and wanted to protect them from National Security agents. When Morsi came into the power this argument became redundant. In October 2012, the Freedom and Justice Party organized a series of workshops for future women leaders (Moushira).

On December 25, 2012 a new Egyptian constitution came into force. However, it did not receive a warm welcome from many secularists, and liberals. The main problem was *Article 2* which stated that "Islam is the religion of the state (…). The principles of Islamic shariah are the principal source of legislation" (Cesari 337).

The mass protests which were a reaction to the draft constitution caused many to lose trust in the *skills* of the Brotherhood to lead a multi-ethnic society. However, we will never know how this experiment of Islamic party with the support of some women could have played out. Still, it was interesting how some female intellectuals described Brotherhood. Mona al-Ghobashy said "Over the past quarter century, the [Brotherhood] has morphed from a highly secretive, hierarchical, antidemocratic organization led by anointed elders into a modern, multi-vocal political organization steered by educated, savvy professionals not unlike activists of the same age in rival Egyptian political parties" (El Ghobashy 373).

When Morsi won the presidential election he said "Muslims and Christians, women and men, young and old – You are all my family," but when he was asked about women's conditions, he answered ambiguously, "An Egyptian woman has the same equal rights as men; there are even some men who ask to be guaranteed the same rights as women" (*Mursi: Chcę być prezydentem wszystkich Egipcjan*). By those words he confirmed that he couldn't see any inequality in Egyptian society. His election program barely included any women's issues. He concentrated on the *social empowerment* which he understood as *the fast rescue for the family*, without any clarification what kind of rescue a family needed. The constitution didn't mention the word "woman" with the exception of one article (No. 10) which describes a woman in the perspective of being a mother: "The state guarantees motherhood and childhood services for free, and fulfills the balance between a woman's duties towards her family and towards her public work. The state gives special care and protection to the divorced, widowed and those who are breadwinners" *(Report on Egyptian women conditions in 2012)*.

With the beginning of transformation, the social status of women could be seen as receding, some hard won laws of the last two decades had been undermined. According to Moushira Khattab, women in the Brotherhood's narration and actions had only instrumental roles. Between friendly gestures and words towards women, we heard parliamentarians who were criticizing the law criminalizing FGM on national TV (Moushira). Islamists' parliament were critical of several draft laws such as the right of women to get an uncontested divorce (Arabic: *khul*), the prohibition of child marriage and the criminalization of FGM (Moushira). There were objections to some women's rights which were viewed as western ideas, which in some quarters were seen as disconnecting women from their culture, religion, family and negating the revolutionary struggles for national liberation.

Paradoxically, in a country where political changes were made because of female presence on the Tahrir Square, there was a clear absence of women in key decision making positions. There were no women on the constitutional committee and only one in the interim cabinet. Women were present but still poorly represented in the People's Assembly with a mere 2% of the seats. It's good to remember that the quota for women in parliament existed under ex-President Mubarak.

In 2010, the quota system gave women 12% of parliamentary seats. This provision was removed following the 2011 revolution. The first parliament after Mubarak's expulsion, had a large majority of Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist MPs, with only 10 female deputies (Shah).

Post-revolutionary Egypt has seen a growing number of women who wanted to be part of the political scene and have become more politically engaged with an increasing numbers of female voters and candidates. A survey conducted by El Baradei and Wafa found that before the revolution only 19% of women had participated in elections as voters compared to 79% who had participated post-revolution. What is interesting is that female respondents tended to emphasise their national identity, describing themselves as proud and concerned with public life (El Baradei and Wafa). However, under the Muslim Brotherhood's time in office, Egypt experienced deteriorations in the level of political rights of women dropping to 125 out of 133 countries, according to a report compiled by the World Economic Forum in 2012. Indeed, Egypt was a lowly 128 out of 131 countries regarding women's representation in parliament as the percentage of female parliamentarians in Egypt decreased to 2% in 2011 parliament, having been 12.5% in 2010. Dr. Hassan, the general secretary of the National Council of Women (NCW) in 2011, said that the underrepresentation of women in parliament set Egypt at *large a dozen steps back* (El Baradei and Wafa).

What was even worse, women who were members of parliament didn't fulfill the role of representing all women, especially in the opinion of secularists. In the analysis of speeches in the 2012 parliament, we see that women's participation in discussions didn't exceed 3% of the total allotted time and they didn't try to influence legislation connected with women's issues. However, one woman from the Freedom and Justice Party, Oum Ayman, was reported to have called for the abolition or change to seven laws which were linked to women rights. She called for the abolition of the *khulu* law, the ban on women to travel alone and not requiring a man to inform his wife when he decides to take a second wife (El Baradei and Wafa).

The other example was sexual harassment. According to the 2013 United Nations study 99.3% of respondents had been victims of sexual harassment, across all ages, education backgrounds, and religions (El-Dabh). After Afghanistan, Egypt was ranked the second worst country for sexual harassment in 2013 (*Report on Egyptian women conditions in 2012*). These frightening results were commented on by Al-Garf, one of the women elected to the parliament with the words: "harassment happens because of the nudity of women, and therefore harassers are not wrong" (*Report on Egyptian women conditions in 2012*, 5). These kind of statements were one of the many reasons for protests against Morsi in 2013. In February of that year, women organized a march against sexual harassment where anti-presidential slogans prominently featured in their event.

In February 2011, feminist organizations expressed concern to the Prime Minister and the Military Council about the lack of women's participation in decision making processes and the dearth of official provisions in protecting women's rights in building a democratic system. The National Council for Women (NCW) was established in 2000 as the government entity responsible for promoting women's rights (*Decree of the Establishment of the National Council for Women*), but when after the revolution the Council was still formerly headed by the wife of Mubarak, technically the NCW was too weak to speak up for women. Many female NGOs had connections with the former president and his National Democratic Party. Almost overnight, women had no respected organization to represent them except those which sympathized with the Brotherhood.

In October 2011, a new federation which represented hundreds of female NGO's was registered in Egypt. Their first goal was to mobilize women to vote in the upcoming parliamentary elections. Many women joined newly established political formations. According to regulations, at least one woman should be on every election list, however it wasn't said which position on the list the woman should take. As a result women weren't on tops of lists, giving them little chance of winning especially with the districts being so large.

In February 2012, a new plan was formulated and approved by the Prime Minister. The NCW was supposed to work on the progress of the social and economic conditions of women and increase female participation in local communities. The Council wasn't only the executive of the Prime Minister's will but also the voice against some arguments which were discussed in parliament. At the same time, they organized a conference *Egyptian Women and the President – the Future of Women in Post Revolution Egypt* to confirm their readiness to cooperate with the new political powers.

2012 saw a number of actions against female activists who represented views on women's rights that differed from those held by the Brotherhood. There were attacks on Dr. Nossir, a professor of religion at the University of Al-Azhar, because of her confronting the aggression on gender equality in the name of religion, an accusation against Geehan Mansour of being a foreign agent, criticism of Lamees Al-Hadidi because of her position on the *terror campaign* against media, and an investigation into Manal Omar because of her analysis of Morsi's personality during a TV show.

The Egyptian economy largely reliant upon the tourist industry faced huge problems. A country which is politically unstable is not a dream holiday destination. After the overthrow of Mubarak's regime there was an increase in female unemployment. What is interesting is that the most educated women were more likely to fall into the unemployment category (El Mallakh et al.). The economic deterioration seriously impacted women who worked in private sector. Official figures on unemployment for 2011 showed that unemployment among women hit 23% compared

to 9% for men (Moushira). According to *The Economist*, analyzing the economic opportunities for women in 2012, Egypt was ranked 80th out of 128 countries. Providing good job prospects and economic opportunities for women is especially important in Egypt with around 22% of all Egyptian households having a matriarchal head of the family. However, women had huge potential. Directly after the 2011 revolution, women owned about 20% of all Egyptian firms and women-owned companies were more technologically modern and likely to export. Egyptians have always been present on *Forbes' Middle East's Top 100 Most Powerful Arab Business Women in Listed Companies* list. The Brotherhood's belief that a woman's place should mainly be at home was understood by many as a wish to distract people's attention from the reality of Egyptian women's economic strength (Moushira).

The lack of importance given to the role of women as decision makers after the prominent role they played in the national upheaval isn't surprising. In every post-revolution case there are plenty of political and economic problems to be fixed, and in comparison, gender issues don't look as important (Wael 483). To ask women to wait until political stabilization has been achieved is a normal tactic used to delay women's demands. The priority is the national interest. In the opinion of Ranchod-Nilsson, women are warmly welcomed to a revolutionary movement as their participation is needed, but they are "discarded or pushed to the margins during later periods of state consolidation." Women's presence gave Egypt a much larger number of participants which had an impact on the pressure exerted by the movement, emphasized national unity and "validated the movement particularly in the eyes of the international community" (Wael 483–485).

