

GLOBAL DISRUPTIONS AND THE MAKING OF A NEW MIDDLE EAST

EDITED BY
TALİP KÜÇÜKCAN



TRT WORLD
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Foreword

Mehmet Zahid Sobacı

TRT, Director General

Global Disruptions and the Making of a New Middle East is a relevant and insightful edited book that tackles some of the greatest changes and challenges taking place in the Middle East today. In an ever-complex, constantly evolving world, TRT World Research Centre has successfully curated a collection of works with nuanced perspectives on a wide variety of issues.

Over the last one hundred years, the Middle East has drastically changed. From physical borders to cultural commonalities, the landscape of the region has witnessed a multitude of disruptions, developments, and foreign interventions, all the while experiencing the impact of an increasingly globalised world.

The edited volume examines the role of Turkey, both in the present and future, in pressing strategic, diplomatic and political affairs. The authors included in this TRT World Research Centre publication leverage their expertise to investigate topics including, but not limited to, Turkish foreign policy, Turkey-EU relations, and Turkish energy and security ambitions. As these are popular and important topics, with many existing published perspectives, it is valuable to highlight these analyses as particularly insightful into Turkish affairs.

Furthermore, this collection of works contains both a diversity of topics and longevity of perspective. *Global Disruptions and the Making of a New Middle East* examines a variety of subjects at the forefront of regional work, including the Israel-Palestinian conflict, the role of U.S. policy on Israel and Palestine, the Arab Spring and the role of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the domestic Egyptian politics, and much more. Overall, this book encapsulates the many transitions and transformations taking place in the Middle East in the 21st century and highlights the crucial role of Turkey in many of these developments.

I am incredibly proud of my colleagues' work and am pleased to present you with *Global Disruptions and the Making of a New Middle East*. This book will serve as a particularly valuable volume among a wide variety of work on the region.

Towards a New Middle East amidst Global Disruptions and Regional Transitions: An Introduction

Talip Küçükcan

This volume originated from debates and discussions held at the TRT World Forums in Istanbul to which the contributors to the book participated giving papers and presentations. Since its inauguration in 2017, TRT World Forum has brought together academics, journalists, politicians, think-tankers and members of civil society to address social, political, economic and security challenges on regional and global levels. This volume includes updated papers as well as articles commissioned by the Editor.

Since the end of the Cold War, the World has been going through radical transformations and international politics is increasingly being marked by the emergence of new powers, conflicts and challenges against the established World Order. While populism is on the rise on a global scale, multilateralism is increasingly being questioned and ongoing conflicts, wars, political and economic competition among global powers and regional actors continue cause disruptions and inflict pain and misery all around the world. This edited volume addresses some of the new challenges and complexities of global transformations in recent decades in the Middle East and offers fresh perspectives not only with regards to the dynamics of ongoing and emerging challenges but also on how to best grapple with their disruptive implications. Taking the legacy of the last hundred years and its implications for today into consideration, contributors to this volume argue that a new Middle East is in the making, drawing on the origins and evolutions of long-running disputes as well as emerging issues in security, energy, foreign policy and economy.

The Middle East as a complex region is studied from different angles. This book adds a new dimension to the present literature by unpacking the legacy of foreign powers and changing dynamics leading to the

emergence of a new Middle East with rising regional powers shaking the post-colonial status quo in the region. Şükrü Hanioglu's contribution in Chapter One supports this observation and illustrates the historical trajectory of how the century-old status quo has been falling apart and a new status quo produced "as a result of a bitter struggle among global actors, nationalisms, and sectarianisms". He argues that the old status quo has been imposed upon peoples of the region and warns against the dangers of "pushing for maximalist nationalist and sectarian agendas" and the risks of relying on deals with non-regional powers. He concludes that reaching an understanding that respects all parties and reflects the will of the people of the region will create the strong and sustainable bonds necessary to avoid repeating the catastrophe that occurred a century ago. In Chapter Two, William Hale takes stock of the century-old Sykes-Picot Agreement, which not only created artificial borders but also a bitter legacy of inter-state and internal conflicts that have lasted to this day. In his article, Hale addresses three major questions as to the reasons behind the rise of the Sykes-Picot agreement, its impact on the formation of the status quo and state structure that has largely been maintained until today, and the extent to which current regional conflicts can be accounted for with reference to the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Hale argues that the Sykes-Picot agreement reinforced existing divisions within the Arab world, by setting up the institutions of separate nation-states, which have proved remarkably durable despite many crises and conflicts. Looking back at the legacy of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, this chapter concludes that the ongoing conflicts in the region derive from a complex mix of historical, cultural, and economic factors. Regional actors in this context are said to all too often act as the allies and proxies of global superpowers who have vested interests in the region.

Richard Falk charts the trajectory and evolution of Israeli-Palestinian relations marked by never-ending tensions, dilemmas and conflicts in the context of retreating globalisation with a special emphasis on US policy,

which he characterises as regressive. In Chapter Three, Falk argues that the retreat from globalisation generates risks and opportunities on the global and regional level and presents the character of these threats and opportunities. He underlines the rise of ultra-nationalist leadership as a central feature of the new world order, leading to “withdrawal of support from cooperative responses to global problem-solving, relying instead on transactional bargains between governments as shaped by geopolitical disparities rather than by deference to considerations of international law, diplomatic compromise, and global justice”. Falk illustrates the contradictions of US policy on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, which greenlights the expansion of Israeli settlements in occupied lands in clear violation of international law and significantly increases grievances of the Palestinian people. He concludes that while present realities seem to favour Israeli ambitions, a genuine unification of Palestinian leadership and the shift toward democratic transition can be regarded as factors that would strengthen the Palestinian position in the future.

The transformation of foreign policies of the prominent actors in the Middle East in the face of regional and global shifts is also addressed in this volume. In this context, Jana Jabbour’s article in Chapter Four examines the perception of Turkey’s “new” foreign policy options and decisions in Europe to which Turkey claims to be an integral part and therefore its leadership regards full membership in the European Union as a strategic objective. Jabbour first, looks at general orientations, the major paradigmatic grounds and several distinct elements of Turkish foreign policy that have emerged under the AK Party that makes Europe uncomfortable in its relations with Turkey. She then successfully explores the relative neglect of Europe in appreciating changing dynamics and explains “the deeply-rooted political and sociological factors that account for Europe’s unease with Turkey and its difficulties to make sense of Ankara’s diplomacy”. She concludes that there are strong grounds for renewed cooperation such as counterterrorism,

migration, energy, the Syrian Civil War and economic investments as Europe acknowledges that Turkey's quest for status and power is a legitimate one but needs to be honest with Turkey as far as the future of full membership is concerned.

In Chapter Five, Faruk Kaymakcı provides a Turkish perspective on troubled Turkey- European Union (EU) relations which have gone through a challenging period despite recently increased high-level contacts and argues that the future shape of the relations will depend on the policy decisions of the EU rather than Turkey. He focuses on the benefits of mutual trust, good working relations and full membership, which is seen as the backbone of relations. Drawing on the impacts of the upheavals in the Middle East and North Africa, Kaymakcı argues that the EU should play a broader role in close cooperation and solidarity with Turkey if the EU's strategic vision is to be a global actor rather than being locked into intra-EU affairs. Echoing Jabbour in Chapter Four, Kaymakcı believes that trade, investment, energy security, defence, the fight against terrorism, irregular migration, radicalisation, cybercrime, climate change is some of the critical issues that are mutually beneficial grounds on which strengthened relations can be built that would reinvigorate accession negotiations, visa liberalisation and updating customs union agreement as immediate expectations of Turkey from the EU.

In Chapter Six, Kaan Kutlu Ataç enquires into the logic and character of Turkey's power politics regarding military involvement in the Syrian Civil War. He claims that the realist perspective of geopolitical theory is sufficient to understand the geographic system in which Turkey is situated, and thereon predicting developments in the said realm. Drawing on geopolitical theorist Richard Hartshorne, Ataç also thinks that global politics are shaped by centrifugal and centripetal forces asserting that centrifugal forces naturally create separating impact and centripetal forces increases unity of the political objectives of Turkish senior decision-makers. Drawing on the analysis of Turkey's cross

border operations in Syria, namely the Euphrates Shield and the Olive Branch operations, Ataç concludes that despite the negative impacts of the centrifugal and centripetal forces created within its borders, Turkey has proven its ability to protect its national interests by engaging in pre-emptive political manoeuvres and military operations to achieve at least relative stability in Syria from Ankara's perspective.

Energy is one of the critical issues in the context of Middle Eastern politics and a source of economic and strategic rivalry, competition, conflict and cooperation. As a result of global political-economic transitions and fundamental shifts in power, global energy dynamics are changing, leading to the emergence of a new world energy and geopolitical order. Turkey aspires to become an energy hub in terms of energy transportation projects and security. In Chapter Seven, Mehmet Ögütçü's focuses on Turkey's aspirations to become an indispensable energy transportation hub as a country that is lacking in oil and gas resources. He considers new opportunities and constraints in Turkey's energy economy and geopolitics, as well as the gas market dynamics in the EU and in the energy-rich region around Turkey. Ögütçü believes that Turkey, the EU and the US need to work closer on energy issues and concludes that "Turkey is not content only to be a simple "bridge" over which energy flows. It aspires to become a regional "hub" that can serve its strategic and commercial interests. Certainly, the country has the potential to become a major regional "hub" in the true sense of the word, for energy flows in the next decade or so if smarter policies can be possibly put in place to both ensure its energy security and serve as a reliable partner for producing and consuming nations, investors and operators."

In Chapter Eight, Nurşin Ateşoğlu Güney looks at the ups and downs in Turkish-Russian relations in recent years and the energy dimension of cooperation that produced mutual economic and strategic benefits for both countries. Ateşoğlu Güney's focus is the TurkStream pipeline project in particular which she sees it is a win-win initiative for both

Turkey and Russia after weighing strategic opportunities and risks embedded in the implementation of this project through which the first gas was pumped on January 1, 2020. She illustrates how the energy dynamics of Europe will be affected following the launch of TurkStream and how Turkey and Russia will emerge as winners in the long run. She challenges the claims that Ankara has become more dependent on Russia after the initiation of TurkStream and argues that in the last decade Turkey has succeeded in changing the weight of mutual dependency in its favour through engaging in more recent large scale energy and defence projects such as the Akkuyu nuclear reactor, purchasing S-400 missile system expanding grounds of cooperation between Turkey and Russia. In her conclusion, she argues that Turco-Russian relations in the economic and trade arenas will be considerably enhanced despite continuing geopolitical competition between the two in Syria and elsewhere.

The Arab Spring, which started in 2010 in Tunisia and spread to North Africa and a large part of the Middle East, has caused deeply felt disruptions and transitions whose social, political and economic effects are still being observed in these regions. In Chapter Nine, Mahjoob Zweiri and Muyassar H. Suleiman take stock of the impact of Arab Spring on GCC Countries after a decade of tumultuous events that led to change of governments, civil wars, human displacement, re-alignments as well as partial emergence of relatively participatory governance. Zweiri and Suleiman argue that most of the interventions within the context of the Arab uprisings led to the creation of fragile states and created new threats or “risks” to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The most important threat according to the authors, was the role of non-state actors, refugees, and infringements on sovereignty. They offer a broader understanding of GCC policies within the context of the Arab uprisings by focusing on the failure of the state’s structure and its centralisation, which led to the emergence of new security, political, economic, and social challenges for states in the region.

The Arab Spring has shaken the status quo and left a lasting legacy in different forms in the MENA region with reverberations that continue to be felt strongly. While the masses demanded social and political transformation pushing governments to introduce significant changes in some countries, the revolutionary wave has also led to regime changes in others. In Chapter Ten, Maha Azzam illustrates the impact of the Arab Spring on Egypt by examining the forces of revolution and counter-revolution. She believes that “despite the success of the coup against Egypt’s nascent democracy, the regime’s subsequent policies carry the seeds of the military’s ultimate demise after almost seventy years of political dominance. However, the level of damage and stagnation that is a result of decades of dictatorship and of particularly the last seven years since the coup of rapidly increasing failure, threatens state and society and not one political system.” Azzam argues that repression as a means of control and containment can succeed only in the short term and will become an obstacle to any form of progress at any level. She projects that in “such a political climate Egypt remains in a stalemate, unable to move forward or to defend its interest while fissures within the state between the ruling elite and the rest of society continue to widen so that some view the situation as leaving a zero-sum equation as an inevitable outcome.”

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not only between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Muslims. The impact of this decades-long conflict is felt across the Muslim world beyond the Arab states and the Middle East. Global powers such as the US are also engaged in the conflict mostly on the Israeli side and World Jewry are also closely interested in its development. The recent US move of its embassy to Jerusalem / al-Quds has been criticized by many Muslim countries and the US-led Abrahamic Accord has been viewed with scepticism, except the Gulf region. In Chapter Eleven, Azzam Tamimi looks at the original causes of the conflict in Palestine with a view of showing that the roots of the conflict are not found in religious differences and disputes, but rather

in the legacy of European colonial powers. He challenges the widely held narrative, which often portrays the century-old conflict as a mere territorial dispute, ethnic and even religious in nature. Instead of a culturalist and religious reading of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that is based on a binary opposition between Islam/Muslims and Judaism/Jews, he proposes to look into a historically informed political approach that will explain the roots of the problem.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also known as the One Belt One Road Project, is planned to involve more than sixty countries with an estimated budget of 1.2 – 1.3 trillion dollars. Many Middle Eastern countries will engage in this New Silk Road project, with potentially massive impacts on regional economies, security and governance. Its weaknesses might be a source of disruption whereas its strengths might lead to transformations in the region. In Chapter Twelve, Sadık Günay provides a balanced account of China's BRI in a world of global disruption, transition, multipolarity and global political competition. Taking the current global environment and conventional mechanisms of control over international channels of energy, logistics and trade, he stresses that multifaceted competition between China and the US began to determine the major contours of policy preferences by other major actors. Günay argues that analyses in Western academia regarding the potential impact of the BRI were biased because of ideological prejudices. However, he argues that there are serious issues with regard to cost management, financial prudence, legal-institutional frameworks and the risk of debt traps for countries involved in BRI. Günay concludes that major actors, including the US, Japan and Russia, have some serious reservations pertaining to the growing influence of China on regional and global contexts.