Times of revolutionary changes fueled by nationalistic slogans is usually used to trigger collective action by accenting "the need to make a sacrifice for the nation" but at the same time feminist desires are used as a pretext to mobilize the female part of society to fight in the revolution. This has happened many times in history. In the Indian fight against colonialism, Nehru persuaded women to participate in the national struggle by promoting gender causes. In 1931 he said: "In a national war, there is no question of either sex or community. Whoever is born in this country ought to be a soldier." He convinced women that they were fighting against gender oppression. Ghandi advised women to use their strategies against gender discrimination in the passive resistance movement. He showed an understanding of their personal struggles against gender injustice and to subtly resist it (Wael).

History shows that when people put aside their differences to unite in one national movement, this unity is not necessarily warranted after. Sometimes these differences remerge as soon as the main aspiration is accomplished (Wael). A whole movement which called for freedom can split into groups which have differing goals and all of whom are hungry for power. As a consequence, the unity of women as an interest group can prove difficult to maintain with gender issues becoming more difficult to highlight.

On July 3, 2013 as a result of the anti-presidential protests Abdel Fattah as-Sisi, general of Egyptian Army led the coalition to remove Morsi and suspended the constitution. According to military sources on 30th of June, 14 millions protesters demonstrated against the president and the Brotherhood, accusing them of betraying the revolutionary values, monopolizing power and imposing strict religious laws (Ohlheiser). If the statistics published by the Egyptian Armed Forces are true this protest would be one of the biggest in world history.

Protests continued until July 3rd. Women were members of the movement and the gender issue was again at the top of political discourse. The chaos which Egypt experienced during this time saw a series of unpleasant events. According to Human Rights Watch, over 100 women were sexually assaulted or even raped between June 28th and July 4th (*Rape and sexual assault: the hidden side of Egypt's protests*). The army which was in control of the country after the overthrow of Morsi, was accused of many acts of violence against protesting women. The media reported that Security Forces arrested, beat and sexually assaulted over a dozen women who were protesting and then left them in the desert outside of Cairo. The most serious case was the imprisonment of 21 female protesters, including seven girls, because of their participation in pro-Morsi demonstrations in Alexandria. The Sidi-Gaber Misdemeanour court sentenced 14 of them to 11 years and one month in prison and sentenced the young girls to juvenile detention until they turned 21 (*Egypt must immediately and unconditionally release women protesters*).

On January 18th 2014, 98.1% of voters showed support for the new constitution established by the interim authorities. According to the constitution, Egyptian nationality "is a right to anyone born to an Egyptian father or an Egyptian mother, and legal recognition through official papers proving his/her personal data, is a right guaranteed and regulated by the law" (Megahed. The previous constitution merely mentioned that nationality is a right regulated by law. In the opinions of many experts, the new rules provide better protection for women and children. The constitution defines a child as a person who is younger than 18 years old, so child marriage is prohibited not only by law, but also by the constitution. The Egyptian constitution includes: gender equality, protection from discrimination, political, civil, economic, social, culture rights, and the protection of motherhood (Megahed). The authorities didn't establish any types of quota at the national level, not only for women but even for workers or farmers who used to have 50% quota in the representative councils since 1956. Some women's rights organizations expressed disappointment that their quest for explicit quotas for women was ignored (Mahmoud). However, many commentators described this new constitution as the most progressive for women. Sisi was aware of the power of women's votes, so making women's rights a strong point of the constitution was not only fair but also very much a tactical decision. Women showed their attitude to the Brotherhood by voting for the new constitution, which some Muslim Brotherhood and

Salafist preachers called "the constitution of the adulterous women" (Abu Chehab). On the day of the referendum many women were dancing and singing national songs in the streets. Many of them were carrying pictures of Sisi who has become a national and women's hero (Khattab).

On March 26, 2014 Sisi resigned from the military to become a candidate in the 2014 presidential election (*Egypt's El-Sisi bids military farewell, says he will run for presidency*). He was sworn into presidential office on June 8, 2014. He won with 23.78 million votes (96.91% of voters). This was the first foreign-monitored election in Egypt's history (*El-Sisi wins Egypt's presidential race with 96.91%*; Watanabe). The man who won the election was known for defending forced *virginity tests* against female protesters in his previous role as head of military intelligence, but at the same time he was the man who had led Egypt to a new progressive constitution.

His election campaign was clearly aimed at women. He even organized the women's conference as part of his campaign, in which he met with women from different sectors from across Egypt's governorates. "Chivalry, love, generosity and benevolence mean that no one is frightened, especially Egyptian women" – he told them during the meeting (Rabie).

Sisi, recently reelected, has now been president for four years now. Although this may still not be enough time to judge him, he is being called the *president of women*. He characterizes his feelings about women with warm affection. He said: "I personally love the Egyptian women, (…) All the women in Egypt would be my daughters" (McTighe). His narration about women is always full of respect. "The women of Egypt have always taken part in writing the history of our nation. They have shown their ability, responsibility and strength in building our country" – he said (*Circles of hell. Domestic, public and state violence against women in Egypt*). One of the first things he did as president was to apologize to women who were sexually assaulted during his inauguration.

The NCW announced its plan to develop which aligns with government policy (*Circles of hell. Domestic, public and state violence ageist women in Egypt*). However, the authorities delayed implementation of reforms under the pretext that currently there is no parliament in Egypt. In December 2014, the NWC had started a program called *Egyptian Women… Step towards Parliament in 2015* to support women who wish to nominate themselves for election, by explaining the election process (Hanna and Foster). A government institution paid the election fees for every female candidate between 25 and 35 years old (*Government institution to pay fees for female candidates in parliamentary election*). The Elections Committee said that in February 2015, only 949 women were among the 7,416 candidates running for election (El-Behary). The elections were delayed because the Supreme Constitutional Court decided that the law on electoral constituencies was unconstitutional. Parliamentary elections were planned for after Ramadan in 2015, which finished on July, 17th 2015.

Did Egyptian women, citizens of the country with a long feminist tradition win or lose by overthrowing the regime of Hosni Mubarak? For sure they defended themselves from the Muslim Brotherhood's post-revolution action. "Women's rights under the rule of President Sisi have improved when compared to their situation during the reign of President Muhammad Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood" – said the Ambassador of the NCW (Abdelatty). Her opinion is shared by the head of the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (Abdelatty). In many aspects, Egyptian women's situation is even better then under Mubarak. Women won by overthrowing the regime of Mubarak but their victory required huge sacrifices, risk and wasn't a spectacular triumph. The new law seems to be better but it doesn't mean this law can fix all of Egyptian women's problems. Al-Khawaja from Cario University said: "The status of women under Sisi's era has improved without any objective signs" (Abdelatty).

Amnesty International published its report, *Circles of Hell: Domestic, Public and State Violence Against Women in Egypt*, which confirmed that Egyptian women still face many problems including state violence, domestic violence, sexual assault. The authors of the report stated that efforts to eliminate violence against women are too little. However, many of those who still judge Egyptian women's situation as very bad and describe the new constitution as not effective, seem to understand that applying new rights stipulated by the constitution takes time and is especially so in such a large country.

Egypt needs not only a good legal framework, but also long term programs to address women's problems such as sexual harassment, health care and employment. What is more none of these problems will be solved until the mentality of the nation will be changed. It's not something that can happen through a good law or pro-feminine president, but at the same time, it is difficult to achieve without them. Egyptian women won by overthrowing the regime of Hosni Mubarak. The current situation, dates and statistics, unsolved problems and the size of this victory shows us that they won a very tough battle but not yet the war.

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The Arab Spring – Implications for the Russian Federation

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Abstract

The Arab Spring led to a major transformation of political systems of the region's most countries; an increase in the significance of radical Islam in the political life; a degradation of the security environment. In addition, changes in the region's economy cannot be overlooked. The events connected with the Arab Spring gave the Russian Federation completely new challenges. The country has to yet again define the character of its relations with Muslim countries and adapt its foreign policy to the new post-revolutionary reality. The Arab Spring also represents a challenge for Russia in its internal affairs.

Keywords: Arab Spring, Russian Federation, Islam, Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Libya, Islamic State, Middle East, Ummah

At the turn of 2010 and 2011, the region of the Middle East and North Africa was dominated by a wave of protests and social unrest which swept through most countries of the region. Even though the scale and consequences of the events baffled the international community, it should be noted that protests or rebellions are not a new phenomenon in the Muslim World (like the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979). The outbreak of social protest was triggered by many factors, often unseen by the West mostly due to the efforts of dictators who created an image that their regimes were stable, modern, and were fighting terrorism (Dzisiów-Szuszczykiewicz). Economic, social and political factors were the main reason for initiating the events in the Middle East and North Africa. For many years, the Middle East had been dogged by problems connected with high unemployment, illiteracy, low income among a significant proportion of the population, and corruption (Dzisiów-Szuszczykiewicz). Demonstrators on the streets of Arab towns also protested against despotic regimes which some researchers, such as J.A. Goldstone, call "Sultan", which in simple terms, describes regimes whose leaders strive to maintain and expand their power, frequently at the expense of formal institutions (Goldstone).

The events in the Middle East first assumed the form of civil disobedience. People in towns took to the streets and demanded that the leaders of their countries step down. Subsequently, the situation developed in a few directions. In Tunisia and Egypt, the authorities made attempts to break the civic movement but eventually gave in under the pressure of growing protests. Protests in these two countries although violent, with many people killed, did not turn into a civil war. With the stepping down of these countries' respective presidents, the situation stabalized and made it possible for the country and society to function (Barhouma). In Jordan, Algeria, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Mauritania, Sudan and Oman, the authorities managed to convince their societies that they would initiate new reforms which would cater to the people's urgent needs. Societies once again trusted the ruling class and the protests petered out (Zdanowski).

In Syria, Libya, Yemen and Bahrain the authorities took a tougher stance. Either the protests were broken up by force (Bahrain) or long-lasting civil wars broke out (Libya, Syria and Yemen). The direction in which the events developed was affected by the balance of forces between society and the authorities. The situation in individual countries was similar as far as the course of events is concerned yet at the same time very distinct due to different political and economic conditions (Zdanowski).

The Arab Spring in the Middle East illustrated how difficult it is to forecast political events in this region. Revolutionaries in each country acted in different conditions, representing totally distinct social groups. Previously, it had been an Islamic society – backward, resistant to any change. Together with the outbreak of the revolution it turned out that it is an open-minded society which is fighting for universal rights (Czajkowska and Diawoł-Sitko). It cannot be expected, however,

that the spontaneous social uprising will turn society into a mature and civil one overnight. The Arab Spring showed the world the importance of social media in bringing about social and political changes as it played a vital role in the context of the events that unfolded in the Middle East. At the beginning of 2010, there were 17 million Internet users in Egypt, of which as many as 4 million used Facebook, which was one of the key carriers of information during the Middle East revolution (Stepanova). The events in the Middle East contributed not only to the changes in the social and political landscape in the region. They also forced the leading players on the international scene to adjust their policies concerning this area and for some they became a source of potential threat. The Russian Federation also faced new challenges in relation to the Arab Spring.

The Middle Eastern region has been of interest to Russia for many centuries. Development of commercial contacts with the Byzantine Empire has been happening since the times of Kievan Rus. The Middle East also saw competition between the Russian Empire and European superpowers for access to the Mediterranean Sea through the Bosporus and the Dardanelles (*O kontrole nad prolivami Bosfor i Dardanelly*). The Middle East in the "cold war" period was an extension of the global bipolar rivalry. The United States and the Soviet Union had a strong impact on the region which, to their mind, represented a territory of great strategic importance. The period from the early 1960s to 1973 may be regarded as the pinnacle of the Soviet Union's influence in the Middle East. After the Yom Kippur War, the Soviet Union slowly began to lose its foothold in the region. Communist ideology was incompatible with the assumptions of Nasserism and the Ba'ath party. Only some of their elements coincided (Ożarowski). Perestroika was crucial for the Kremlin's Middle East policy as it forced Russia to resign from political involvement in peripheral regions. In the aftermath of the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation withdrew politically from the Middle East. In the early 1990s the country focused on the its political and economic transformation as well as restoration of relations with the Western countries. In the new geopolitical situation, the Russian Federation was not able to have such a strong impact on the international scene as the Soviet Union once did (Bryc).

A change in the attitude of Russia's foreign policy concerning the Middle East region began when Yevgeny Primakov became the Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Russian Federation in 1996. The main doctrine of Russian foreign policy in the mid-1990s was the so-called Primakov doctrine. Its main goal was the restoration of Russia's international position through the creation of strategic alliances, including those in regions that Russia had traditionally had influence in, such as the Middle East. Vladimir Putin continued this by giving importance to relations with Middle Eastern countries. Due to the close proximity of the post-Soviet region or, in many cases, a common religious, ethnic or political identity, the situation in the Middle East is of keen interest to the Russian Federation (Bryc).

Reaction of the Russian Federation to the Events Connected with the Arab Spring

When at the beginning of 2011, the regimes in Tunisia and Egypt were overthrown, a question arose about how predictable this entire situation was. The main reasons for the Arab Spring had been known long before the first anti-government reactions appeared. The Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, in an interview in mid-March 2011, expressed an opinion that "nobody had precise forecasts of these events," and he referred to the anti-government reactions as "the expected surprise." "Expected because problems, predominantly in the social and economic spheres, had been accumulating for many years. The regimes which had been in power in many countries for over a decade had lost contact with what was really happening in them, what problems society was facing," said Lavrov. He noted that the United States together with other countries very often drew the attention of the region's countries to their problems, sometimes even helping to resolve them. He also admitted that events in the Middle East had been a surprise as "they occurred very quickly and influenced many countries at the same time" (Solov'ev).

Regarding mass protests in the Middle East, it is worth citing the words of Vitaly Naumkin, Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, who noted that "mass protest of young people, not inspired from the outside, mostly educated and with liberal views, are a precedent, particularly in Egypt and Tunisia. One may not, however, equate what happened in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain and other countries" (Naumkin).

The first mass protests in Tunisia commenced in mid-December 2010 and led to the resignation of the President Ben Ali on 14 January 2011 (*Tunisia since the Arab Spring: timeline*). The reaction of the Russian Federation was rather restrained. A representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Alexander Lukashevich stated the following in a press release. "Moscow is alarmed to see the development of the situation in Tunisia. We believe that it is in the interest of all Tunisian people to come back to the normal and stable situation in the county in order to prevent confrontation, especially an armed one. We consider it a priority to restore peace in a democratic way through constitutional dialogue and with no violence" (*Zajavleniie oficial'nogo predstavitelja MID Rossii A.K. Lukashevicha v svjazi s sobytjami v Tunise*). Subsequent comments of representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were similar in tone. Russia reacted in a positive way to the parliamentary elections in October 2011, and the presidential elections in December which were won by Mohamed Moncef Marzuki (*Rossiia podderzhivaet stremlenie Tunisa k fundamentalnym peremenam – MID*). The Kremlin was also enthusiastic about the parliamentary elections

conducted at the end of 2014 and the presidential elections, stressing that they were an important step on the way to democratic transformations in this country (*Moskva nazvala parlamentskie vybory v Tunise uspeshnymi*).

Anti-government protests in Egypt from January 25 to February 11, 2011 forced the Russian Federation to pay greater attention to the processes in the region (Schwartz). This time the head of one of the leading Arab countries was overthrown. Already on February 9, 2011 Alexander Saltanov, the vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, made a special visit to Egypt (*O vizite v Egipet Special'nogo predstavitelia Prezidenta Rossijskoj Federacii po Blizhnemu Vostoku, zamestitelia Min Inostrannyh Del Rossii A.V. Saltanova*). From the very beginning, Russia took a really moderate stance, refraining from overtly supporting ant particular party.

The Russian Federation reacted in a neutral way to mass protests in Bahrain, where on February 14, 2011 supporters of the opposition gathered in the town of Manama, demanding from the king, political liberties and an end to the infringement of Shiites' rights in this country (Nyathi). In official statements the Ministry stressed that the best method to get back to normal in the country back to normal was dialogue between the authorities and the opposition in a peaceful and violence free-atmosphere (*O situacii v Korolevstve Bahrejn. Soobshheniie dlia SMI*). Subsequent events in this country were received by the Russian Federation in a similar moderate tone (*Kommentarij Departamenta informacii i pechati MID Rossii po situacii na Bakhrejne*). From the very beginning, the Russian Federation also carefully watched the unfolding situation in Yemen. On November 23, 2011 a peace plan prepared by the Gulf Cooperation Council and signed in Riyadh. Under this peace plan, the incumbent president would step down in favour of the vice-president. Siergiej Kozlov from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, was present at the ceremony (*Jemenskaja Respublika*).