This edited volume would not have come to fruition without the support and contribution of many people. Special thanks go to Professor Mehmet Zahid Sobacı, Director General of TRT and Mr. İbrahim Eren, former Director General of TRT, who have both supported the TRT

World Forum, which forms the basis of this book, since its inception. I also would like to thank Dr. Pınar Kandemir whose unwavering support was invaluable in the completion of this book. Dr. Tarek Cherkaoui, Managing Director of TRT World Research Centre, Dr. Tankut Öztaş, Dr. Serkan Birgel, Michael Arnold and Semanur Pekkendir Darbaz who all immensely supported the editor throughout the project. I thank all of them for their contributions.

A Hundred Years Later: The Emergence of a New Middle East, 1914-2014

Şükrü Hanioglu

After describing the pre-1914 status quo, this paper will provide an analysis of the post-Ottoman Middle East that emerged after the Great War and elaborate on the future reshaping of the region. A new status quo, whimsically imposed by the victors of the global conflict, opened a Pandora's box and triggered interminable conflicts reproducing themselves in different forms in a region that gained vital importance thanks to its abundant energy resources. In the past century, global, regional, and local actors tended to opt for zero-sum competition rather than exploring win-win solutions or cooperative frameworks. While the century-old status quo has been falling apart at seams, this paper will maintain that only a new order deemed workable by all parties will prevent the region from facing new and seemingly everlasting conflicts.

At the outbreak of the July Crisis in 1914, the Near East (the Eurocentric appellation for the Middle East during that period), was not considered a significant and consequential region in world politics and dynamics. Compared to the Balkans, particularly Macedonia (which had been the greatest global diplomatic problem until the post-Balkan Wars settlements in 1913), the Near East was an area of much less concern to global powers. The overwhelming Muslim majority in the region prevented the European powers from considering it a component of the "Eastern Question", which seemed to have been settled that same year. While the Western powers perceived the safeguarding of the rights of the local Christians as a moral and humanitarian duty, they all agreed that in the Asiatic provinces of the Ottoman Empire and other parts of the Middle East under colonial rule, only the Armenians should have extensive autonomy or independence (Rodogno, 2012).

A sizable portion of this region (which had permeable and fluid boundaries was) under colonial rule. Various chunks of a vast area stretching from Morocco to the Suez Canal had become colonies and protectorates or were placed under European occupation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For the Great Powers carrying out *missions civilisatrice*, these regions became extensions of their various European empires. These areas were no longer strategic issues. From the vantage point of colonial powers, matters like “Muslim fanaticism”, as was allegedly manifested in Egypt in 1906, were vital concerns (HC Deb, 1906). However, European administrators in charge were to address them.

By 1914, another major regional power that had originally succeeded in remaining independent thanks to Great Power competition, was divided into zones of influence. Iran, a country that owed its independence to the Anglo-Russian rivalry, faced a major threat after the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907. The British and Russians created three zones: a British sphere of influence, a Russian sphere of influence, and “neutral zone” in between. They agreed to allocate the north, including Isfahan, to Russia; allot the southeast, especially Kerman, Sistan, and Baluchistan, to Britain; and demarcate the remaining land between the two powers as the neutral zone (“Ratifications between GB and RU”, 1907, pp.555-57). This division helped these two powers to reinforce political as well as economic control in Iran. Splitting the country also allowed Britain and Russia to interfere in Iran’s political system. With foreign influence, revolution was outflanked by a combination of European and monarchist activities.

The rest of the Middle East was considered Ottoman territory, even though a rich variety of administrative patterns existed in this area. The extreme decentralisation extant before the end of the eighteenth century was replaced by a relatively centralist administration. In the last hundred years before the outbreak of the Great War, the Ottoman centre penetrated the periphery as deeply as it could. Many regions

once left to the rule of governors who had transformed themselves into virtually independent local sultans, or to traditional administrations of Arab, Kurdish, or Albanian chieftains or tribal leaders, were pulled to the centre. In the more distant periphery, the centre reset the rules on autonomy. For example, it sometimes eliminated the local elites and replaced them with new and more loyal ones as it did in the areas heavily inhabited by Albanians, Kurds, or Bedouin Arabs. Yet, while the success of the imperial centre in centralisation was remarkable, it could not be uniform.

Prior to the start of the greatest conflict that the world had ever seen, there were four different political arrangements in the Ottoman Empire: Ottoman provinces directly administered from Istanbul; legally autonomous regions such as the Mount Lebanon or the Zaydī highlands in the Yemen; regions under nominal Ottoman rule but in fact under the control of local leaders such as the Najd and al-Ḥasa under ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn al-Sa‘ūd, or ‘Asīr (where a Ṣūfī state emerged under the leadership of Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Idrisi); and regions that had become *de facto* British protectorates through contracts signed between Great Britain and local leaders such as Kuwait and Qatar. Consecutive Ottoman governments refused to honour these contracts and maintained that local leaders negotiating such agreements with the British were not entitled to do so as Ottoman subjects.

The Ottoman centre was also concerned with the proto-nationalist and nationalist movements gaining strength and acquiring popular followings. All nationalist movements led by Christian ethnic groups of the empire had achieved their goal of separation by July 1914; the only exception was the Armenians, though they, too, had secured a substantial reform programme in their favour in February 1914 (Davidson, 1948, pp.481-505).

Moreover, while Turkism, a flourishing proto-nationalism, gained considerable ground at the heartland of the empire, similar movements

emerged among the Muslim Ottoman groups like the Albanians, Arabs, and the Kurds. Even small Muslim communities like the Circassians who had been settled in the Empire following their mass exodus and migration from the Caucasus in the nineteenth century exhibited a rise in ethnic consciousness. By 1914, Albanian proto-nationalism had turned into a full-fledged nationalism, realising its ultimate goal of separation from the Empire in late 1912. The other nationalist movements were still fluctuating between a more liberal definition of Ottomanism and ethnic nationalism (Hanioglu, 2010, pp.142-44).

Those who considerably stretched the boundaries of Ottomanism and propagated a hyphenated identity such as Arab-Ottoman or Kurdish-Ottoman held the upper hand vis-à-vis the separatists who composed small but vigorous and persuasive minorities. For instance, the Kurdish proto-nationalist press that was born with the publication of the journal *Kürdistan* by Kurdish expatriates in Cairo in 1898, gained considerable momentum between 1908 and 1914. However, it operated within the boundaries of Ottomanism. Similarly, while Kurdish organisations of the Second Constitutional Period like *Kürd Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (Kurdish Mutual Assistance and Progress Society) stretched the contours of Ottomanism as compared to the *Azm-i Kavi* (The Strong Will Society), that was established in Egypt during the final years of the Hamidian regime. They too were confined within this supranational ideology.

The fateful year 1914 witnessed the development of a number of major events prior to the eruption of the July crisis. In February of that year, the Ottoman government grudgingly agreed to implement a special reform programme in Eastern Anatolia. After protracted diplomatic negotiations and under intense Russian pressure, the Ottoman leaders rancorously accepted a settlement providing for a pro-Armenian reform programme to be implemented by two European inspector generals in Eastern Anatolia and the Black Sea Coast. In a similar vein, the Anglo-Turkish Convention of 1914 ratified immediately prior to the eruption

of the July crisis by the Ottoman parliament formalised the division of the Arabian peninsula between the British and the Ottomans. In return for Ottoman recognition of the agreements signed between the British and local Arab leaders, whereby the British protectorates were created *de jure* in southern and eastern Arabia, the British recognised Najd, a vast area under the rule of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Sa‘ūd, as an Ottoman administrative unit (BOA-MHD, 242/11; 242/14; 376/2; and 369/2).

The violet line separating the Ottoman and British spheres of influence represented a settlement beneficial to both parties. The British obtained legitimacy for its holdings in the Arabian peninsula, something that they had sought for decades. In return, the Ottoman government forced a strong and rebellious leader to accept Ottoman sovereignty. The demarcation of a border in Arabia was part of a larger Ottoman-British effort to eliminate all outstanding disputes between the two empires ranging from the rights of navigation on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to Ottoman customs duties. Caught between the Ottomans and the British, local rulers in Arabia were forced to come to terms with one of the dominant powers. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Sa‘ūd, for instance, was left high and dry by the British agreement with the Ottomans, and resentfully signed a contract with the Ottoman government in May 1914, making him the hereditary governor of Najd and al-Hasa (BOA-DH. SYS. 25/103).

Thus prior to the eruption of the July crisis, a new and seemingly long-lasting *status-quo* had been established in the Middle East. Whereas half of the region was under European control, the other half under Ottoman control was reshaped. The Ottoman-British rivalry over the peninsula came to an end, Ottoman recognition of several autonomous regions such as the Highlands of Yemen and Najd prevented the continuation of local conflicts, and the Armenian nationalists came one step closer to achieving independence (BOA-A. DVN. NMH. 371/1). As for nationalisms and proto-nationalisms, the Ottoman centre began negotiating with the Arab intellectuals who had convened the Arab

Congress in 1913. Similarly, the Kurdish nationalism that focused on a cultural renaissance was still far from entertaining any form of separatism.

Upon the ratification of the Anglo-Ottoman Convention of 1914, the Ottoman decision-makers believed that they secured a relatively extended period of peace and reconstruction. In retrospect, these hopes now appear to be a *Château en Espagne*. Nevertheless, at the time, they duly reflected the realities of the pre-Great War situation. The Great War, however, changed this *status quo* forever, and its effects are still apparent throughout the region. Turkish nationalist historiography has long portrayed the Great War as a conflict aimed at Ottoman destruction. According to this train of thought, one of the main reasons for this war was the partition of the Ottoman Empire. Contrary to this view, the Western powers did not wish the dissolution of an Ottoman Empire that had lost almost all of its European provinces, granted extensive autonomy to its malcontent Armenian population, recognised the British zone of influence and a number of autonomous regions in the Arabian peninsula, and significantly decreased the tension between the Turkist centre and the various nationalist and proto-nationalist movements. Though Russia revitalised its long-time dream of capturing Istanbul and the Straits region especially after its *détente* with Great Britain in 1907, its activities did not necessitate a complete breakdown of the Ottoman state (Bobroff, 2006). Had the Great War not erupted, the *status quo ante bellum* would have lasted much longer, and the Great Power intervention in the Middle East would have been minimal as compared to the previous decade.

The *status quo* existing before the Great War was not the product of a natural development. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed half of the Middle East become an extension of the European imperial powers. As stated, the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 signed by Sir Arthur Nicolson and Alexander Izvolsky turned Iran into a semi-colony in practical terms. Elsewhere in the Middle East, the British acquired

strategic superiority through cunning diplomatic manoeuvres. Despite these developments, a large section of the Middle East was still under a single administration. An individual could travel from Edirne to Yemen or Trabzon to Basra without a passport.

The new settlement dictated by the Allies created a much more volatile Middle East. From 1914 onwards, the Allies coordinated a series of plans for the partition of the Ottoman portion of the Middle East, each of which was rapidly overtaken by wartime developments. The Constantinople Agreements of 1915 among Great Britain, France, and Russia, which awarded the Ottoman Straits and the adjacent areas to Russia on the condition that Istanbul remains a free port, became a dead letter following the Bolshevik Revolution. Other wartime sketches of possible fault lines of partition were the Treaty of London (1915), the Sykes-Picot-Sazonov Agreement (1916), and the Agreement of St.-Jean-de-Maurienne (1917). Woodrow Wilson's famous Fourteen Points (1918) established three principles of partition: sovereignty for the Turkish portion of the empire; security of life and an unhindered opportunity for the autonomous development of the remaining nationalities; and the permanent opening of the Dardanelles under international guarantees as a free passageway for the ships and commerce of all nations.

Such lofty principles appeared easily applicable on paper. In practice, however, their implementation was no simple matter. Anglo-French conflicts over some of the grey areas in these plans, compounded by the United States' subsequent disengagement from the region, constituted the primary external obstacles to smooth partition of the Empire. Other factors that complicated its division were British commitments to Arab leaders in the Ḥijāz, Najd, and 'Asīr in 1915-1916, separate reassurances given to Sharif Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī of Mecca in January 1918, promises made to seven other Arab leaders in June 1918, the undertaking towards world Jewry envisioned in the Balfour Declaration

of 1917, the territorial demands of Greeks, Armenians, and Kurds, as well as the ferocious Turkish nationalist resistance.

After the conclusion of the war, a new Middle East arose from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, shaped and dominated by British and French power, but seething with underlying tensions of local origin. Recognising the irretrievable loss of empire brought about by defeat in the Great War, the new Turkey's pragmatic leaders renounced all formal rights of empire outside of Anatolia, including all claims to Egypt, the Sudan, Libya, and Cyprus. Syria, the hotbed of Arab nationalist intellectual activity during the last years of the Empire, came under French mandate in July 1920. Contrary to nationalist aspirations, some districts previously ruled from Damascus, as well as the entire Ottoman province of Beirut, were annexed to Mount Lebanon in 1920 to form "Grand Liban," also under French mandate. One year later, despite Turkey's strong objections, the British fused the province of Mosul with two other former Ottoman provinces, Baghdad and Basra, to form the mandate and then state of Iraq thanks to League of Nations arbitration. The British also controlled both banks of the Jordan River, the Holy Land destined to pose one of the most acute partition challenges in former Ottoman lands. In 1922, they divided the Palestine Mandate into two artificial entities. On the East Bank, they created the Kingdom of Transjordan, which became the enduring refuge of the Hashemite family, driven out of Arabia by their rivals, the Saudis. On the West Bank, they continued to administer the reduced mandate of Palestine, bitterly contested between Jews and Arabs ever since.

In the Arabian Peninsula, Imām Yaḥyā, who during the conflict had remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire, secured an independent state in Yemen following the war. Another pro-Ottoman semi-independent leader, Sa'ūd ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, amīr of the House of Rashīd in Ḥā'il, was assassinated in 1920, following which the Rashīdī dominion was overrun by 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Sa'ūd. The latter then embarked upon a bitter struggle for the domination of northern Arabia against his

traditional arch-rival, Sharif Ḥusayn; this ended in Saudi domination of the Ḥijāz by 1925, and the departure of the Hashemite line from the Arabian peninsula. The Idrīsī Šūfī state in ‘Asīr suffered a similar fate by Saudi hands in 1930. Other beneficiaries of British protection under the Anglo-Ottoman Convention of 1914 shed their remaining ties to the Ottoman state at various stages of the war.

In Anatolia, to use the term coined by Erik-Jan Zürcher, the “Muslim nationalists” fiercely resisted partition of the Anatolian core of the empire (Zürcher, 1999, pp. 81-92). Their success in overturning the peace settlement breezily imposed by the Allies at the end of the Great War is an astonishing episode in world history, which has received far less attention than it deserves. The defiance of the Muslim nationalists signified the first noteworthy challenge to the new world order and served as a harbinger of things to come. Despite this major challenge, the rest of the Near East was shaped by the victors of the Great War, specifically by Great Britain and France. In Iran’s case, while the Soviet government repudiated the earlier Anglo-Russian agreement in 1918, Britain’s strong influence continued.