The reaction of the Russian Federation to the conflict in Libya was different than in the aforementioned countries. The country's initial reaction to the events in this country were similar to those which Russia had expressed to the events in Tunisia and Egypt. However, together with the escalation of the crisis and increasing violence, Russia began to criticize the authorities in Tripoli for using armed force against civilians. This criticism could be seen in Russia's support for resolution no. 1970 of the United Nations Security Council, imposing sanctions, mostly an arms embargo, on the regime of Muammar Gaddafi. Russia, however, abstained from UN Security Council resolution no. 1973, which formed the basis for the NATO intervention in Libya (*SB OON i Liviia: prigovor mezhdunarodnomu pravu*). Russia imposed its first sanctions on Libya in March 2011, shortly after adopting the aforementioned resolution no. 1970. Six months after the outbreak of the crisis in Libya, the president of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, signed a degree under which Russia imposed additional sanctions on Libya. Russian airspace,

for instance, was closed to Libyan airplanes, with the exception of humanitarian aid. Restrictions also concerned to the personal finances of the Libyan leader and his closest associates (*Rossiia vvela novyie sankcii protiv Livii*). However, in the case of Syria Russia's stance different. From the beginning of anti-governmental protests in this country till today Russia is consistent in its supporting of Damascus (Kleshhenko).

Russia faces up to new challenges

The formulation of new foreign policy rules in relation to the Middle East is currently one of the biggest challenges that the Russian Federation is facing. Changes to the international situation in the Middle East were reflected, for instance, in the latest Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, which was approved by the President in February 2012. The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation specifies the country's main priorities, directions, aims and targets of Russia's foreign policy. This document, along with the Constitution, federal acts and the Concept of National Security of the Russian Federation, represents one of the foundations of Russian foreign policy. Initially, the Arab Spring was interpreted as an event intentionally inspired by Western countries, aimed at weakening the position of Moscow in the region. Since 2012, there has been a shift in Russia's perception of the Arab Spring, which began to be understood by Russia as a willingness to return to the roots of civilization. It is perfectly reflected in the Concept of Foreign Policy which says that "these days we observe a return to the roots in individual civilizations and cultures, which is particularly visible in the context of events in the Middle East and Northern Africa, where political, social and economic change is often effected under the slogan of introducing values based on Islam" (Chernenko).

As observers note, after the death of Muammar Gaddafi, Russia was left with only one serious partner in the Middle East – Bashar al-Assad. Syria may be counting on the support of the Russian Federation as it is one of the main markets for Russian weapons. Syria is also important for Russia for strategic reasons. The port of Tartus is the only Russian naval base outside the territory of the former Soviet Union. What is more the base has direct access to the Mediterranean Sea (*Rossiia ne budet sozdavat' v sirijskom Tartus bazu VMF*). Moscow's involvement in the Syrian conflict is motivated by two main reasons: firstly, Russia wishes to challenge the American hegemony in the international arena and secondly to help Bashar al-Assad's regime in the struggle with radical Islamists who in the view of Russia are regarded as serious enemies of the Russian Federation. Keeping President al-Assad in power is motivated by a range of Russian interests. Syria has become a bulwark in preventing the United States from extensively using its military forces. In addition, Russia strives not to allow for a regime change in Syria through

intervention from the outside as this could have dangerous consequences for post-Soviet countries on the peripheries of Russia, including Russian Federation regions populated mostly by Muslims. Russia does not want the Libyan precedence to be repeated, i.e. military intervention of Western countries under the slogan of human rights protection. The Russian Federation considers the al-Assad's secular dictatorship to be the best guarantee of not allowing extremists connected with Saudi Arabia and Qatar to gain power.

It is also worth looking at the opinion of Syria's leader, Bashar al-Assad, on the relation with the Russian Federation. He expresses his clear support for strengthening Russian presence in the Middle East. According to Assad, thanks to increased Russian involvement, the region will be more stable and the balance of power will be restored after it was lost after the breakdown of the Soviet Union. "Increasing the Russian presence in our region will contribute to the stabilization of the situation. Russia plays a very important role in strengthening stability in the world," the Syrian leader said in an interview for the Russian TASS agency in March 2015. Al-Assad also noted that there is some similarity between the conflicts in Syria and Ukraine. In his opinion, in both cases there is a common goal: "to weaken Russia and create a puppet state" (*Asad predlozhil Rossii rasshirit' voennoe prisutstvie na Blizhnem Vostoke*). It is also worth stressing that a very important problem that the Russian Federation will have to face is the possibility of spreading extremism to Northern Caucasus and Central Asia. The most serious source of radicalism is the Islamic State, which had increased its influence every month to include territory in Syria and Iraq (Khramchikhin).

The Arab Spring: Its Impact on Russian Muslims and Russia Itself

Islam in today's Russia is by no means homogenous. First of all, it must be noted that in recent years the division into traditional and non-traditional Islam has been used more and more often. Traditional Islam comprises groups of Muslims that arrived in Russia and who built their identity before the revolution and continue to reside in the country to the present day. Non-traditional Islam predominantly consists of groups that arrived in Russia after 1991 and deem it necessary to revive the religion and, in a way, purify it. Russian Muslims mostly include Tatars, Bashkirs and inhabitants of Northern Caucasus. According to the latest census, Russia is inhabited by 14.5 million followers of traditional Islam. According to unofficial data today's number of Muslims in Russia exceeds 20 million. The majority of Russian Muslims are Sunnis, the Hanafi, and in Caucasus the Shafi'i school is present with Sufism being widespread there as well. In seven federal units, Muslims represent the majority of the population, namely in: Ingushetia – 98%, Chechnya

– 96%, Dagestan – 94%, Kabardino-Balkaria – 70%, Karachay-Cherkessia – 63%, Bashkortostan – 54.5%, and Tatarstan – 54%. In Moscow alone, the number of Muslims is two million, while in the Moscow Oblast it is 650 000 (Malashenko).

Muslims living today in the Russian Federation also consist of immigrants whose numbers continue to grow. They come mainly from Central Asia – Uzbekistan, Kirgizstan and Tajikistan as well as from Afghanistan. Their number is estimated to be from one million to 3.5 million. So the structure and demography of the Muslim population in Russia appears to be rather complex. According to a prominent Russian scholar, an expert from Centre for Central Asian, Caucasian and Volga-Urals Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Professor Mikhail Roshchin, the Russian authorities are now facing a major challenge and trying to understand this situation though, for instance, supporting, mostly financially, traditional Islam (Roszczyn). In his opinion, non-traditional, radical Islam is also growing in strength, even though it is not financed by the state. In all places where there is relatively strong armed underground (in Dagestan, Ingushetiaor Kabardino-Balkaria), funds are raised from protection money, as financing from other regions and countries is increasingly difficult due to the increased transparency of banking systems (Roszczyn).

The Arab Spring also reverberated among the Muslim community in Russia. Official standpoints of Muslim leaders concerning events in the Middle East were convergent with those of the government. The Chairman of the Russian Council of Muftis admitted that "adopting a UN resolution on Libya lies in the interest of the Muslim world." Referring to the reasons for the riots there, he said that "if somebody has been ruling a country for 30 years, not giving society any social benefits, then it is normal that people walk into the streets and demand economic and political changes" (*Glava Soveta Muftiiev Rossii Podderzhivaet operaciju protiv Kaddafi*).

According to Ruslan Kurbanov, an orientalist, the greatest interest in the Arab Spring in Russia can be seen among the Muslim youth that use the Internet and speak English and Arabic. It is precisely this group that supports revolutions in the Middle East in the hope that the Arab-Muslim world is going to change in the years to come. People of older generations present rather balanced views, mostly convergent with the official policy of the authorities (*Vliianiie arabskoj vesny na Rossiiu i rossijskikh musul'man*).

Events connected with the Arab Spring forced the Russian authorities to change their attitude towards Muslim education. The issue of young Russian citizens leaving the country to get an education in Muslim states has been discussed for a long time. It was not infrequent that graduates of Arab universities were influenced by Muslim radicals; in addition, they learned about Islam from textbooks from Saudi Arabia. Young Muslims returning to their homes often became missionaries of a tradition different from the Russian tradition of Islam (Mukhietdinov).

In the Russian Federation there are officially 97 Muslim universities. This data, however, includes all educational institutions on a tertiary level, including both higher madrases, and universities together with their branches. However, many experts and official representatives of Muslim clergy claim that the most serious players in the system of Muslim higher education in Russia are universities from cities such as Moscow, Kazan, Ufa or Makhachkala (*V Rossii budut otkryvat'sia novyie Islamskiie Universitety*) . In Dagestan alone there are 13 licensed universities (Mukhietdinov). Most Muslim organizations in Russia take the stance that only those who have already received higher education in Russian Muslim universities are allowed to attend foreign institutions. The strictest stance taken in this matter is from organizations from Northern Caucasus as they are in favour of introducing an absolute ban on young Muslims leaving the country to be educated in Muslim states (*Kto vliiaet na religioznoe obrazovanie rossijskih musul'man?*).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation recommends that Muslims refrain from leaving the country to for education in Arab states, especially those where there have recently been revolutions. Instead, the Ministry proposes going to, in the opinion of civil servants, safer countries in South-East Asia. An open meeting of the Bureau of the Clerical Muslim Board for the European Part of the Russian Federation was held on December 25th 2012 in Moscow. A representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Konstantin Shuwalov, expressed an opinion that despite the fact that Arab countries have so far offered Russian Muslims a satisfactory level of tuition, the ongoing political changes had forced the ministry to seek new opportunities and directions. The representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation stressed that the education of Russian students abroad should be at most additional and that it was a priority for the next few years to develop Muslim education within the country (Manonova). The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, also referred to the issue of educating Russian Muslims abroad in June 2015. According to him, the priority was to establish a competitive system of Muslim education within the country. To support Muslim education in the country, the authorities earmarked 894 million rubles for 2014–2016 (Majorova).

The Russian government's fears of extremism stemming from the Arab Spring are not groundless. Dagestan's capital, Makhachkala, saw mass protests in February 2013 with one of the slogans on display objecting to Russian policy towards Syria (Magomedov). However, radicalization does not only concern Northern Caucasus. Russian authorities paying attention in this area, underestimated the threat resulting from the deteriorating situation in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. In these regions, the attitudes among the Muslim youth are being perceptibly radicalized. The whole process is complex, but an important factor is migration, both internally from Northern Caucasus and externally from Central Asia. This combination means that radical ideologies permeate Russia (Bogodvid).

A fundamental problem for both the Muslim community and the Russian authorities is the increasingly active participation of citizens of the Russian Federation in military activities conducted in the Middle East. During his visit to Russia in June 2015, the Mufti of Syria said in an interview for the TASS agency that nowadays between five and seven thousand citizens from Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent Countries were part of the army of the Islamic State. "About 70 thousand people from all over the world is fighting on their side (…), some of them come with their whole families, and they are trained in Turkey. These people are financed by interests in Saudi Arabia. There are still new volunteers, mostly from Tatarstan, Kazakhstan and other states of the Commonwealth of Independent Countries," noted the Mufti. He also went on to say that "we thank Russia, China and India, which have helped us to live without the support of the International Monetary Fund. Today Syria is fighting for Russia, and also for Crimea and Chechnya. If Syria falls, terrorists will go to Russia" (*Verkhovnyj muftij Sirii: porjadka 7 tysjach vykhodcev iz Rossii i stran SNG voiuiut na storone IG).* At the end of May 2015, the Russian public was shaken by the case of a 19-year-old female inhabitant of Moscow, a student of philosophy at the prestigious Moscow State University who flew in secret to Istanbul in order to travel to Syria and join the Islamic State. The woman was detained at the Turkish-Syrian border and deported to Russia. After her detention, the woman was in a very bad mental state and said she did not not exclude the possibility that during the recruitment she was given psychiatric drugs (*Varvara Karaulova poprosila Otca Kupit' Frukty i Igrushki*).

Despite certain frictions between the authorities and the Muslim structures in Russia, both sides go hand-in-hand against politicizing Islam in the country, especially in the context of processes visible in the countries affected by the Arab Spring. In March 2011, the final document of the National Convention of Muslims stressed the necessity to make the public aware of the fact that Russia is a democratic, secular and multi-faith country (Makharov). The Arab Spring seems to be the event that has opened a new chapter in relations between the Russian Federation and Muslim countries. At this time, Russia is struggling to maintain its influence in the Middle East region. Syria remains the most important area of influence and this country will probably remain Russia's main partner in this part of the world for the foreseeable future. The Islamic State remains an important challenge for Russia and the international community alike. Vladimir Putin fears expansion of Islamism to Russia, especially to Caucasus as well as to Central Asia which the majority of immigrants coming to Russia are from. Only a common front against the Islamic State, with the involvement of the Russian Federation, may be effective in preventing the threats posed by the Islamic State. The Arab Spring also represents a challenge for Russia in its internal policy. The authorities will have to face, above all, the growing radicalization of moods among the Muslim population.

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Polygyny Amongst Muslims in the Russian Federation

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Abstract

Polygynous families had been living legally in Russia in the areas inhabited by Muslims from the October Revolution to the mid-twentieth century. However, such a family model was not common among the followers of Islam. An act penalizing bigamy or polygamy was introduced into the Penal Code in 1960. During perestroika, and later changes in the political system, imams who came from abroad began to visit areas inhabited by Muslims. They contributed to the rebirth of religion and promoted the idea of polygamy. Polygyny is the visible sign of dissimilarity and Muslim identity and was an important point in their teaching. In this context the number of polygynous relationships in Russia has increased significantly. The article is dedicated to the analysis of social and political discourse in Russia that has been taking place for several years.

Keywords: Polygyny, Islam, Muslims in Russia, Nikah, the Census, discussion about the legalisation of polygyny

In Russia, Islam is one of four traditional religions, along with the Orthodox Church, Judaism and Buddhism. It is perceived as an element of the historical and cultural heritage of the country both in social perception and in relations with the state authorities. As opposed to other religious movements (such as Catholicism, or various other expansive sects), its activity in Russia is not perceived as proselytism. What is more, thanks to its status, just like in the case of the Orthodox Church, Judaism and Buddhism, its mission receives a positive acceptance from the state authorities. Of course it is proportional to the number and positions taken by Muslims in Russian society. Followers of Islam in the Russian Federation (RF) can be divided into two groups: native and migrant. The first group includes Muslims from North Caucasus, Tatarstan, and Bashkortostan. The migrant group covers immigrants from the former Soviet Union republics in Central Asia and the non-Russian part of the Caucasus, which are today independent states. This migrant group seek work in order to improve their standard of living. The social mosaic is further complemented by Muslims from the Middle East and Africa, who emigrated for political reasons. Most followers of Islam in Russia belong to Sunni Islam's Hanafi law (Kobishchanov 62–70).

Changes in Russian social life was started by perestroika, as well as the process of religious re-birth (Malashenko, *Islamskoe vozrazhdenie v sovremennoi Rossii*, 68–101) – as it is described by some – with Islam legalisation in the areas inhabited by Muslim population (Gainutdin 71–129) leading to the institutionalisation of Islamic social activities. Religion, which used to be perceived as a relic, turned out to be for many citizens the only way to satisfy, spiritual hunger' after the fall of communism. For this reason, at the beginning of the twentieth century, we could observe practically in all of Russia the increased organisational activity of Muslims. Today Islam significantly shapes social awareness, and it is officially recognised by the state (together with the other main religions). Because of this, it plays a significant role in the social and political life of the state. What is interesting is that the Muslim case does not seem to be an isolated one. The national re-birth of practically all ethnic groups living in Russia was done through religion and not any lay ideology (Filatov 10). This fact may be surprising, as up until 1988 all religions in Soviet Union were in a state of lapse.

The transformation of the state of religion from being "dormant" to having full freedom happened in a relatively short space of time, which in turn influenced the character and "depth" of demands and expectations formulated by Muslims. Even if they do not concern fundamental or principle issues, but rather banal life issues (in other words, they concern the superficial Muslim awareness of self), they are treated with extraordinary seriousness. Alexey Malashenko claims that we can observe in Russia an interesting phenomenon. It is the desire to "Islamise" the environment Muslims are sharing with others. This is done not to convert, but as a result of growing awareness of their own belief identification. It seems

to be something more than just a fashion for religion (Malashenko, *Islam dlia Rossii*, 18). It is bound with the need to construct their own "I" through shaping the surrounding reality. Unimportant things, or things hidden in privacy are now publicly discussed. Muslims (at least some part of them) started to feel the need to manifest their identity. There are issues being discussed (even by non-Muslims) like women's clothes, the issue of "cleanness" – the halal nature of grocery products, and the relations between men and women. The resolutions of the above – based on the principles of belief systems and traditions – became valid in general discourse (not only in Muslim ones) and also affect the followers of other religions. Therefore, this phenomenon has been described as a so-called "Islamisation" of the environment.