The Middle East that had once been directly administered from Istanbul was now under British and French control through mandates. For the rest, local leaders were permitted to rule on the condition of respecting British and French zones of influence in addition to their economic and strategic interests. With the exception of the Arabian peninsula, where local leaders with religious credentials entered into a bitter struggle that ended with the Saudi control of a large area, including the two holy cities of Islam, the new settlement brought about the ideological supremacy of nationalism. Of the two major ideologies of the pre-War era, Ottomanism predictably disappeared from the scene quickly. In fact, the Allied victory marked the dissolution of this ideology which had existed for almost a century albeit in different forms. It had indeed served as the official state ideology, even though its content changed substantially over time. The second major ideology of the pre-1918

Middle East, Islamism, also lost substantial ground to nationalisms. It was subsequently pushed into the background until its gradual and strong revival in the second half of the twentieth century.

In Turkey, a strictly secular Turkish nationalism basing itself on popular anthropological theories, racial concepts, and Darwinian theories of evolution hastily replaced the Muslim nationalism crowned by victory in 1922. This new nationalism adopted an unsympathetic attitude to Islam and aimed to supersede religion in the formation of identity. It also distanced itself from another pre-war ideology, Pan-Turkism, due to strategic considerations. In the Arab countries, local nationalisms gained the upper hand despite domination by the British, French, and the regimes installed by them. Pan-Arabism was relegated to the background yet was never abandoned. The borders set by the Treaty of Lausanne and the subsequent cession of Mosul to Iraq in 1925 divided the Kurds of the Ottoman Empire among three new nation-states -Turkey, Syria, and Iraq- and thereby overturned Article 62 of the Sèvres Treaty (1920). Kurdish aspirations for self-determination were essentially shattered. The reduction of the Ottoman Kurds to minorities in nation-states promoting Turkish, Syrian, and Iraqi nationalisms unintentionally gave an impetus to Kurdish nationalism, facilitating its evolution into a full-fledged nationalist movement.

Thus, the new Middle East haphazardly established by the victors of the Great War unwittingly fuelled nationalist movements. Obviously, the post-war era also witnessed the global supremacy of nationalism, and the emergence of nationalist movements cannot be considered a sole result of the new order one-sidedly imposed by Great Britain and France.

If we compare, in 1914, there were three supranational ideologies binding together the Turks, Kurds, and Arabs living in the Ottoman Empire. The first was Ottomanism. The Ottomanism of the Second Constitutional period was quite different from the Ottomanism of the Tanzimat era.

The Committee of Union and Progress sought both to centralise the empire and to impose a heavily Turkish version of Ottomanism on non-Turkish communities that either defended a hyphenated Ottomanism centred on the recognition of cultural rights or pushed for the realisation of their national ambitions through separation (Hanioglu, 2006, p.3). Still, the fundamental incompatibility of nationalism and empire granted Ottomanism a new lease on life. Ottomanism then served as a major medium binding different Ottoman ethnoreligious groups.

The second was Islamism, which was pushed to the background during the post-war era. Likewise, the Caliphate as an institution served as a medium uniting the aforementioned ethnic groups. We should remember that in addition to these two ideologies and the institution of the Caliphate, the very structure of the empire produced various kinds of ties among the Turks, Kurds, and Arabs.

The third was the ideal of secular imperial citizenship especially embraced by the educated elites and urban dwellers. Members of these ethnic groups attended the same schools, served in the same army and bureaucracy, and sent representatives to the same parliament. In the post-Great War order, all these ties vanished, and strict ethnic identities dominated over everything else.

The post-Great War Middle East has gone through substantial changes in the last hundred years. Colonial regimes and mandates have ended, nationalist dictators have replaced the rulers who had been brought from other regions, and Islamist movements have gained considerable strength. In spite of these changes, the status quo, artificial boundaries, and states that emerged after 1918 have largely persisted.

A hundred years later, we are now witnessing the emergence of a new Middle East. Unlike what happened in 1918 when the two victors of the Great War reshaped the region at will, today numerous actors are striving towards amending the *status quo* in their favour. Unlike the

Near East of the pre-Great War era, the current-day Middle East has become a consequential region deeply influencing world politics and dynamics, thanks to its rich natural resources. Local actors who merely observed the emergence of a new Middle East as mere spectators after the end of the Great War will certainly join the struggle. Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the oil-rich Gulf states will play significant roles in the shaping of the new Middle East. Likewise, global actors will actively participate in the game. This time, unlike in 1918, none of them will be excluded.

While nationalisms seriously affect the struggle for the new Middle East, religious sectarianism that played a minimal role a century ago will be more important in moulding the region. In 1914, upon the Ottoman declaration of war, the leading Shī'ite mujtahids in shrine towns issued numerous fatwas declaring that all Muslims should support the Ottoman war effort (Hanioglu, 2016, pp.117-34). Likewise, unlike many Sunnī leaders, Imām Yaḥyā, the leader of the Zaydis in Yemen, remained loyal to the Ottoman centre to the bitter end. In the present-day Middle East, where sectarian lines have become increasingly more rigid, it is difficult to imagine such cross-sectarian political cooperation.

A new *status quo* produced as a result of a bitter struggle among global actors, nationalisms, and sectarianisms would be tenuous and fragile at best. This time, however, a new contestant joins the great game as well. Unlike the world of 1918, where the desiderata of the local peoples were counted for nothing, these indigenous voices will rise more loudly and will make a difference. This seems to be the only hope for a stable and fair *status quo* respecting the rights of all parties.

A century ago, various ethno-religious groups of the Middle East had numerous ties binding them together. Despite these ties, their disagreements on a future order and foreign intervention resulted in an iniquitous *status quo* imposed upon them. Today, this broken-down

status quo is in its death throes. Now, the question is how the peoples of the Middle East will create stronger ties to avoid the disaster that befell them a century ago. A meaningful response would be to reach an understanding rather than pushing for maximalist nationalist and sectarian agendas. As the recent history of the region demonstrates, cutting deals with the non-regional actors might indeed furnish short-run gains. In the long run, however, these acquisitions will only plant the seeds of future conflict. Reaching an understanding that respects all parties involved and, more importantly, reflects the will of the people on the ground would serve as a new medium. It will create a strong and durable bond that can help them avoid repeating a new catastrophe reminiscent of the one that occurred a hundred years ago.

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The Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Contemporary Middle East

William Hale

The Sykes-Picot Agreement, negotiated by British and French diplomats in 1916, has been harshly criticised as an ‘imperialist conspiracy’ by Britain and France, which created entirely artificial borders in the Middle East, creating inter-state and internal conflicts that have lasted to this day.

This paper will attempt to address three questions: first, what was the Sykes-Picot agreement, and how did it arise? Second, to what extent did it shape the present state structure in the Middle East? Third, can it be blamed for current regional conflicts, both within and between states?

At the outset, the assumptions, aims and expectations of those who drew up the Sykes-Picot agreement need to be born in mind. This was one of several similar pacts negotiated between the Entente powers during the First World War, outlining a putative division of Ottoman territories in the Middle East, and assuming that the central powers would be defeated. In effect, the Allied governments were writing themselves post-dated cheques drawn on a bank that did not yet exist. Since the whole scheme was conditional on winning the war, they paid little attention to the detail or the realities of human geography. Frequently, their separately negotiated agreements conflicted with one another. Although the First World War can be seen in retrospect as the beginning of the end of the epoch of European imperialism, the Allied governments maintained classic nineteenth-century attitudes, which assumed that territories and peoples outside Europe or North America could legitimately be taken over, regardless of the wishes of their inhabitants, or existing ethnic and religious identities and political and social structures (Monroe, 1963, Chs.2-3).

In 1917, the entry of the United States into the war brought a potentially fundamental change to this strategy, since President Woodrow Wilson tried to give the war a new moral dimension by advancing the principle of national self-determination, and thus the independence of the conquered territories under their own national governments, at the top of his policy agenda. However, Wilson's defeat in the US presidential election of 1920, and hence America's return to isolationism in the 1920s, left his project only half-realised in the Middle East.

The competing interests and plans of the Entente powers at the time the Sykes-Picot agreement was drawn up in 1916 also need to be born in mind. Although it dropped out of the war in 1917, and its original plans were thus abandoned, Russia was still an important player in inter-allied diplomacy up to that time. Historically, its main interest had been to secure free passage through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits for its naval forces and commercial shipping. Under the Constantinople Agreement of March 1915, Britain reversed a century of opposition to this project, as Britain joined France in promising that Istanbul and the straits would be handed over to Russia after the war (Kerner, 1929, pp. 411-15). Elsewhere, Tsarist Russia's perceived role as the main protector of Orthodox Christianity gave it a powerful voice in determining the future of Jerusalem, while its alliance with Armenian nationalists against the Ottoman Empire made it the main sponsor of a putative Armenian state in eastern Anatolia and Transcaucasia.

Historically, Britain's main interest had been to protect its route to India through the eastern Mediterranean and Suez Canal, and to this end, it had built up a dominating position in Egypt and the Persian Gulf. Although the Constantinople Agreement negated the central part of this strategy by promising Russia access to the eastern Mediterranean, Britain's territorial ambitions in the region were not abandoned. Although Britain and France were wartime allies, resistance to French expansion in the Middle East was still a central part of British strategy, both before and after the war. In the Gulf region and Mesopotamia, control (or at least

security) of existing and potential oil resources was also an important British objective. To add to the list of conflicting commitments, some authorities on the British side saw Arab nationalism as a tool by which they could destabilise the Ottoman Empire. David Lloyd George, who became Prime Minister in 1916, also saw the Zionist movement as an ancillary ally, besides promising Anatolian territory to Greece as a means of drawing it into the war.

On the other hand, France had long-standing ambitions in the Near East, going back to its original intervention on behalf of the Maronite Catholics in the Lebanon in 1861. Support from this community continued into the twentieth century, despite the official separation of church and state under the Third French Republic in 1905. More broadly, French culture, officially conceived as part of a mission civilisatrice, was sponsored in the region through a network of privately established schools. These numbered more than 500 by 1914, with over 100,000 students, so that French became easily the most commonly used Western language in the Middle East. Materially, French industrialists looked to the Euphrates basin, running from central Anatolia into Syria, as an important and independent source of cotton for the textile mills of Lyon. More broadly, France had substantial economic and financial interests in the Ottoman Empire as a whole, in the fields of banking, railways and harbours, and hoped to expand these after the war. Over and above these cultural and economic factors, however, it is argued that France's primary motivator in the region was political, deriving from a sense of 'wounded nationalism', inspired by its steady loss of power in the Middle East, especially since 1870 when France had been defeated by Prussia. In effect, it appears that France's Middle Eastern policy during the first world war was motivated more by European than regional political dynamics (Burrows, 1986, pp. 110, 114, 127, 129, 132).

France's bid to claim Syria and Lebanon as her share of the prospective post-war carve-up of the Middle East began in March 1915, when the French government accepted the planned Russian takeover of the

Turkish straits under the Constantinople Agreement, on condition that Russia supported the French demand for “the territory stretching from the Taurus mountains and Cilicia to the Sinai and from the Mediterranean to the Tigris river” (i.e., the whole of modern Lebanon and Syria, plus southern Turkey and northern Iraq) (Tanenbaum, 1979, pp. 5-6). These ambitions were opposed from the start by Britain’s Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, who as early as November 1914 had proposed that Britain might support an Arab revolt against ‘the Turks’, in return for which they could be promised an ‘Arab state’ to include Syria. This idea was supported by the senior British officials in Egypt (Tanenbaum, 1979, pp.5-6; Klieman, 1968, p. 243). Against this, however, Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, urged that “it would be a break with France if we put forward any claims in Syria and Lebanon” (as cited in Tanenbaum 1979, p.7). In effect, British policy was divided from the start between what can be called the ‘Middle Eastern’ (more specifically, the ‘Cairo’) view, which favoured the establishment of a British-protected Arab state in the region, as a means of encouraging an Arab revolt against the Ottoman government, and the ‘London’ view, which attached primary importance to maintaining the alliance with France and thus accepted the French territorial claim.

During 1915, the idea of sponsoring an Arab revolt gained traction on the British side as a result of Britain’s defeat at the Dardanelles, and hence the perceived need to start an alternative front against the Ottoman armies in the Middle East (Charlwood, 2015, pp. 241-252). In May 1915, Emir Feisal ibn Hussein, third son of Sharif Hussein, the hereditary ruler of the Hijaz (then part of the Ottoman Empire) visited Damascus for meetings with secret Arab nationalist societies. These resulted in what became known as the Damascus Protocol, proposing an Arab revolt in alliance with Britain. It aimed to establish an Arab state running from the southern borders of what is now Turkey, south to the Arabian Sea, east to the western frontier of Iran and the Persian Gulf, and west to the Mediterranean (Paris, 2003, p.24). Subsequent negotiations between Sharif Hussein and the British took the form of

a series of letters between him and Sir Henry McMahon, British High Commissioner in Egypt dating from July 1915 to August 1916 (the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence, [H-M Correspondence], n.d.).

Initially, Hussein asked for British support for the eventual establishment of an Arab state whose frontiers would be in line with those proposed in the Damascus Protocol, but including Mersin and Alexandretta (İskenderun), now in Turkey (Tanenbaum, 1978, p.8). On 24 October 1915, McMahon responded by telling Hussein that the “two districts of Mersina [sic] and Alexandretta and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo cannot be said to be purely Arab and should be excluded from the limits demanded.” However, “as for those regions within those frontiers wherein Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interest of her ally France (left completely undefined) Great Britain is prepared to recognise and support the independence of the Arabs in all the regions within the limits demanded by the Sherif of Mecca” (H-M Correspondence, 1915, letter no. 4). In reply, Hussein accepted the exclusion of Mersin and Alexandretta, but not of the “two vilayets of Aleppo and Beirut and their sea coasts, which are entirely Arab vilayets” (H-M Correspondence, 1915, letter no. 5). In response, McMahon continued the vagueness on the British side, telling Hussein that

“With regard to the vilayets of Aleppo and Beirut, the Government of Great Britain have fully understood and taken careful note of your observations, but, as the interests of our ally, France, are involved in them both, the question will require careful consideration and a further communication on the subject will be addressed to you in due course.” (H-M Correspondence, 1915, letter no. 6).

In effect, McMahon prevaricated about the future of the Lebanon and the Mediterranean coast of Syria but was still committed to allowing the planned Arab state the whole of the rest of Syria (Iraq,

for the time being, was evidently to be placed under British control). In effect, Britain could not meet the French demand for the whole of Syria without double-crossing Hussein, which is what the Sykes-Picot agreement eventually did.

Meanwhile, Britain was conducting separate negotiations with France, which clearly reflected the ‘London view’ rather than that of Cairo. They were carried out on the British side by the diplomat (he was also a politician and army officer) Sir Mark Sykes and on that of France by the diplomat François Georges-Picot. They began at the end of November 1915. Initially, Grey’s Permanent Secretary Arthur Nicolson, told Picot that “some talks have been held with the Sherif of Mecca and that the Arabs were insisting not on Lebanon and Palestine, but on the inclusion of Aleppo, Homs, Hama and Damascus” within the proposed independent Arab state. However, the British never made clear exactly what had been agreed with Hussein, leaving the French under the impression that Britain had given him no precise or real commitments, or that any of them were in writing (as cited in Brecher, 1993, p.642). Predictably, Picot rejected the idea of any British-protected Arab state in Syria and assumed that if it were established it would be confined to the Arabian peninsula – that is, roughly, modern Saudi Arabia. Instead, the idea was developed of dividing modern Lebanon, Syria and Iraq into areas of direct control and protectorates, and this proposal was accepted by Sykes on 3 January 1916 (Tanenbaum, 1978, pp. 9-11). How these ‘protectorates’ would be organised, and how they would differ from the areas of direct control, was left completely vague.

The Sykes-Picot agreement putatively divided the Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire into six zones, shown on the map.

1. The British zone of ‘direct control’ (the ‘Red Zone’), embracing southern Iraq, including Baghdad, Najaf and Basra, plus Kuwait and the Arab coast of the Persian Gulf.

2. The 'B Zone', to be 'under British influence', embracing north-central and western Iraq, plus what is now Jordan and southern Israel down to the Gulf of Aqaba.
3. The French zone of 'direct control' (the 'Blue Zone'), embracing western Syria, the Lebanon, and a huge triangle of present Turkish territory, including Mersin, Adana, İskenderun, Sivas, Diyarbakır, and Mardin,
4. The 'A Zone', to be 'under French influence', embracing the whole of the rest of Syria, including Aleppo, Homs and Damascus, plus northern Iraq, including Mosul and Rowanduz.
5. What is now northern and central Israel, including Haifa, Jaffa, and Jerusalem, plus the currently occupied Palestinian territory of the West Bank and the Gaza strip, was to be counted as an 'International Zone', to be governed by a coalition of the Entente powers, including Russia (Text of Sykes-Picot Agreement, n.d.).

The most striking feature of the Sykes-Picot agreement was obviously that it made no mention of the proposed Arab state or any of the undertakings which McMahon had given to Sharif Hussein. Arab nationalists thus had every reason to complain that they had been flagrantly duped by the British, who ignored any all their rights to self-determination or even fair treatment.

Between 1916 and 1926 there were important changes to the Sykes-Picot partition plan. First, following the October Revolution in Russia, the Bolshevik government abandoned any claim to Ottoman territory. The new Soviet government also released the text of all the previous secret agreements between its Tsarist predecessor and the Western Allies, including the Sykes-Picot agreement, so that the extent of the British deception became clear to the Arabs. The envisaged Russian takeover of eastern Anatolia also dropped off the agenda, although some Armenian nationalists did not abandon claims to what is now Turkish

territory. Equally, Russia's removal from the Entente ended one of the principal reasons for classifying Palestine as an 'International Zone', the main purpose of which had been to give the Tsarist government a role in the future administration of Jerusalem. This allowed the Lloyd George government to realise its aim of an alliance with the Zionist movement, achieved with the issuing of the Balfour Declaration in November 1917, in which the British promised to promote the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine (Thompson, 2019). The conflicting claims of the Zionists and Arab nationalists thus added to the confusion already created by the Sykes-Picot agreement and the Hussein-McMahon correspondence.

A further important change was the re-allocation of northern Iraq – in effect, the province of Mosul – from French to putative British control. This gave Britain control of the important oil resources in Mosul, the existence of which had been known, albeit not accurately calculated, before the war. The concession was agreed upon during a private conversation between the French and British Prime Ministers, Georges Clemenceau and David Lloyd-George, in December 1918. Apparently, Clemenceau accepted because he put primary emphasis on securing British support for French security aims along the Rhine frontier with Germany, and wanted to eliminate a potential source of friction with Britain (Fitzgerald, 1994, pp.697-8).¹ Eventually, France was compensated by being awarded a share of the oil in Mosul province.²

¹ The attachment of Mosul to Iraq left Britain in dispute with post-war Turkey, which also laid claim to the province, which was not settled until 1926: see Peter J.Beck, "A Tedious and Perilous Controversy", *Britain and the Settlement of the Mosul Dispute, 1918-26*, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.17, No.2, pp.256-76.

² During the war, the allies expropriated the German (Deutsche Bank) share in the pre-war Turkish Petroleum Company, transferring it to the French government at the San Remo conference of 1920. After American objections, the French company CFP (*Compagnie Française des Pétroles*) a 23.75 per cent share in what became the Iraq Petroleum Company in 1929: US Department of State, Office of the Historian, 'Milestones 1921=1936: The 1928 Red Line Agreement', <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/RedLine>.

The map of the Sykes-Picot Agreement



Source: Text of Sykes-Picot Agreement

While the Bolshevik revolution removed one of the actors, America's entry into the war in April 1917 brought a new one into play. As part of the 'Fourteen Points' which he urged should govern the post-war settlement, President Woodrow Wilson proposed that the non-Turkish territories of the Ottoman Empire should be assured "an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development" (Transcript of President Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points, 1918). In pursuit of his aims, his main initiative was to push through the foundation of the League of Nations. As part of the functions of the League, control of the former territories of the Central Powers (in practice, only those outside Europe) could be granted to the Entente governments under mandates, which required them to prepare the territories for eventual self-government and to report back to the League on the performance of their mandates. The mandates system was thus to be used by Britain and France to legitimise the takeover envisaged by the Sykes-Picot agreement in a way that would satisfy the United States.

British and Arab forces captured Damascus in October 1918, thus ending Ottoman rule in Syria. Emir Feisal, the son of Sharif Hussein, then helped to set up an Arab government in the country under British protection. In an attempt to overthrow the Sykes-Picot agreement, Feisal visited the Paris Peace Conference in January 1919 where he put forward a detailed proposal for the establishment of an independent Arab state. In May, elections were held in Syria for a Syrian National Congress, which met in the following month. Feisal returned to Damascus in January 1920. On 7 March he was proclaimed 'King of the Arab Kingdom of Syria' by the National Congress. However, his arguments in Paris had fallen on deaf ears and in April 1920, the Allied conference at San Remo gave France a League of Nations mandate for the government of 'Greater Syria' (including Lebanon), with similar mandates given to Britain for Iraq and Palestine. French troops entered Syria to defeat Feisal's forces at the battle of Maysalun in July 1920

and effectively establish the Sykes-Picot partition by force. Intending to limit the area under which the Jewish 'National Home' project would apply, the San Remo conference also separated the area east of the Jordan from Palestine, creating what became the Emirate of Transjordan, or modern Jordan. Similarly, the French separated 'Greater Lebanon' from Syria, creating further bitter political legacies (Paris, 2003, Ch.8).

As we have seen, the San Remo partition was not an exact replica of the Sykes-Picot agreement, since apart from the British takeover of Palestine and the Mosul province, plus the separation of Transjordan, the distinction between the zones of 'influence' and 'direct control' was abandoned. In effect, Syria and Iraq were ruled by the French and British respectively - in the latter case, through Feisal, who was made King of Iraq in August 1921, with his brother Abdullah Emir of Transjordan. Equally significantly, Wilson's ill-health and the isolationist Republicans' victory in the US presidential election of 1920 effectively removed the US as an actor in Middle Eastern politics. The US Senate rejected America's membership of the League of Nations so that the British and French governments were left unhindered by American influence in the Middle East (Barr, 2011, Chs.5-9).

Meeting fierce resistance from the Turkish nationalists led by Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), the French abandoned their claim to southern Anatolia. As part of the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 they vacated most of the present Syrian-Turkish frontier but for the province of Alexandretta (Hatay), which was transferred from Syria to Turkey in 1939. To the east, the British and Turkish governments were in dispute over the status of Mosul until 1926, when they finally accepted the present Iraqi-Turkish frontier. With a few further alterations, the frontiers established in the early 1920s have survived to this day (Hale, 2013, pp. 42-3, 50-51).

In retrospect, it can be said the Sykes-Picot agreement was not responsible for all the present territorial divisions in the Middle East. In particular,

the frontiers of Saudi Arabia with Jordan, Iraq, the Gulf sheikhdoms, and Yemen, as well as the southern boundaries of Turkey and the frontier between Syria and the Lebanon, were separately determined. In Palestine, the frontiers are unsettled, with Israel in occupation of the West Bank and the status of the Gaza Strip still undetermined. The territorial divisions in the central part of the region, between Syria, Iraq and Jordan were, however, essentially established by the Sykes-Picot agreement, and have remained unaltered ever since. More broadly, the post-war settlement established states which preserved their separate identities and institutional momentum long after the withdrawal of British and French rule (in 1932, in the case of Iraq, 1943 in that of Lebanon, and 1946 in that of Syria and Jordan). The most important of these was the separation of Iraq and Syria. The aims of pan-Arab nationalists, like those of the Ba'th Party or Arab leaders like Gamal Abdul Nasser, to overthrow the post-war settlement, in spite of its weaknesses, have remained unrealised with the imperial ambitions and rivalries of Britain and France blamed for current conflicts and even wars.

How fair is this argument?

In response, it will be argued, French and British rule ended over 70 years ago and the Arabs remain divided. If the frontiers they established were entirely artificial, why have they not been removed? Attempts to do so have signally failed. Most notably, the United Arab Republic of Egypt and Syria of 1958 collapsed in 1961. There was an attempt to revive it in 1972 when the Iraqi government proposed the re-formation of the UAR, this time of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. However, Syria and Iraq were controlled by rival factions of Ba'thists and President Sadat of Egypt was reluctant, so the plan barely got off the ground. As a practical project, the idea of a single Arab state has effectively evaporated.

The internal political structures of the Arab states must shoulder a large share of the blame for this. Since the 1940s, Syria, Iraq and Egypt have nearly always been under autocratic rulers who have refused to share power with anyone else within their own countries, let alone across inter-state frontiers. To do so would risk opening up bitter disputes (as in the case of the Egypt-Syria union) which could threaten their domestic power bases. In effect, the autocrats have preferred to be a big fish in a small pond, rather than a small fish in a bigger one. Regime survival, not Arab unity, has been the first (if not the exclusive) objective of all these rulers.

More broadly, it is cogently argued that the separation between Syria and Iraq is not entirely artificial since it has deep historical, and social roots going back to the days of the 'Umayyad and Abbasid empires. Sectarian attachments are also central to the politics of both countries, as they are in the Lebanon. The biggest community in Iraq is Shi'a Muslim and generally supports the idea of a separate Iraq, given the Sunni majority in Syria. Within Iraq, also, the Kurdish community generally favours the formation of a separate state, rather than a merger with another state with a large Arab majority. Syria in turn is riven with conflict between Sunnis and 'Alawis, with the Christian minority caught between the two. Neither the Iraqi Shi'a nor the Syrian 'Alawi and Christian communities support the idea of a union between Syria and Iraq, in which they would be outnumbered by Sunnis.

There are also serious economic issues and strategic divergences between the states, with Iraq reluctant to share its large oil revenues with Syria. In both cases, the vast majority of their international trade is with the rest of the world, not one another. In foreign policy, the two states diverge: Iraq's main interest is in the Gulf, whereas Syria (before the civil war) was mainly preoccupied with its conflict with Israel. Other regional disputes, it will be argued, do not derive from Sykes-Picot, or only partly so. The Kurds are divided between four states – Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran – but a separate and independent Kurdish state has

never been a realistic project, and their division between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria would probably be there anyway, regardless of the Sykes-Picot agreement. Similarly, the internal sectarian conflict in Lebanon and the on-off hostility between Damascus and Beirut are the product of long centuries of conflict and the separation of the two states by France, not Sykes-Picot. Elsewhere, the bitter struggle between Israel and the Palestinians derives historically from the Balfour Declaration, of which the Sykes-Picot agreement was only indirectly the progenitor, and the wars of 1948-9, 1967 and 1973. Lastly, the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran derives from sectarian divisions and recent historical circumstances, not the territorial division of the 1920s.

It can also be argued that most, if not all of the consequences of the Sykes-Picot agreement were unintended. This raises the question of what the intentions of those who signed it actually were. On the French side, it appears that the main one was to restore France's political power and prestige in the region, after a period of steady decline, and to enhance its economic interests. In any event, this project collapsed with the rapid defeat of France by Germany in 1940. Subsequently, France's fortunes in the Levant were dependent on Britain and the US, obliging France to concede independence to Lebanon in 1943 and to Syria in 1946

For Britain, the intention was to establish British control of Iraq, and what is now Jordan and Israel/Palestine, either directly or in collaboration with the Hashemite dynasty. By supporting Zionist claims in Palestine, and thus establishing British control of the territory, David Lloyd George planned that Britain would gain port facilities in Haifa, a rail connection from the Mediterranean and Iraq, and a buffer zone between Egypt and the French in Syria (Klieman, 1968, pp.241-2). In contrast, Lord Kitchener believed that Palestine "would be of no use to us whatsoever" – as it turned out, an accurate prediction (Klieman, 1968, p.242). In Iraq and Transjordan Britain achieved its aims for a time, but, like France, it was left fatally weakened by the second world

war – hence, heavily dependent on the United States, which saw no reason to support British and French imperialism in the Middle East or anywhere else (Kent, 2020, pp.730-43). The formerly independent power of Britain in the region finally collapsed with the Suez fiasco of 1956 and the Iraqi revolution of 1958, resulting in the dissolution of the Baghdad Pact, Britain's attempt to preserve its regional role after the withdrawal of its military bases in Egypt and Iraq. In this sense, all the long-run results of the Sykes-Picot agreement can be seen as unintended.

Summing up, it can be said that the Sykes-Picot agreement reinforced divisions within the Arab world by setting up the institutions of separate states, which have proved remarkably durable. Nevertheless, current conflicts also derive from a complex medley of historical, cultural, and economic factors, to say nothing of much bigger rivalries, in which regional states all too often act as the proxies of global superpowers.