Polygamy in the Russian Federation, without the media and hyperbole, (especially in the perspective of large demographic numbers) is not statistically a significant issue – either for Russian society or Muslims living there. For this reason, it is difficult to treat it as a manifestation of the above mentioned "Islamisation." However, due to the fact that the topic is captivating in a media sense, it seems to be an interesting case. Irrespective of its future in the federation (whether it gains in popularity, becoming a real socio-political problem, or if it remains at its present level) it will automatically be linked with Muslims from the public's perspective. We are only a step away from building stereotypes about polygamy and Muslims in Russia. From this aspect, it may represent an element of society's "Islamisation." Polygyny as a type of marriage, in which a man is in a marital relationship with more than one woman is permitted in Islam. It is commonly known that the Koran allows for restricted polygamy: "And if you fear that you cannot act equitably towards orphans, then marry such women as seem good to you, two and three and four; but if you fear that you will not do justice (between them), then (marry) only one or what your right hands possess; this is more proper, that you may not deviate from the right course (K 4:3)." A Muslim man is allowed to marry more than one woman but not more than four at the same time. However according to religious law a number of conditions should be observed. The first one is the just treatment of wives. It pertains to providing equally for, and treating equally, all of them. Responsibility solely rests with the husband. This rule also refers to the distribution of time and attention, which should be given equally to all wives. It is worth mentioning here that polygyny is permittedbut it is not obligatory. Polygyny cannot be used to satisfy desire, it should be based on the compassion for widows and orphans. The question is then how is it interpreted and put into practice by Muslims in Russia.

According to Kazan Orientalist – Rais Suleymanov – up until the October Revolution polygynic families had a legal status in Russia in the regions inhabited by Muslims. However, they represented a minority, since more than one marriage could have only been afforded by affluent people. A second wife generally appeared

if the first one was childless (Fiodorova). Polygamy was not widespread to the same degree in all Muslim regions. Suleymanov claimed that Tatar women rarely agreed to share their husband with another woman (Fiodorova). Highland women from the western part of the Northern Caucasus also felt disinclined to agree to this. According to Madina Pashtova from the Adyghe Regional University of Humanistic Studies – "in Cherkessia's version of Caucasus culture there has never been approval of polygamy. It was only permitted formally by Islam and Adat if there in the case of a childless wife, or if a wife only gave birth to girls. But in reality, Cherkessia women's mentality did not allow for any form of submission" (Nefliasheva, *Chto na vostochnom Kavkaze – tyl, to na zapadnom – front*). It is very well illustrated in the language, where the biggest insult is a phrase that means: "they are as two wives of one husband," and a series of proverbs and sayings which are negative in connotation and refer to polygynic relationships (Nefliasheva, *Chto na vostochnom Kavkaze – tyl, to na zapadnom – front*). However, in the south of Northern Caucasus – in Dagestan, Chechnya, Inigushetia – polygyny is a normal phenomenon. What is more it is deeply rooted in family and social life. Vakha Bogatyrev (a LDPR politician from Dagestan) admitted in 2006 when asked about the necessity for polygyny legalisation: We live quite well without that law. "My mother was eighth wife (sic) of my father. I have only one wife, but my younger brother has got three" (Gamov and Pleshakova).

A man in the Caucasus marries another wife usually for four reasons:

— the first wife cannot have children, and her husband does not wish to abandon her, divorce her, and in doing so, put her in an unfavourable life situation;
— if a man is not satisfied with the intimate aspect of the marriage, and he would like to avoid the sin of adultery, or he does not want to enter a brief and informal relationship;
— for love;
— for the need to have many offspring (every new wife brings him closer to this aim) (Nefliasheva, *Chto na vostochnom Kavkaze – tyl, to na zapadnom – front*).

In 1960, Soviet law did not accept bigamy, or polygamy. But it did not have any special forms of punishment for people living in these relationships. Their presence was tolerated and not only in Muslim societies. This liberal approach was related to USSR demographics after WWII. "In a starving country destroyed by war, women were made to give birth in all conditions. Men were allowed to practise polygamy" (Sobolevskii 26–27). This was unofficial as there was no formal possibility to register the marriage in registry office. However, the relationship was not perceived as a romantic affair practised outside marriage, but polygamy was understood as living a double life and working for the upkeep of the second family. In 1960, article 235 was added to the Penal Code penalising bigamy and polygamy. According to this new law, persons who perpetrated these forbidden acts were subject to one year in prison, or correctional work (Vlasov). However, according

to Abdurashid Dudaev – the president of the International Muslim Mission – polygamy in the Caucasus and Central Asia has always been present and changes in the Penal Code did not greatly influence the practices of the inhabitants in these regions. The major change, which first appeared in the 1960s, was in the obligation to register a marital relationship in the Registry Office. However, this still did not present an obstacle for those in favour of polygamy. A man would register a relationship with one wife – usually the first one – and he would live with two, or three wives (Pestereva and Gridneva 3). He would marry the others in an Islamic wedding ceremony (nikah – a Muslim wedding ceremony usually performed in the presence of an Imam and two witnesses). The popularity of this arrangement among Soviet Muslims may be found in the opinion of Dagestan philosopher – Mikhail Vagabov; according to him, between 1960–1965 in Uzbekistan there were between 30 and 66 polygamy court cases a year, and in Tajikistan between 30 and 47 cases (Abashin 110). It is worth noting here that what was punished was not sexual intercourse, but the running of a household with more than one wife (Sobolevskii 174).

Imams from abroad began to visit, at the time of perestroika and later state changes, regions inhabited by Muslims. The religious re-birth of the time, which is attributed partially to them, favoured the idea of polygamy. Polygyny as a visible sign of distinctiveness and Muslim identity performed an important aspect of their teachings. Due to this, the number of polygynic relationships (even the ones not fully formalised) increased. According to Rais Suleymanov, a large proportion of marriages in the 1990s were characterised by the unequal position of the spouses. The man would choose to marry for the second time without informing his first wife, she would be presented with the result. A woman, left with no choice, who would not want to break the family, was forced to accept the situation by deciding to stay in a polygynous relationship (Fiodorova). There were cases of unknowing polygyny. Girls were made by their family to marry men without knowing that they were not their first wife. In the opinion of Kazan Imam Seidzhafar Lutfullin, it concerned only the relationships conceived from the trend to marry incoming Turks and Arabs. The above mentioned imam is not in favour of polygynous marriages, mainly due to the legal regulations present in the Russian Federation and the status of wives. In his opinion, they and their children are practically deprived of legal protection. For this reason – he claims – he does not marry people in the case of a second wife. He witnesses the effects everyday – which he calls – Wahhabi ideology, propagating, for example in Tatarstan, the idea of polygyny. Being in charge of the Zakat funds, he observed that 80% of women petitioning for help are homeless single mothers with two or three children, who after being married in a mosque were abandoned by their husbands (Fiodorova). Although the aspect of polygyny does not directly appear in this relation, it may be suspected that the problem concerns the second or other wives. When a woman in Russia – even when very religious – marries a man in any religious tradition she does not resign

from registering the marriage in the registry office. The registration is only possible in the case of the first wife. For this reason, we can assume that all the women mentioned above, later abandoned by their husbands, were only married in the mosque, and that they were second or later wives.

The proper interpretation of the Census shows that polygyny in the Russian Federation as a phenomenon may be rather widespread. The 2002 Census revealed that the number of married women was 65,000 higher than that of married men (Kuzichev). This, of course, does not provide grounds for assuming that all these women remain in polygynous relationships. And there are more rational explanations for these numbers. With great certainty, the number includes second, third and later wives. The Census from 2010 established with greater precision the scale of polygyny by allowing the respondents to select the right answer. The data shows that 1616 polygynous marriages were declared, in the following regions: Inigushetia – 30; Chechnya – 75; Kazan – 40 (Fiodorova); whereas in Petersburg – 382, and in Moscow – 732 (Sobolevskii 175). Taking the scale of the Russian Federation into consideration, these numbers may not look significant, but it is worth remembering that these practices, as discussed earlier, stay hidden from the public. It's interesting that in 1616 cases, the pollsters received an honest response. Based on the observation of media interest, researchers and observers of Russian Muslims' lives, we can tentatively assume here that the polygyny phenomenon – taking a second or third wife amongst Islam's followers – is not marginal, and in the last 25 years, despite formal obstacles, has gained in popularity. Polygyny is forbidden in the Russian Federation. Article 14 of the Family Code in the RF states: "marriage between persons who at least one is already married, is not allowed" (*Semeinyi kodeks RF*). According to article 27, marriages conducted against the above regulations are seen as invalid in the eyes of the law (*Semeinyi kodeks RF*). In this situation, the formal registration and legalisation of a relationship of a married man with another woman in a registry office is not possible.