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U.S. Policy Toward Israel/Palestine in a Deglobalising World

Richard Falk

Points of Departure

This chapter considers some impacts of the retreat from globalisation on the evolution of Israel/Palestine relations, giving special attention to the regressive character of U.S. policy toward the unresolved conflict. In line with the overall theme of this book, this retreat is a complex ongoing phenomenon, generating both risks and opportunities, which are changing through time, and the present character of these threats and opportunities will be explored here. A central feature of the world order in the course of this retreat from globalisation is the rise of ultra-nationalist leadership in many important countries, which has resulted in a generalised withdrawal of support from cooperative responses to global problem-solving, relying instead on transactional bargains between governments as shaped by geopolitical disparities rather than by deference to considerations of international law, diplomatic compromise, and global justice.

Despite these recent negative developments, the politics, culture, and economics of globalisation should not be romanticised (Falk, 1999), or more specifically not viewed as achieving positive results in relation to the century of struggle by the Palestinian people to address their legitimate grievances. Above all, the Palestinians have endured the denial of their inalienable right of national self-determination and been victimised by the imposition of apartheid structures of control on the Palestinian people as a whole, that is, whether living under occupation or otherwise (Falk & Tilley, 2017). The Palestinian people have been victimised by the primacy of geopolitics for more than a century,

ever since the issuance of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, which has illustrated the limits of normative (legal and moral) globalisation (Kattan, 2003). The retreat from globalisation seems to have accentuated the disregard of international law and the authority of the United Nations, highlighted in relation to Israel/Palestine by the release of the Trump/Kushner plan with the absurd claim to offer ‘the deal of the century’ (U.S. Government, 2020). Such a trend, if allowed to continue, does amount to a severe setback for the legitimate aspirations of Palestinians, but such a bleak prospect is being challenged by parallel developments.

Whether this retreat from globalisation is cyclical, soon to be reversed, or a longer-term linear trend is difficult to discern at this time. Its trajectory is highly contingent on the impingement from unforeseeable political, economic, and ecological developments. The election of Joe Biden as the U.S. President certainly improves the prospect for improved global cooperation on major issues such as climate change, world health, and arms control, but it raises concerns about geopolitical confrontations given indications of early moves to restore Cold War alliances and highlight adversary relationships with China and Russia. Biden is also facing a challenge as to whether the Covid-19 virus can be contained without producing a global economic collapse. As well, it is important to interpret the depth and breadth of this retreat. It certainly reflects a populist reaction of angry frustration against various forms of inequality that led many people to feel disadvantaged by ‘neoliberal globalisation’, and a turn toward demagogic leaders who denounce such developments and point fingers at the culprits, real and imagined. It has also given rise to an affirmation of nationalism as the most existentially relevant political and ideological alternative to globalism. This economistic mood of grassroots alienation also reflects hostile attitudes and disruptive adjustments that pertain to such historically conditioned challenges as global migration flows and trade tensions. Also relevant for achieving an understanding of these recent developments is whether the apparent re-bonding of peoples on the basis of nationalist and even

racist and civilisational conceptions of the outer limits of political community is integral to the retreat or just a temporary shift in focus away from the global.

We need to keep in mind that despite these evident patterns of retreat, the world in many respects continues to be more interconnected and networked than at any time in human history, and these dynamics are continuing, perhaps even accelerating as technology advances, a largely unacknowledged new interconnections in this digitally driven form of ‘globalisation-from-below’ (Slaughter, 2004, 2019). As well, on ecological and health frontiers, climate change and the global spread of lethal disease, remind us that we cannot hope to address effectively the challenges of the contemporary world without strengthening mechanisms of global cooperation. The behaviour of the United States Government in leading the retreat, withdrawing from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Nuclear Programme Agreement with Iran (JCPOA, 2015), help us to appreciate how dysfunctional from a world order standpoint is a generalised retreat from globalisation, and more concretely, what the loss of U.S. leadership in many global policy domains has meant. Such an endorsement of globalisation should not, for instance, be understood as the approval of neoliberal globalisation as it unfolded after the end of the Cold War. Indeed, this largely under-regulated market-driven approach to economic globalisation greatly contributed to various types of inequality and alienation that led many peoples throughout the world to be receptive to the appeals advanced in favour of ultra-nationalism. In other words, the ultra-nationalism of the present should not be separated from a variety of disappointments brought about by predatory capitalism (Falk, 1999).

U.S. Retreat and Israel/Palestine

The reality of retreat bears crucially on the particular conflict between Israel and Palestine as reflected in the shift of the U.S. approach from its earlier pre-Trump role as *partisan intermediary* to its hyperbolic

identity during the Trump presidency as *a super-partisan deal maker*. Such a shift is fully in keeping with the broader pattern of retreat from globalisation, but it has some additional distinguishing features. Above all, the personality and style of Trump, as reinforced by the influence of extreme Zionists donors and Evangelical Christians who constitute powerful elements of his political base. Translated into foreign policy, this has meant that undisguised pro-Israeli unilateralism has replaced the earlier American diplomatic public stance of peacemaker, which uneasily coincided with the undisguised ‘special relationship’ with Israel. This special relationship meant concretely unconditional support in all security domains, although tempered by occasional murmurs of disapproval as by calling Israel’s periodic moves to accelerate the expansion of its unlawful settlements as ‘unhelpful’. By way of contrast, concerning the settlement movement, which struck an Israeli dagger into the heart of the two-states approach, the presidency of George W. Bush (and continued under Barack Obama, Trump’s Secretary of State), agreed to close his eyes on their unlawfulness, but only in the context of an agreed peace arrangement. Mike Pompeo abandoned altogether the view that the establishment of settlements violates international law without the precondition of reaching an overall agreement (Pompeo, 2020). Beyond this, even before the release of the Trump/Kushner plan, U.S. foreign policy toward Israel after Trump assumed the presidency in early 2017 exhibited a blatant form of one-sided unilateralism with regard to previously unresolved issues: appointing as his principal advisors on Israel and Middle East policy only Zionist extremists (Kushner, Friedman, Greenblatt), moving the American embassy to Jerusalem, recognising Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights (that was widely held to be occupied Syrian territory), cutting U.S. funding for UN humanitarian relief efforts in Gaza, and openly embracing Netanyahu’s racist leadership while turning his back on his Palestinian counterparts and their concerns.

Such a pattern of unilateralism is illustrative of the retreat hypothesis because it so directly undercuts not only the earlier somewhat more internationalist American approach, but also so bluntly departs from the global consensus at the UN that favoured a negotiated solution that upheld Israel as a legitimate state but based its vision of peace on an agreed establishment of an independent, and sovereign Palestinian state that would then be accepted as a full member of the UN. A major component of this consensus was the view that diplomacy would be relied upon to resolve the future of Jerusalem, settlements, the treatment of Palestinian refugees, the fixing of borders, and the overall arrangement of security guarantees. On all counts, Israel has recently moved with the apparent approval of Washington to resolve these issues on its own by completing its expansionist agenda. This coordinated Israel/U.S. provocative posture was dramatized by the movement of the American Embassy to Jerusalem in early 2019, an initiative overwhelmingly condemned to no avail by the UN General Assembly (UNGA Res., 2019). The Jerusalem provocation, in particular, was a direct assault on the earlier global consensus. The Islamic world insisted that such issues, and especially the status of Jerusalem, be settled by compromises achieved in a negotiating process so as to give both sides the sense of win/win outcomes.

In important respects, what this Trump turn represented beyond its affinity with other expressions of anti-globalisation, was an assessment that the Oslo diplomacy had been tried and failed, and that it was an opportune time to make a shift toward a more muscular, less consensual, geopolitics.

Daniel Pipes, long a Zionist proponent, best articulated this approach on his website, Middle East Forum, months before its adoption in slightly less crude form by Trump/Kushner (Pipes, 2017). Pipes insisted that diplomacy had been tried in good faith as the means to resolve the Israel/Palestine conflict but had failed and it was time to try a different approach. In his view, conflicts of this sort that prove difficult to resolve

by diplomacy are shown by history to be ended only through the victory of one side that then dictates the terms of peace, with the losing side being compelled to surrender its political objectives. Without a glimmer of surprise, it was Pipes' view that objective analysis identified Israel as the winner, Palestine the loser. Yet despite this, the conflict dragged on because the Palestinian leadership with its head in the clouds refused to accept this reality. The task of Israel, with U.S. backing, was to intensify coercion until Palestine sees the light and surrenders, and a new normal can be established. Trump/Kushner use a twisted language of 'peace' rather than the transparency of a 'victory' to set forth their conception of the end-game in the long struggle. The substance of the plan legitimises Israel's territorial and security ambitions and offers the Palestinians what is called 'a state,' but is in fact 'a statelet' that is nothing more than 'a Bantustan,' a shorthand reference to the Apartheid-era South African way of setting up subordinate political entities subject to the rigours of its apartheid structures of control. To encourage the Palestinians to swallow the Kool-Aid of the deal of the century, the Palestinians are threatened with unnamed dire consequences if they reject and enticed with sugar-coated offers of economic development assistance if they accept.

It is too early to gauge whether Palestine's immediate rejection of the Trump/Kushner/Netanyahu victory approach will prevail. This undoubtedly depends on whether such an outcome is endorsed by the Israeli and American election results in 2020, especially the latter. If Netanyahu and Trump both win, then the Palestinian Authority will likely experience coercive pressures to give up their political ambitions and opt for a more normalised economic and social life as the best result they can hope for. What is striking from the perspective of the globalisation hypothesis is the willingness of the U.S. to depart so unconditionally from the global consensus to support Israel in a manner that seems not only anti-internationalist but also in all likelihood works against its broader and longer-term strategic national interests

in the Middle East, which cannot count on the indefinite repression of fiercely pro-Palestinian sentiments among Arab populations. As such, this path to ‘peace’ compounds the retreat from globalisation with a costly challenge to stability in the region. This imprudent posture is domestically driven by narrowly parochial interests as epitomised by AIPAC lobbying leverage and Zionist donor pressures on the American political process (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2003). Although these features of the American political scene antedated Trump, his presidency has accentuated their relevance.

Whether the Biden presidency will revive a posture of more ‘balanced partisanship’ remains to be seen. What has become evident even at this early stage is a reassertion of the ‘two-state’ solution that gives a second life to the false expectations of the Oslo Diplomacy. With Israel’s unlawful settlements all over the West Bank amounting to de facto annexation, it would seem that this return to a two-state is little other than ‘smoke and mirrors’ that have little to do with peacemaking and lots to do with public relations. It is a matter of being global in rhetoric, and geopolitical in deed.

With respect to the U.S. approach to Israel/Palestine, it might not have assumed such an extreme form without the specificity of the Trump election. In other words, retreat from globalisation would likely have been present whoever was the Republican nominee in 2016 and even likely, in the event that Hillary Clinton had been elected. Yet the anticipated retreat would have taken place in those circumstances of new American political leadership without breaking the continuity of approach to Israel and the conflict in the radical manner adopted by Trump. The American retreat might have emphasised anti-migrant, economic nationalism, and confrontation with Russia to a greater extent, and possibly less drastic withdrawals from globalist engagements in the security domain. That is, even with American leaders other than Trump accepting the politics of retreat, it seems rather likely that policy toward Israel and Palestine would have displayed only minor changes from the

Bush/Obama years, probably becoming even more reluctant to criticise Israel on settlement expansion than Obama's willingness to break with his own practice by allowing the 2016 criticism of Israel by the Security Council to reach a decision, abstaining rather than as on prior occasions, using its veto to shield Israel from formal censure even if it stood alone in doing so. It is never possible to be very confident about 'what if' conjectures, but nevertheless, it seems highly unlikely that had a different president been voted into office in 2016, the approach to Palestinian grievances would have abandoned diplomacy and opted so openly for coercion and unilateralism (Falk, 2017).

What likely would have occurred with the Republican alternatives to Trump in 2016, but not so if Clinton had won, is a retreat from what might be called 'normative globalisation', which is the most obvious common anti-globalisation stance being taken across the globe. What this normative dimension of retreat entails is a general lessening of confidence in and respect for the UN and international law, and a declining reliance on global approaches to problem-solving, whether the subject matter is trade relations, human rights, migrant flows, or climate change.

In such a transactional atmosphere, problem-solving with respect to international conflict resolution relies heavily on coercive diplomacy among states and the geopolitical priorities of dominant states. The effect could be to sharpen geopolitical tensions between the U.S. and China, the U.S. and Russia, and possibly give rise to a new Cold War, with regional military confrontations and dangerous escalations. In this set of circumstances, the emergence of autocratic and ultra-nationalist leadership would lead to more pragmatic relationships reflecting geopolitical priorities rather than normative affinities based on shared values and world order commitments.

Risks Associated with Trump's Version of Retreat from Globalisation

Superficially, and in the short run, Israel has been a beneficiary of this U.S. shift in diplomatic posture, but there are secondary effects and contingencies that may yet turn out to be favourable to the Palestinian struggle. More concretely, this means that the United States no longer seeks to act in general accord with the international consensus that has been shaped over the decades at the UN and elsewhere, which although reflecting a pro-Israel bias, endorsed the view that this conflict could only be resolved by some sort of negotiated accommodation between Israelis and Palestinians that set the terms and established a process for achieving a sustainable peace.

Of course, this shift in U.S. policy reflected several converging factors that resulted in the Trump presidency of which a retreat from UN consensus and rule-governed global diplomacy was only one element. Other factors included the influence exerted by Zionist donors in American domestic politics and by Trump family members, the softening of the attitudes of Arab governments toward Israel, the reduced Western dependence on Middle Eastern oil, and the heightening of tensions with Iran. Yet the retreat from globalisation is of the greatest importance as explaining the disregard of the international consensus exhibited at the UN that had somewhat constrained earlier U.S. policy. Yet these limits should not be overstated, as they did not prevent the continuous erosion of Palestinian rights and expectations as measured by the rules and principles of international law. That is, despite U.S. global leadership, and endorsement of globalisation, in relation to Israel/Palestine an incremental coercive diplomacy that favoured Israel was what led to a steady deterioration of the Palestinian position. In this respect, the super-partisanship of the Trump presidency removed the pretences and inconsistencies of normative globalisation that had not materially helped the Palestinian side, while covering up the one-sided support of Israel's political zero-sum agenda. Does this greater

clarity give Palestinians new opportunities as well as pose more severe challenges?

The United States has for more than 25 years claimed the role of indispensable intermediary in working toward a negotiated peace arrangement between Israel and Palestine. Such a role reflected its global leadership status that was without challenge after the Cold War ended in the early 1990s, as well as Israel's insistence that if negotiations were ever to occur, they had to be conducted within a framework presided over by the United States. The U.S. status as global leader also corresponded with a renewed emphasis on the Middle East (and East Asia) given the altered historical circumstance, as well as the great strategic importance of Gulf oil reserves. This meant replacing Europe as the strategic site of geopolitical struggle in a globalising world. The importance of the Middle East for the United States reflected four interrelated concerns: access to the regional oil reserves at affordable prices; ensuring Israeli security; containing the spread of political Islam in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution (1979); avoiding any further proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region.

Given these realities there existed a strong diplomatic incentive on the part of the United States to find a solution to the Palestinian struggle that would alleviate pro-Palestinian pressures, without appearing to weaken the ideological and strategic special relationship between the United States and Israel. After years of frustration on the diplomatic terrain, the Oslo Framework of Principles, agreed upon in 1993, seemed to provide a credible path to compromise and peace, consisting of the regional normalisation of Israel as a legitimate state within agreed borders and the establishment of a Palestinian state based on 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as the joint capital of the two states, the satisfaction of Israeli security concerns, some kind of compensation as a substitute for the repatriation of Palestinian refugees, and the legalisation of most of Israel's unlawful encroachments (separation wall, settlements, road network, security zones) on formerly occupied Palestine. This peace

dynamic, although sharply favourable to Israel, was viewed as the most realistic political compromise that could be achieved. Its adoption by the most affected parties also silenced most opposition in international arenas. This new dynamic was celebrated as a major breakthrough, launched with theatrical fanfare by the dramatic handshake on the White House lawn. The famous 1993 picture of the Israeli leader, Yitzhak Rabin, shaking hands with the PLO leader, Yasir Arafat, and a smiling U.S. President, Bill Clinton standing in between, was the iconic climax of choosing this delusionary path to peace. These delusions were challenged two years later by the assassination of Rabin, and even more by the rightward drift of Israeli politics and the growing influence of the settler movement, but the diplomacy dragged on and on, and even the Palestinians seemed lulled to inaction as the diplomacy continued wending its way through a labyrinth without an exit.

What is most relevant to the focus adopted here is that this diplomatic approach under U.S. auspices was superficially respectful toward the international consensus on how to address the conflict—that is, by diplomacy that was framed as negotiations between the parties and was understood to seek compromises on the main issues in contention (territory, settlements, refugees, Jerusalem, security). This outlook, supported by bipartisanship in the United States, meant overwhelming Congressional support and continuity of the approach whether the president was a Democrat or Republican, and in substance rather than form this is expected to continue during the Biden presidency. This Oslo peace process seemed consistent with American foreign policy of ‘liberal internationalism’ that persisted throughout the Cold War and endured until 9/11 occurred, being finally discarded by Trump. The Trump orientation may be described as militarist geopolitics and ultra-nationalist illiberalism. As applied to Israel/Palestine, this means the Pipes victory scenario presented as diktat with scant interest in enticing Palestinian acceptance. As such, with irony, this most pro-Israeli of all American presidents has ironically fractured Jewish support for

Israel in the West, alienating not only progressive Jews but also many liberal Zionists who believed in a negotiated two-state peace agreement (Bishara, 2020).

However, to gain a proper attitude toward the Trump stance, it is necessary to avoid an unjustified embrace of this prior American peace diplomacy. It is crucial to identify the weaknesses of an approach that claimed fairness to the Palestinians while strongly slanting the process and its intended outcome toward Israel. As with Pipes, yet skilfully disguised as a compromise, Oslo diplomacy when deconstructed reveals a weaker version of an Israeli victory scenario (Bauck, P. & Omer, 2013). By failing to mention a Palestinian right of self-determination or affirm the equality of the two sides, the Oslo framework of principles set in motion one-sided diplomacy that gave weight to power disparities, a bias further reinforced by having an overtly partisan intermediary. This imbalance was further accentuated by the insistence that Palestinian negotiators swallow all objections to Israeli violations of international law until the so-called ‘final status’ negotiations at the last stage of the process. Palestinians were told that objecting in the present context would jeopardise the negotiations. Israel never ceased building and expanding its network of unlawful settlements and further encroaching on the Palestinian territorial remnant by securitising the settlements, including connections to Israel, which truly undercut the credibility of negotiations. Beyond this, what were called ‘negotiations’ were basically occasions for Israel to put forward self-serving proposals for conflict resolution on a take it or leave it basis, realising Israeli goals and neglecting Palestinian priorities, and undoubtedly expecting the Palestinian side to reject. In this period, the two sides also sought agreement in direct secret negotiations that were similarly, yet more explicitly, weighted in Israel’s favour, and indicated that despite the willingness of the PLO to give Israel most of what it wanted by way of keeping its settlements and meeting its security concerns, their Israeli counterparts showed little interest (Swisher, 2011). Even if the two sides

somehow had signed such a one-sided peace agreement, it might not have produced anything more substantial than a pause in the struggle, in effect, one more periodic ceasefire, and quite likely rejected by both the Israeli and Palestinian publics. Succeeding generations of Palestinians would not be likely to accept the validity such permanent subjugation in what purports to be a post-colonial world order. The wildfires of the ethics of nationalism and the politics of self-determination would almost certainly have doomed an arrangement that left Palestinians languishing in a dependent semi-sovereign entity called a state but lacking in the most elemental aspect of true sovereignty, effective control over its own security, and even its own territory.

Even on the Israeli side, the Oslo slant may not have satisfied the implicit Zionist agenda of recovering the whole of the promised land, the biblical entitlement on which Israel's claims rest, but was temporarily and tactically acceptable as it improved overall prospects to reach such a goal. This helps explain Israeli contentment despite a diplomatic process that seemed a bridge to nowhere and never acknowledged Jewish biblical entitlement. For Israel, the Oslo process was a bridge to somewhere, allowing the country to accumulate many facts on the ground, while further structuring the kind of apartheid state needed to check Palestinian resistance, thereby ensuring the stability of an ethnically based hegemonic social, economic, and political order. For Palestine, Oslo diplomacy proved to be a political disaster despite its initial gift wrapping, as the noose of victimisation tightened to the point that Palestinians became virtual strangers, or even captives, in their own homeland, slowly recognising that when the wrappings were removed the package within was an empty box. Such a dual process of Israel's gain and Palestine's loss occurred while the globalisation fever remained high, and this one-sided dynamic achieved its momentum years before deglobalisation trends became evident.

When Trump arrived on the political scene in 2017, the de facto reality of an Israeli one-state solution coexisted with defunct governmental

and UN continued adherence to a *de jure* vision of a two-state outcome. What Trump sought by dropping the pretence of negotiating the future for Israel and Palestine was a changed formula for ending the struggle over the sequel to the British Mandate. Even Trump did not overtly affirm the major Zionist premise of biblical entitlement, using the accepted international terminology of ‘the West Bank’ rather than the promised land language of ‘Judea and Samaria’. The Trump/Kushner approach legitimised facts on the ground as of 2020, suspending all scrutiny of the lawlessness by which the facts were accumulated. Kushner expressed this outlook clearly in an interview the day after the White House finally released its peace plan: “I’m not looking at the world as it existed in 1967. I’m looking at the world as it exists in 2020”. As well, Trump/Kushner’s deal avoided an explicit endorsement of the analysis of Pipes based on using force to induce the Palestinian leadership to surrender its political goals and accept Israel’s victory in the long struggle between these two peoples to control the identity of the homeland in what had been a Palestinian entity during the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate (Olson, P., 2011).

The other distinctive feature of the Trump approach was the explicit disregard of Palestinian rights under international law. The American Secretary of State, in language rather parallel to the sentiments expressed by Kushner, articulated the view that it was time to abandon the earlier U.S. official stance regarding Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian territory as unlawful. In Mike Pompeo’s words of explanation, “[...] arguments about who is right and wrong in international law will not bring peace”. On behalf of the PLO, Hanan Ashrawi articulated anger and frustration in a tone of understandable exasperation: “We cannot express horror and shock because this is a pattern, but that doesn’t make it any less horrific... total disregard of international law, what is right and just, and for peace.” Although Ashrawi’s words resonate with attitudes toward international law pre-Trump and pre-retreat, the discontinuity is not as great as liberal internationalists contend (ICJ, 2004). All through

the post-1967 period of occupation, while the settlement process and related encroachments on Palestinian rights and aspirations occurred, the Palestinians were counselled to withhold their international law objections so that the peace process might go forward, and the Israelis were lightly scolded as their expansionist dreams became building projects. In this spirit violating international law was ‘unhelpful’, but if sustained, could gain legal acceptance as they did in 2004 when the Bush/Sharon exchange of letters (Bush/Sharon, 2004) declared that the settlement blocs would become part of Israel’s sovereign territory in any future peace arrangement.

Rhetoric matters and this overt show of disregard for international law is an integral aspect of this broader retreat from globalisation. Respect for and confidence in international law and procedures is a vital precondition for encouraging globally cooperative approaches to problems that affect the world as a whole. The proudest achievements of liberal internationalism along these lines were based on law-making treaties governing such disparate matters as the public order of the oceans, the development of Antarctica, and some aspects of military competition in the nuclear age. With the rise of ultra-nationalism and the decline of global leadership by the United States, world order is again reliant on the pre-1945 state-centric style of geopolitical rivalry but facing the severe diverse challenges of global scope that threaten the world with catastrophe in the 2020s and beyond.

The main risks attributable to this interplay between the retreat from globalisation and the super-partisanship of American policy toward Israel/Palestine can be summarised as follows:

- stabilising Israel’s apartheid state, while denying the Palestinian people basic human rights, particularly, the right of self-determination;
- weakening respect for international law, the UN, and the authority of diplomatic resolution of international disputes;

- expressing the transition in the American global and regional leadership roles from a liberal internationalist perspective to that of rogue superpower;
- lending support to an outcome of the long struggle based on power rather than law or ethics, thereby establishing a very unfortunate precedent for conflict resolution in the 21st century.

Opportunities Resulting from the New Realities of Retreat and U.S. Super-Partisanship

At first glance, the situation following the release of the Trump/Kushner seems totally discouraging. It affirms the form and substance of Israel's right-wing leadership, whether Likud or Blue/White, and reflects the dominant Zionist agenda reflecting 'biblical entitlement' to the whole of the promised land, either by direct or indirect sovereign control. As such it rejects a political compromise. It seems to confront Palestinians with the unhappy alternatives of political surrender or forcible resistance. Paths promising a political compromise, sovereign equality, and resting on international diplomacy seem indefinitely closed. Beyond this, the important Arab governments are silently siding with Israel, and Palestinians are without any realistic prospect of unified leadership. Given the recognition of this situation, it is difficult not to succumb to despair.

And yet, the Palestinians show no sign of regarding their struggle as 'a lost cause.' Resistance activity remains robust, and no element of the Palestinian leadership seems ready to sign on to the U.S. proposals despite the temptations afforded by the offers of economic relief, which must be difficult to dismiss given the desperate plight of the two million Palestinians living in Gaza and the diminishing sense of national territory in the West Bank, given Israeli accelerating encroachments and Washington bright green light given expansionist ambitions and cruel, coercive tactics.

Such an unfavourable context is reinforced by the retreat from globalisation. This retreat as complemented by ultra-nationalism has resulted in reduced respect for the authority of the UN, as well as weakened pressures for a genuine two-state compromise at the UN, which is itself supplemented by less willingness to challenge Israeli defiance of international humanitarian law. The utter disregard of Israeli continual reliance on excessive violence at the Gaza border is emblematic of both disregard by the media, UN, and EU for Palestinian rights and Israeli lawlessness.

Yet these developments, as paradoxical as it may sound, also have the potential to improve Palestinian prospects. There are two broad explanations. First, the earlier posture in international society had not been helpful to the Palestinian struggle for basic rights. As earlier suggested, Israel acted to undermine the core element in what was regarded as the international consensus, namely, the establishment of a viable sovereign Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. By allowing the settlement movement to go forward with subsidised government assistance and encouragement, the Israeli government signalled its intention to never let go of control over 'the promised land'. Even if forced by geopolitical pressures to accept some kind of demilitarised Palestinian state, the obstacles involved in reversing the settlement dynamic in the West Bank and Jerusalem became more formidable with each passing month. Almost as tellingly, the internal Israeli reference points of 'Judea and Samaria' of the West Bank along with the unification and formal annexation of Jerusalem as the eternal capital of the Jewish people, underscored the Zionist sense of biblical entitlement as the non-negotiable foundation of its claim rather than the mixture of legal, moral, and political considerations that formed the vision of both the consensus at the UN and the outlook project by 'liberal Zionists' in the Jewish diaspora (Khalidi, 2013).

Secondly, the combination of releasing the Trump/Kushner plan and its embrace not only by Netanyahu, and the Likud Party, but by Gantz and Blue and White, clarifies two aspects of the overall situation that had been previously somewhat obscure: (1) present prospects of any form of political compromise to resolve the conflict by diplomacy between the parties are dead for the foreseeable future; (2) advancing the Palestinian struggle at this stage depends on sustaining the legitimacy war that uses all means available to react against Israeli lawlessness and immorality, including international judicial tribunals and the UN Human Rights Council and General Assembly (Falk, 2014), continuing various forms of Palestinian resistance to demonstrate that the struggle lives on within Palestinian society, and building momentum in global civil society by soft power means, currently most effectively expressed by the BDS Campaign.

In effect, the Palestinian struggle has shifted its centre of gravity from its intergovernmental axes to that of the resistance and solidarity. In other words, the role of governments and international institutions, once dominant, is now discredited and subordinated. At some later stage of the conflict, if a balance more favourable to the protection of Palestinian rights is achieved or there is some kind of change of outlook in the United States and/or Israel, then there might again emerge a greater willingness to allow a diplomatic framework to help fashion a mutually acceptable political compromise, but with a major difference. The new diplomacy to have any chance of success in producing a sustainable peace arrangement must proceed on the basis of the formal and existential equality of the parties, either relying on direct inter-governmental negotiations or by selecting a credibly neutral mediating framework. (Said, 2000; Abunimah, 2014)

This alternative more positive framework for conflict resolution not only depends on delegitimization, resistance, and solidarity, it also depends critically on a *prior* Israeli decision to dismantle the apartheid features of its state structures that now subordinate and victimise the Palestine people as a whole (including refugees, exiles, minority in pre-1967 Israel) on the basis of racial criteria (Falk & Tilley, 2017). Considering the similarities and dissimilarities with the South African experience is also illuminating. The changed balance achieved with respect to South African apartheid was largely achieved by resistance and solidarity initiatives, although, unlike the Israel/Palestine conflict, aided by a globalised anti-apartheid campaign. It was a soft power triumph in the end, although the threat and reality of armed struggle were never eliminated. In the end, the white leadership made a calculated decision that their interest would be better served by accepting what a decade earlier seemed a utopian impossibility—that is, a transition to a multiracial constitutional democracy, which the demographics made clear, would mean that the long victimised African majority would control the political destiny of the country. The bargain, a kind of ‘genuine deal of the century’ was a tribute to the skills of Nelson Mandela and the leadership of de F. W. de Klerk, that made the white minority take their chances based on guarantees of their economic and social rights. Mandela has been criticised for allowing the whites to retain their privileged economic position and social status, but without such flexibility, any transition to post-apartheid South Africa would have been violent and bloody.