The second or third wife is left with nikah. But still, this ceremony does not give the woman or her children the same legal protection or guarantee as a marriage conducted in a registry office. They have no right to inherit from a deceased husband/father in the same way as the wife and children from the first marriage. Also a woman, who marries her husband in a mosque only but is later abandoned by him, has got a longer and more difficult struggle for alimony rights. It is important to note here that since 1996 the polygyny penalisation law has been removed from the Penal Code (Komissarov). That means that persons breaking, or avoiding Family Code regulations in this area are not subjected to penal system punishment. This opens a wide spectrum for the informal practice or even blossoming of the phenomenon of polygyny in this grey zone.

One of the visible sights of a polygyny grey zone is the returning media and public theme of polygyny. The particular aspects of life in such a family has been

for a long time one of the top topics undertaken on, for example, Muslim internet forums. Women search for advice on how to settle relations between the first and second wife. Some of them propose that the other wife should not be looked upon as a rival but as a sister in faith. To authenticate this opinion, they quote many verses from the Koran, which recall the life of the prophet Muhammad (*Kak sabliusti spravedlivost' mezhdu zhonami v poligamnom brake?*). But in most cases, when they are asked directly what they feel when they know that their husband spends a night with the other wife, they admit that they would prefer to be the only wife. Noone is surprised by the Internet dating portals, which give men two options to declare their status and intentions: "bachelor, I am interested in a relationship in order to marry" or "married, I am looking for another wife" (*Ishchu vtoruiu zhenu*). But in 2010, these options became the source for a major scandal. A newly launched dating portal "NikahRT", which offered its services to Muslim women searching for a husband in accordance with their faith, allowed married men to register. And a number men enthusiastically welcomed this possibility. In turn, this action invoked indignation amongst registered women. The portal's administrators had to answer this outcry by publishing explanatory commentaries. However, sometimes it is not the man, but his first wife who is the one looking for a second wife for her husband on the Internet. This is a rather rare phenomenon, but it is not an isolated case. Women resort to this due to, for example, their ill health, or when they feel that they are losing their position in the marriage. They don't want to wait passively, when they are pushed aside or when they are cheated on. This solution allows them to feel that they have some right in deciding about their own family's future (*Musul'manki v Rossii*).

A popular form of polygynous marriage in contemporary Russia is a relationship in which there is a significant age difference. The pattern is always the same. A Muslim man about 40 years old or more has a wife at about the same age. He is interested in another partner who is 18–20 years old. Situations when a man decides to marry a second wife of a similar age to his first wife, or older, or a single mother raising children by herself are very rare. Naila Ziganshina – the leader of the Russian Muslim Women Association – claims that she knows many age-difference-marriages and has a negative opinion of them and has compassion for the first wives (Fiodorova). On one hand, for some women the situation seems rather favourable. Young women who are impressed by mature men, may expect some benefits: care and upkeep.[1] On the other hand, there are some negative consequences that they are not aware of. In most polygynous relationships, the second wife stays hidden (Aliautdinov). Even members of the family are unaware of them, not to mention the first wife. Publicly the man never shows himself with his second spouse. There

1 Kamilla from Samara is the fourth wife of her husband who is 30 years her senior. She studies law and believes that when she graduates from college her husband will find her a good job: *Lolita. Bez komoleksov: mnogozhenstvo*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcsKEyjdZdU.

is also a widely held opinion that a young wife expects immediate satisfaction of her needs – without delay and without the difficulties of a life together. She uses the assets of the previous marriage (Fiodorova). Paradoxically this relationship can make both women unhappy. While the second wives, living a hidden life, are challenged by loneliness, they cannot participate in family celebrations, the first wives continue to ask themselves what they lack. They want to understand why their husband married another woman. Many can fall into depression. Women very often are ashamed of the situation in which they find themselves. But they remain in the relationship, as they do not want to break up the family (Aliautdinov).

As a result of the mobility of people searching for work throughout the entire post-Soviet region, we can observe the widespread phenomenon of marriages between women and Muslim migrants. They may not be immigrants from the Middle East, but they are citizens of post-Soviet republics, who live in the Russian Federation (RF) for work reasons. These men leave their own families behind in Uzbekistan or Kazakhstan. Women are often not aware that, once married, they can become the second wife. Often she finds out about this upon completion of the Muslim wedding ceremony (Aliautdinov). The man, while in Russia, decides on *nikah* for religious reasons. He thus avoids accusations of promiscuity or adultery. It is difficult to ascertain if the decision is based on formal or legal motivations. With certainty, we can say that the ritual does not bring any consequences which are written into state law. It cannot be used to legitimise a man's stay in the country. When the contract is up, or if the man loses his job, or if he resigns from his work, the husband goes back to his place of origin. To start with, he stays in touch with his Russian wife. But after a while, the contact stops. It appears that women, entering into marriage through *nikah*, have no awareness of the fact that the marriage is temporary. They do not know that they have just become part of a temporary arrangement (the marriage lasts as long as their husband's contract, after which the husband goes back to his country) (Aliautdinov). What is interesting is that this problem does not only concern Muslim women searching for Muslim husbands. It turns out to be the opposite. The "victims" appear to be women of other religions (most often Slavic women) who are also unaware of their husbands' marital status. Muslim men impress young women not only with their maturity or/and assets, but also with the fact that they do not drink alcohol, and that they may actively participate in raising the children. In the Russian reality, Russian men – according to women – are alcoholics, drug addicts, irresponsible people, lazy and abusive (*Zamuzhem za polumesiatsem*). It should be noted here that the above opinion is not solely based on prejudices. Research in Russia shows that for every ten men, three are alcoholics, two are impotent, one is a drug addict and one is homosexual (Gamov and Pleshakova). There are three healthy candidates left to become a husband and a father. We should not be surprised with the choices of Russian women bearing in mind the above and the fact that they are largely unaware of the principles

of Muslim marriage and family in Islamic tradition. On the other hand, women, who are fully aware of the dangers of polygamy, or temporary marriage, cooly calculate the pros and cons. In the opinion of some women living in a polygynous relationship, it is better to share an honest man with four other wives, than live with a slapdash husband (*Zamuzhem za polumesiatsem*).

There is another form of polygynous relationship as a result of non-traditional forms of Islam in Russia – a Muslim Salafi man marries a Muslim woman (a neophyte). Marriages with converted people used to be rather rare due to reasons outside religion such as the need to protect cultural and group identity. But Imams from abroad, who are rather indifferent to these particular aspects, and who propagate polygyny, encourage men to search for wives amongst newly converted Muslim women. On the other hand – as Rais Suleymanov explains – Russian girls accepting Islam express their religious interest more than anyone else. They agree to take the status of a third or even fourth wife. They believe that this is what their religion expects them to do (*Mnogozhenstvo v Tatarstane*). A perfect example may be found in the case of a 54-year-old Imam from the Bornay mosque in Kazan. He married his third wife – a 19-year-old Russian girl; or an imam from a mosque in Almetyevsk for whom two wives out of four are neophytes (*Mnogozhenstvo v Tatarstane*). Russian Muslim women explain the change of faiths and choice of husband as being due to the lack of "normal" Russian men. In their opinion, the "entire youth is drunk," where as a polygynous marriage, even with an older man of a different nationality, offers the chance of experiencing family bliss and raising children (Gumanova). Sometimes it is the men, who are over the moon with a promise of an easy life in polygyny. They marry four wives (if they could, they would marry more) only so that they provide for him (Gumanova). They expect the wives to bring in some extra money, but this is no reciprocation from these men to provide for each wife as is expected according to Muslim law. And it does not matter to them that polygyny is not a religious order, but a possibility which does not have to be used. The attitude to polygyny is often embodied in questions publicly posed by the men: "I am Muslim, as far as I know I can be the lord of four wives" (Aliautdinov) writes 31 year old Aman who expects a positive response.

As the popularity of polygyny is on the increase, there has been a continuing discussion for the past 15 years about the legalisation of polygyny in the Russian Federation. The supporters of the legislative changes justify their stance by emphasixing the need to improve the demographic situation of the country. They claim that it would start to correct the gender imbalance (a worrying disproportion in the number of women compared to men: resulting in a catastrophic low birth rate). The supporters bring up the results from the latest Census. The last one, done in 2010, showed that in Russia there are 11 million less men than women. Amongst the arguments there is the legal situation of existing polygynous relationships – the need to provide the right protection for wives and children from such

marriages (*Legalizovat' mnogozhenstvo v Rossii*). Finally, there is the practical or common-sense aspect of the situation. As such marriages exist, there is no reason why we should pretend that polygyny is not practised. The legal system should be adjusted to the status quo. A political party favouring polygyny in Russia is the Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia. Even though it is not a key part of their programme, the individual activity of its representatives creates this impression in the media. Sergei Semenov, LDPR MP (at the time a member of the Committee for Women, Family and Youth at The State Duma) proposed on October 30, 1996 a project that legalised polygynous relationships. It ascertained that for second or other marriages to take place, all family members had to give their permission. The project was welcomed by authorities in Inigushetia, the Altai Republic and three other administrative regions (*Semevov Sergei Sergeevich*). In June 1999, the president of Inigushetia, probably inspired by earlier attempts at federal level, legalised polygyny in the territory of his republic (at least giving some semblance of legality to his decisions). According to the presidential decree: "In the Republic of Inigushetia male citizens have the right to enter into four marriages with female citizens who are not bound by any other marriage" (Nefliasheva, *Dva tyla ili dva fronta? O mnogozhenstve na Severnom Kavkaze*). The new regulation concerned only people who could fulfil two conditions: every wife should be treated equally; a man marrying again should have the funds to provide for wives and children born as a result of their new relationship. The president justified his decision citing the demographic situation in the republic. As a result of the Ingush Ossetian conflict (1992–1993) a lot of men had died. Inigushetia authorities believed that the nation's re-birth, while holding on to monogamous relationships, was not possible (Pestereva and Gridneva 3). But as a result of a Russian Federation High Court decision the decree of Ruslan Aushev was repealed as it was contradictory to federal law (mainly Family Code) – which was rather predictable. Nevertheless during the time the act was active in Inigushetia, 15 men registered, in registry offices, their marriages with a second or third wife (Gamov and Pleshakova). Attempts to change the law appeared in the following years. For example on October 25, 2000 the State Duma rejected a proposal to legalise polygyny, by an LDPR MP. Even though the proposed act failed, it is important to note here that 21 out of 450 voted for the changes (*Semevov Sergei Sergeevich*). On the regional level, the Inigushetia case was not repeated, but another Caucasus politician clearly declared his support for polygyny legalisation. Ramzan Kadyrov – the president of Chechnya in 2006 decided that polygyny was indispensable for the future of the republic. According to statistical data, there is between 9% to 18% less men than women (due to war) (Podorozhnova). The president believes that polygyny was a solution for young widows and those women who could not find a partner (Amirov).

The most well-known person in Russian public and political life, who wholeheartedly supports polygynous relations is Vladimir Zhirinovsky – the leader of

LDPR. As he is known for his controversial opinions, he seems to be supporting polygamy as one of the answers to the country's social problems. In 2006, he stated that his party has always supported the legalisation of such relations and he, having one wife, would love to marry two Chechen women (Podorozhnova). In 2010, he argued in favour of polygyny because of the need to fight a demographic disaster: "30% of children are born here out of wedlock, and if a man has the right to marry another woman, who gave birth to his child, without the necessity of dissolving the marriage with the first wife, whom he respects. As he does not wish to destroy the happiness of the family we should place upon him the responsibility for the second family" (*Zhirinovskii predlagaiet legalizovat' mnogozhenstvo v Rossii*). The last opinions concerning polygyny spoken by Zhirinovsky are from March 2014. When he spoke in The State Duma, during a round table discussion dedicated to the problem of alcoholism, he expressed the opinion that according to him, men in Muslim countries do not drink because they clearly have no time for this. Having many wives, and with each having several children, they have to think all the time about how to provide for them. Extending this logic, he proposed removing from the family code three redundant words – those relating to limiting polygyny (Griciuk).

Polygyny legalisation was also supported – which many may finde surprising – by a politician who was extremely different from Zhirinovsky, Boris Nemtsov – the late leader of the Republican Party of Russia: Party of National Freedom. The leader of the opposition never tried to conceal the fact that he had three families. What is worth noting is the fact that this had no influence on the popularity of the politician and it did not translate into a fall in the polls. In 2006, Nemtsov said during an interview that "millions of men here have several wives, who were civil partners, because there is no possibility to legalise their relationship. However, a question now needs to be asked: are we ready to legalise something that already exists? Either the Chinese in 50 years will live in Russia, or polygyny will be legal. If the choice is between the Chinese and polygyny, I choose polygyny" (Gamov and Pleshakova).

The last attempt to change the legal status of polygyny was done at the federal level in 2012. It went much further than any other proposals, even further than the requests of Russian Muslims. The proposal's premise was to allow both men and women to marry more than one person. In the opinion of Yelena Borisova – the Chairman of the committee for Women, Family and Youth in the State Duma – the proposed change was not interested in "introducing a new law, but to abolish article 14 of the Family Code, which forbids having more than one spouse. We understand that the legalisation of polygyny and polyandry is an important step and therefore the work on the proposed change did not last a month. We need to take into consideration the multi-nationality of Russia and the fact that we have many different religions here. For this reason, forbidding Muslims polygynous marriage,

for whom it is a centuries old tradition, we may be in effect be showing a lack of respect for them." According to Russian custom and culture norms, only monogamous relationships are allowed, but in some social groups a relationship between a man and many women are quite popular. "If a man can build and provide for a family in which there is more than one wife, and the wives are ready to live together, then what is the point in putting legislative limits in the area concerning people's personal lives" notes Borisova. "The abolition of polygyny's prohibition is not a call for everyone to give up monogamy in favour of polygamy, however, every person in Russia should decide for him or herself what their private life should be and the state should not restrict this freedom in law" (*V Rossii budet razresheno mnogozhenstvo*). Ultimately this revolutionary change was not accepted.

Russian society is not very enthusiastic about the question of polygyny. A poll of 1500 respondents from 2006 conducted by a public opinion research centre showed that 62% of those asked were against polygyny legalisation with only 10% in favour unsurprisingly, women (72%) far outweighed the men (50%) in their opposition to such changes. It is surprising that the religion practised did not determine the answer. Amongst those who described themselves as Muslim, only 16% supported the legalisationwhile 59% were against. Those against – irrespective of their religion – called upon Russian tradition and morality in which legal polygyny is not a typical phenomenon. Ten per cent of respondents believed that love and marriage was for two people alone. Eight per cent of those asked considered the practical side of the problem, claiming that a Russian man could not provide for another family. On the other hand, supporters believed that polygyny may be a perfect solution to the problem of the lack of men and would help in increasing the birth rate. Some people argued that they had the right to choose what life style they led (Vovk 73).

There is definitely a discrepancy in the Russian media regarding polygyny, specifically what its legal situation is. What is interesting is this discrepancy does not seem to be the problem of the authorities. It is difficult to determine here why, but clearly the government assumes that as society (at least a part of it) approves and practices polygyny, then the least dangerous practice seems to be in the strategy where state bodies should not bother (or punish) people living in polygynous relationships. At the same time there are no (even veiled) suggestions that gives hope the chance of legalising the practice, since proposals from controversial politicians and other parties cannot not be taken as serious propositions. This situation has a number of problems. On the one hand, the state officially advocates the protection of its citizens' morality. On the other, it accepts polygyny and approves of the functioning of "unofficial" law, regulation, and customs outside the area controlled by the state. If someone is not shocked with this prevarication, there is another practical aspect which gives rise to social problems. Under the cover of a respect for Muslim society, there are situations that are tolerated in which some citizens run their lives

in some ill-defined sphere, and poorly regulated formal-legal environment. What is more the consequences of these ambiguities and regulations are challenges faced by the weakest group of citizens – women and children. It is this group who suffer from the consequences of malfunctioning polygynous relationships. They are deprived of legal protection and have no way to assert their rights. In Russia we deal with "approved polygyny" sanctioned by both Muslim society and the State. Simply put, all interested parties express approval for these relations (Zyzik 124). It may be seen as a temporary means to solve the problem, but on the other hand it seems difficult to call a phenomenon which has existed for 50 years "temporary." Undoubtedly, one particular aspect of polygyny may be evaluated positively. According to Dilara Larina, a psychologist, it is a question of demography in the face of the catastrophic state in the health of the Russian 'me' (Fiodorova).

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