Although Israeli Zionists have genuine demographic concerns given the relative size and fertility rates of the two peoples, their prospects in a secular constitutional democracy for a large share of control over the institutions of governance would remain much more favourable to Jews, provided Jews would not abandon such a post-apartheid state and Palestinians would uphold the rights of the Jews if they were to gain control over the governing process. Undoubtedly, the situation would

reflect the context, including geopolitical factors and the motivations, wisdom, and skills of the leadership on both sides.

What seems clear, whether the retreat from globalisation deepens or is reversed, is that the preconditions of ending Israeli apartheid and accepting commitments to the substance and spirit of equality on both sides is essential to overcoming the present approach premised on a victory scenario, combined with the spirit and substance of inequality, which will add to Palestinian suffering without achieving Israeli peace and security. In these circumstances, unlikely to be altered in the near future, the present pattern of control and encroachment will continue.

A Concluding Comment

The preceding analysis leads to the conclusion that the retreat from globalisation is one factor in altering the nature of the Palestinian struggle but may not in the end affect the outcome. In the immediate setting, it seems like a major setback for the Palestinians as the Israelis have unambiguous geopolitical support for their most extravagant claims, and there is no meaningful countervailing power at either the regional or global levels. Yet in the post-colonial period, a long-subjugated people do not give up their dreams of political independence and their grievances of rights denied, especially in the Palestinian case as long endorsed by the UN and international public opinion. One development favouring the Palestinians, and evidently worrying the Israelis, is the increasing acceptance of the view that Israel maintains an apartheid structure of control over the Palestinian people and that Israel needs to be perceived as the last remaining significant settler-colonial state. This chance of discourse has been countered by branding activists and critics as ‘anti-Semites’ although their opposition to Israel is nonviolent and unrelated to hostility to Jews as a people, but to the Israeli state as depriving the majority resident population of its rights of self-determination and its overall human rights.

Each struggle has its own features and this is particularly true in the case of Israel/Palestine. A crucial such distinguishing feature is that Israel managed to impose its political will on Palestine with the help of British colonial support, yet able to come to independence as a powerful manifestation of anti-colonial struggle by coercing not only the Palestinians but making life untenable for the British (Kaplan, 2019). Of course, the last stage of the struggle to establish Israel in the face of Palestinian and Arab opposition were a series of developments in Europe favourable to the Zionist project, especially the moral sympathy arising from Nazi genocidal behaviour and the liberal guilt of Europe and North America arising from their failure to challenge German murderous racism. These factors led to the premature legitimization of Israel in 1948, reaching its climax by admission to the United Nations without first resolving Palestinian grievances in a satisfactory manner. Such an attempt might not have succeeded in any event as the Palestinian side refused the idea of partitioning its homeland, and the Zionist side, although outwardly ready to strike a pragmatic bargain, never gave up its vision of restoring sovereignty over the biblical homeland of the Jewish people.

Finally, the retreat from globalisation is too new and contingent to serve as a basis for anticipating the future as it impacts on the Israel/Palestine struggle. As suggested, present realities suggest that the situation seems to favour Israeli ambitions, but some factors could strengthen the Palestinian position overnight, such as the rejection of Trump in the 2020 American elections, the true unification of Palestinian leadership, or the shift toward democratic populism in the Arab world as foreshadowed by the 2011 uprisings. In the event of a restored spirit of what might be called ‘moral globalisation,’ an early undertaking might be renewed attention to Palestinian grievances, and a resolve to take action to complete the policy agenda of decolonisation and racial equality that dominated the last decades of the prior century elsewhere in Asia.

At present, the outlook is for more robust forms of global cooperation in solving problems of global scale together with a cautious reversal of the retreat trend that had been so prominent in the pre-Covid years and gave rise to a more nationalist approach to foreign economic policy and, as such, a crisis of confidence with respect to neoliberal globalisation. We must await the emergence of ‘a new normal’ in a post-Covid global atmosphere to discern whether globalists win out over nationalists. With respect to Israel/Palestine, the issue is not likely to fade away, but will likely be perceived more and more as a struggle pitting Israel and the U.S. on one side and Palestinian resistance and the BDS Campaign on the other side. There is no end in sight.

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Turkey's "New" Foreign Policy in Europe's Eyes: The Difficulty in making Sense of a Rising Power's Diplomacy

Jana Jabbour

In its Issue no.3547 published in June 2019, the French magazine *L'Express* titled its cover page: "How Erdoğan is infiltrating France", with a photo of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan pointing his finger at the reader in a seemingly aggressive way. In a similar vein, in a Special Issue devoted to Turkey published in August 2016, *Le Point* magazine titles its cover page as: "Turkey: the Country that Scares the West", with a photo of President Erdoğan staring at readers with a grim look in his eyes.

Such media coverage of Turkey reveals deep European unease with Turkey's foreign policy, and with the country's leadership embodied in President Erdoğan. With the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party (AK Parti- AKP) in 2002, Ankara adopted a proactive stance in international affairs and a more independent and self-interested path in foreign policy. Turkey's newfound assertiveness in global politics has raised eyebrows in the West in general, and in Europe in particular, creating perplexity and confusion as to the real aims and intentions of Ankara. Turkey's candidacy to the EU, membership in NATO, and long history of alignment with the West since WWII, made Europeans expect a more "obedient" pattern of behaviour from Ankara. The growing independence of Turkey on the world stage in the 2000s, and the country's relative emancipation from its past alliances, generated suspicion and mistrust, in European circles.

This chapter examines the perception of Turkey's "new" foreign policy in Europe. First, it looks at the particular elements of Turkish foreign policy under the AK Party that make Europe uncomfortable.

Second, it explores the deeply rooted political and sociological factors that account for Europe's unease with Turkey and its difficulties in making sense of Ankara's diplomacy. Lastly, the paper analyses the benefits, for both Turkey and the EU, of turning mutual distrust into trust, and looks at the means available to reset Turkey-EU relations.

I- Europe's difficulty in making sense of Turkey's foreign policy: an inability to understand a rising power behaviour

It has become very common to hear Western and European diplomats saying that Turkey's foreign policy under the AK Party is difficult to understand. Several features and elements of that policy are perceived by Europe as "troublesome" and constitute a source of growing discomfort and perplexity.

Turkey's Middle-Eastern orientation: "shift of axis" in Turkey's foreign policy or symptom of rising power diplomacy?

Turkey's assertiveness as a regional power in the Middle East is a major European concern. In fact, the 21st century is marked by a new phenomenon: Turkey's return to the Middle East/Arab region after almost a century of divorce with the Arab and Muslim world. Departing from the Kemalist tradition, which framed the Middle East as a national security threat for Turkey and portrayed the Arabs as "enemies", the ruling AK Party - in power since 2002 - has engaged in an assertive and proactive foreign policy towards the Middle East region, suggesting a drift away from the predominantly Western orientation which had been a hallmark of Turkish foreign policy throughout the post-World War II period.

Turkey's return to the Middle East in the 2000s has been multifaceted. At the political level, Ankara improved its bilateral relations with Arab leaders, a policy famously coined as "zero problems with neighbours";

at the economic level, Turkey engaged in trade with the region and sought to establish an economic regional integration through the formation of a “Shamgen space”, echoing the European Schengen space. Lastly, at the socio-cultural level, Turkey engaged in a charm offensive vis-à-vis the Middle East/Arab region through the projection of soft power. Turkish soap operas conquered hearts and minds; *Yunus Emre* cultural institutes established in Middle East capitals shaped a Turcophone and Turcophile elite; and Middle East/Arab students were provided with Turkish scholarships, enabling them to study for free in Turkey (Jabbour, 2017).

Turkey’s rapprochement with the Middle East and the country’s assertiveness as a major regional power created confusion in Western/European diplomatic circles (Ülgen, 2010; Taşpinar, 2011). In particular, Ankara’s engagement with the Middle East has raised doubts over the country’s real commitment to EU membership. For both public opinion and diplomats in Europe, Ankara’s assertion as a regional power in the Middle East was interpreted as a “shift of axis” in Turkey’s foreign policy, and as proof that Turkey is “turning its back to the EU” (Brysch, 2007; Duzgit, 2009).

This interpretation of Ankara’s diplomacy reveals Europe’s inability to make sense of Turkey’s “new” behaviour in the international realm and a failure to understand the country’s mindset and hubris in the 21st century. In the early 2000s, Turkey emerged as a middle rising power in a quest for status and recognition on the international scene (Jabbour, 2017). As such, Turkey has sought to assert itself as a major actor in world affairs through enlarging and diversifying its network of partners and allies, and through engaging in a proactive, independent, and multifaceted foreign policy. By embracing its Arab and Islamic neighbourhood, Turkey is exploiting the opportunities offered by its rich historical past and unique geographical position, to acquire “strategic depth” in a region that is key to global power balances (Davutoglu, 2001). Turkey is not looking for compensation or an alternative to a seemingly lost EU

membership but is rather multiplying and diversifying its foreign policy options so as to emerge as a “central state” (*merkez ülke*) in international affairs. By engaging with the Middle East, Turkey is not turning its back to the West; Ankara is rather building a regional sphere of influence that allows it to gain geostrategic value on the international stage, thus becoming a key global player. At the core of Turkish foreign policy is the country’s will to assert itself as an independent, autonomous, rising power in a multipolar world. This is a reality that Europe has real difficulty making sense of.

Furthermore, Ankara’s “new” foreign policy has been accompanied by the Turkish leadership’s increased use of a “neo-Ottoman” discourse based on two elements: the glorification of the Ottoman past and the assertion that Turkey belongs to the Islamic civilisation. Neo-Ottomanism is visible in the following statements by President Erdoğan:

“We speak as descendants of the Ottomans” (*biz Osmanlı’nın torunları olarak konuşuyoruz*)¹.

“We are proud of our great civilisation (...) We possess a glorious civilisational legacy (...)”².

“Soon our glorious civilisation, which contributed to humanity’s historical, cultural, and scientific legacy, will rise again and regain the status it deserves”³.

¹ Speech at an AK Party meeting in January 2009.

² Speech at the AK Party Congress in 2012: www.akparti.org.tr/site/haberler/basbakan-erdoganin-ak-parti-4.-olagan-buyuk-kongresi-konusmasinin-tam-metni/31771

³ Quoted in Nurullah Ardiç, « Civilizational discourse, the ‘Alliance of Civilizations’ and Turkish Foreign Policy », *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2014, pp. 109-110, and « Prime minister Tayyip Erdoğan: The Golden age of Islam will be revived » <http://www.harunyahya.com/en/Towards-Turkish-Islamic-Union/37109/prime-minister-tayyip-erdogan-the>

Such reminiscence of the Ottoman Empire is interpreted in Europe as a sign of Ankara's imperial instincts and therefore generates hostility to, and fear of, Turkey. Yet, rather than revealing a nostalgia for the imperial past, Turkey's new obsession with the Ottoman Empire – which could be coined as “Ottomania” – may be explained through the lens of rising power diplomacy. In fact, the neo-Ottoman discourse is as an instrumental discourse: by rehabilitating and glorifying the imperial past, Turkey seeks to better assert itself as an important actor and to legitimise its quest for status on the international level. The logic is simple: being the heir of a great Empire, Turkey has the right to claim a better status in international affairs, one that reflects the country's past historical glory and *grandeur*. In a sense, rather than giving off the scent of an imperial attitude, this neo-Ottoman discourse can be interpreted as the expression of “Turkish Gaullism”⁴ (Taşpınar, 2011). Just like the former French president Charles de Gaulle used to invoke France's “glory and *grandeur*” to carry out an independent and autonomous foreign policy, the Turkish leadership appeals to the *grandeur* of the Ottoman past to better position Turkey on the international scene and to justify a more assertive and independent diplomatic behaviour.

“Troublesome” characteristics of Turkey's Middle East policy from a European point of view

In addition to Europe's lack of understanding of Turkey's new mindset, particular aspects of Ankara's Middle East policy remain largely misunderstood in European circles and are shunned by European leaders. First, Turkey's embrace of Third-Worldism, embodied in President Erdoğan's criticism of the current world order and his call for a more inclusive and just order that engages the Global South, is disliked in Europe. In fact, President Erdoğan's constant reminder that “*The world is bigger than five*” puts established powers at unease, as it highlights the lack of legitimacy of their unilateral leadership of the world. In a

⁴ Ömer Taşpınar, « The Rise of Turkish Gaullism: Getting Turkish-American Relations Right », Insight Turkey, Vol. 13. No. 1, 2011, p. 11-17 http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2011/1/turkey-taspinar/01_turkey_taspinar.pdf

sense, Turkey's Third-Worldist discourse is troubling Europe because it questions global power balances and shakes the foundations of the current oligarchic structure of the world order (Badie, 2014).

Turkey's "Third-Worldism" and the country's solidarity with the Global South crystallises, in particular, around the defence of the Palestinian cause. The years of the AK Party's rule have indeed been characterised by Turkey's pro-Palestinian stance. Ankara championed the Palestinian cause in international fora, including at the UN General Assembly where President Erdoğan called for Israel's lifting of the ban on Gaza, and at the World Economic Forum of Davos, where he vilified Israel for practising "state terrorism". By defending the Palestinian cause and adopting a defiant and courageous rhetoric vis-à-vis Israel, Erdoğan raised eyebrows in the West, where the "Israel question" remains a taboo, and support for the Jewish state is often taken for granted. In their private talks with the author of this paper, many European bureaucrats at the European Commission mentioned Turkey's vocal stance against Israel as a major source of concern⁵.

Another aspect of Turkey's foreign policy in the Middle East that worries Europe is Ankara's drive for regional integration. In many ways, Turkey's "grand plan" for the Middle East in the 2000s was to create regional integration through increased economic interdependency, political dialogue, and cultural interaction, with the aim of establishing a post-Sykes Picot order where Middle East states and societies are reconnected (Jabbour, 2017). Through improving its bilateral relations with Arab states and through embarking on the mediation of intra-regional conflicts (between Syria and Israel, between Hamas and Fatah, between Iraqi factions), Ankara sought to solve internal tensions and divisions in the region in order to federate Arab/Middle Eastern states around their shared cultural identity, historical past, and common destiny. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoglu thus once declared:

⁵ Brussels, European Commission, March 2015

“Usually the “Middle East” – an orientalist term – is regarded as synonymous with tensions, conflicts and underdevelopment. But our region has been the centre of civilisation for millennia, leading to strong traditions of political order in which multicultural environments flourish. In addition to this civilisational and political heritage, we have sufficient economic resources today to make our region a global centre of gravity.”⁶

adding in another speech that:

“As was the case in the 16th century, we will put the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East at the centre of world politics. This is our goal, and we will achieve it”⁷.

Stressing the importance of regional unity and solidarity as a precondition for the Middle East’s *renaissance*, Mr. Erdoğan stated:

“The only way to overcome the crises in the Islamic world is unity, solidarity, and alliance. Believe me, as long as we are united, we can solve all the problems”⁸.

Yet, such a Turkish “grand plan” for the region challenges Europe for at least three reasons. On the one hand, a united Middle East, where states overcome their internal strife and act in unison on the global stage, would translate into an empowered region, one that could threaten existing geopolitical power balances. On the other hand, a united Middle East that gravitates around Ankara would give Turkey increased geopolitical value, making it an important regional power and a potential global power. In his interview with the author of this paper, a diplomat at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a statement

⁶ Ahmet Davutoğlu, « We in Turkey and the Middle East have replaced humiliation with dignity », The Guardian, 15 March 2011. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/mar/15/middle-east-dignity-common-destiny>

⁷ Quoted in « Erdoğan’s Hidden Agenda », Al Ahrām Weekly, 28 November 2013 <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/4775/21/Erdogan%E2%80%99s-hidden-agenda.aspx>

⁸ Quoted in « Foreigners don’t like Muslims, only their money », Hürriyet, 27 November 2014 <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/foreigners-dont-like-muslims-only-their-money-turkish-president-erdogan.aspx?PageID=238&NID=74893&NewsCatID=338>

that reveals Europe's unease with Turkey's improved status in the Middle East⁹: "Turkey has become a key player in the Middle East, one that we need to accommodate and whose interests we need to take into consideration. How much more power do Turks want to accumulate by instrumentalising the Middle East for their own benefits? How far will they go to achieve their power ambitions?" Lastly, Turkey's rise as an agenda-setter in the Middle East is perceived as a threat to Europe's status, role, and assets in the region. In fact, Europe has traditionally viewed the Middle East as its own sphere of influence and thus has difficulty accepting that another power could emerge as the leader of this region.

Ankara's approach to the Syrian conflict is another element of Turkey's Middle East policy that creates discomfort in European circles. In the early 2000s, as part of its "zero problems with neighbours" policy, Turkey "started befriending Syria by conducting multiple top-level visits, eliminating entry visas between the two countries, and improving business ties" (Pierini, 2013). Given its early relations with Bashar al-Assad's regime, Turkey found itself in the international spotlight with the outbreak of the Syrian revolution. The crisis unfolding in its own backyard put to test Ankara's rhetoric about its capacity to affect outcomes in its neighbourhood (Jabbour, 2019). Adopting a pragmatic stance, Ankara first chose to leverage its ties with the Syrian regime to elicit political reforms in Damascus. When this plan failed, and when Damascus unleashed brutal repression against Syrian civilians - Ankara swiftly moved for Bashar al-Assad's removal (Pierini, 2013). Backed by the US and the EU, Turkey reached out to the Syrian opposition and provided it with logistical and military support. As the crisis extended and jihadists groups such as ISIS emerged, Turkey found itself cast in European public discourse and media as a "jihadist highway"¹⁰,

⁹ Paris, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Centre d'Analyse, de Prevision et de Strategie, November 2017

¹⁰ AFP, November 2015: <https://www.nouvelobs.com/monde/20151121.AFP7391/turquie-apres-les-attentats-de-paris-ankara-veut-fermer-son-autoroute-du-jihad.html>

implying that the country became a conduit for jihadi fighters seeking to join ISIS. Such vilification of Turkey revealed Europe's difficulty to understand the complex geographical reality of the region and to appreciate Turkey's efforts, albeit failed, to fully control its 910km border with Syria.

Moreover, Turkey's approach to the Kurdish issue in Syria constitutes another element of divergence from Europe. While Ankara considers the PYD/YPG as a terrorist organisation and a national security threat, Europeans view them as "freedom fighters"¹¹, support them, and consider them as an asset and a partner in the fight against ISIS. And while the Kurdish issue in Syria is viewed in Turkey through the lens of counter-terrorism, it is mainly perceived in Europe through the lens of nationalism and minorities' right to self-determination. In this context of divergence in points of view, Turkey's military operations in Northeast Syria are seen in European eyes as an assault on Syrian Kurds. In fact, some European leaders have developed a Manichean/binary vision of the Kurdish issue: for them, what is happening in Northeast Syria is a conflict between, on the one hand, a strong-armed Muslim-majority country (Turkey), and on the other hand a minority of "oppressed" people (the Kurds) who are fighting for their legitimate rights. This view was made perfectly clear in a statement made by Jean-Luc Melenchon, a French politician, leader of the "France insoumise" party. In a hearing at the Foreign Affairs Commission of the French Parliament, he declared that "the Turkish regime [under Erdoğan] is an Islamist dictatorship" that carries out "repression and persecution against the Kurds" who "try to defend themselves"¹².

¹¹ The EU officially lists the PKK as a terrorist group. However, some leftist groups in Europe have demonstrated a tendency to develop an ideological affinity with the PKK and to view its activism through the lens of Marxism/Socialism, while disregarding the ethno-nationalist nature of the PKK as a separatist organisation.

¹² 23 January 2019. Video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6Z2rQcI_jQ_kurdes-sois-belle-et-combats_5223520_3232.html

The French media have echoed such statements by portraying the Kurds as victims and as people who share common cultural values with the West¹³. In particular, Kurdish women fighters have been presented as the symbol and embodiment of Kurds' emancipation and as the proof that Kurds share Western values of gender equality¹⁴.

Europe's inability to understand Turkey's security concerns in Northeast Syria and its positive appreciation of, and support for, PYD/YPG forces, disappoints Ankara. Many Turks today feel that they have been betrayed by Europe; they consider that when Europeans have their own interest at stake, they have no issue jeopardising or sacrificing their partners' security.

Lastly, in recent months, another aspect of Turkish foreign policy has represented a major concern for European capitals: Turkey's increasing assertiveness in the Eastern Mediterranean. In fact, 2020 witnessed escalating tensions between Ankara and its European counterparts over energy resources and maritime boundary delimitation in the Eastern Mediterranean, an issue with the long-standing Cyprus Problem at its core. Turkey made bold moves, including dispatching a gas exploration vessel (Oruç Reis) into the Mediterranean off the coast of the Greek island of Kastellorizo. This was negatively interpreted by Greece and the EU who claimed that Turkey was illegally drilling in the region and engaging in an aggressive policy, while Ankara claimed the area was within its exclusive economic zone. Under international law, seismic surveys in areas of contested maritime boundaries are in fact allowed, but not so with drilling. Europe's over-reactiveness to Turkey's posture

¹³ On the portrayal of Kurds as victims of oppression and persecution by Turkey, see for instance: Allan Kaval, "Sur les ruines des rêves kurdes", *Le Monde*, 26 October 2019 https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2019/10/25/sur-les-ruines-des-reves-kurdes_6016918_3210.html ; "Les persécutions de l'État turc contre les Kurdes ne cessent pas, au contraire", *L'Humanité*, January 2012 <https://www.humanite.fr/monde/les-persecutions-de-l%E2%80%99etat-turc-contre-les-kurdes-ne-cessent-pas-au-contraire-488188>

¹⁴ Frédéric Joignot, "Femmes soldats kurdes : sois belle et combats", *Le Monde*, 2 December 2017 <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2017/12/02/femmes-soldats->

in the Eastern Mediterranean shows Europe's failure to acknowledge Turkey's new reality: that as a rising power and an emerging economy, Turkey is determined to defend its energy interests and will not make compromises on its sovereignty and rights, even if this comes at the cost of adopting an offensive foreign policy.

Turkey's fluctuations between East and West: a lack of consistency or the symptom of a rational "split diplomacy"?

Ankara's frequent fluctuations between East and West, the Middle East and the EU/NATO, as perceived in the West, render it difficult for Europe to make sense of Turkey's aims on the global stage (Pierini, 2013). In Europe's eyes, Turkey's foreign policy lacks consistency and is full of ambiguity and contradictions, thus making it hard to trust Ankara.

Turkey's rapprochement with Russia over the past few years has perplexed its friends in the EU. In fact, while maintaining its EU candidacy and its membership in NATO, Turkey acquired the S-400 air defence system from Russia. Brussels' (and Washington's) primary concern is that Turkey, a long-time partner, would now operate a "stand-alone" missile system that would never be interoperable with NATO's collective missile defences. For the Europeans, Ankara's rapprochement with Russia, coupled with its appeal to China and Russia to obtain the status of Dialogue Partner at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), is the sign that the country is in the process of reconsidering its traditional alliances in order to pursue new international relationships that are incompatible with its Western anchorage.

However, Turkey's apparently erratic foreign policy and the country's constant shuffling between old allies and new partners and friends, rather than reflecting a lack of consistency, can be interpreted as the symptom of a "split-diplomacy" (Badie, 2014) that is characteristic of rising powers (Jabbour, 2017). By simultaneously engaging on the

Northern and Southern fronts, the East and the West, and by building relations with antagonistic actors across the international system, Turkey is diversifying its foreign policy outlook and enhancing its position as an emerging power and a leading regional and global actor. In a world tilting toward multipolarity, Turkey believes it is in its interest to build pragmatic, transactional partnerships with middle-ranking rising powers both to achieve its objectives on particular issues and to increase its bargaining power vis-à-vis the West. It is in this framework that Turkey's purchase of Russian S-400 missiles should be understood: the move is part of Turkey's broader policy of diversification of its foreign partners and 'autonomisation' on the world stage, as much as it is a symptom of its desire to assert itself as a "challenger" of established Western/European powers.

Lastly, Turkey's seeming loss of zeal towards its EU candidacy confuses Europe. While Turkey has maintained its candidacy and has conducted genuine EU-inspired reforms in the economic, technical, and political fields, the Turkish leadership has adopted strong language vis-à-vis Europe, thus obscuring Turkey's real position on the EU candidacy file. Harsh anti-EU statements, such as referring to the EU as a "sick, collapsing man"¹⁵ or accusing the German chancellor of "Nazism" and "fascism"¹⁶, perplexed European policymakers and diplomats and made them unsure of the nature of Ankara's relationship with Brussels (Pierini, 2013). Yet, rather than questioning Turkey's commitment to EU candidacy and the country's desire to join Europe, such fiery rhetoric can be viewed as a reaction to Turkey's hurt national pride. A large majority of Turks believe that European governments do not want Turkey to be part of the EU (Hoffman, 2018, p. 4), and are frustrated with what they perceive as Europe's double standards when it comes to

¹⁵ Speech of Mr Erdogan in Izmir on 9 April 2017: <https://www.rferl.org/a/turkey-erdogan-europe-referendum-european-union/28420141.html>

¹⁶ Mr Erdogan, June 2017: <https://www.politico.eu/article/turkey-germany-reception-erdogan-calls-angela-merckels-stance-on-eu-membership-nazism/>

accession negotiations. As a result of what Turks see as a “humiliation” by the EU, they are developing an acute form of nationalist pride and strong language vis-à-vis Europe.

In this sense, Euroscepticism in Turkey is the flip side of growing Turco-scepticism in Europe. Very often, the Turkish leadership’s anti-EU statements are a reaction to anti-Turkish culturalist statements made by European leaders that hurt the feelings of Turks, such as when former French President Nicolas Sarkozy declared in a mocking tone “if Turkey were European, it would be known”¹⁷, or when President Emmanuel Macron said in the Conference of Ambassadors in August 2018 that “the Turkish president has a pan-Islamic project that is clearly anti-European”¹⁸.

In this context, Turkish anti-EU statements are counter-statements meant at healing Turkey’s hurt national pride. Rather than reflecting a desire to abandon Turkey’s EU candidacy, they are meant at putting pressure on European states to ease up accession negotiations. Yet, differences in political culture make it difficult for Europe to read Turkey’s rhetoric through this lens. As Marc Pierini (2013) perfectly puts it: “Differences in political culture (...) matter. What is routinely perceived within Turkey as arm-twisting in defence of national interests often appears as mere chest-beating abroad”. Seen from Brussels, President Erdoğan’s fiery statements against the EU are aggressive and interpreted as reflecting a combative posture and a desire to break up with Europe, rather than a manoeuvre to better dialogue with it.

¹⁷ « Si la Turquie était européenne, cela se saurait », Nicolas Sarkozy in a TV show, January 2005. Quoted in Didier Billion, « France - Turquie : entre tensions et normalisations », *Confluences Méditerranée*, No. 96, 2016/1, pp. 71-83

¹⁸ « Le président turc a un projet panislamique régulièrement présenté comme antieuropéen », Emmanuel Macron, 27 August 2018. Quoted in *Le Figaro*, 28 August 2018 <https://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2018/08/28/97001-20180828FILWWW00190-ankara-macron-est-loin-de-comprendre-la-turquie.php>

II- Europe's discomfort with the "New Turkey": political and sociological explanations

Europe's perplexity about Ankara's proactive foreign policy in the Middle East and newfound role in international relations reveals deep-seated socio-political concerns and fears that surpass the limited framework of how Turkey acts.

Europe's reluctance to accept the global power shift from West to East

Overall, the EU's (and the United States') unease with Ankara's new foreign policy behaviour shows that Europe is still unready to make sense of, and fully digest, the new international reality: that the old Western-centric world order is gradually vanishing, and that a new era is being ushered in, characterised by power diffusion and by the growing assertiveness of rising middle powers, and of the Global South in general (Badie, 2014). While the dichotomy between "the West and the Rest" (Ferguson, 2011) is disappearing, the West (Europe and the US) remains attached to the old power configuration and is eager to keep its hegemony in the international system, thus rejecting any role for non-Western rising powers, such as Turkey. This is epitomised by Europe's (and the US') negative stance vis-a-vis two Turkish-led initiatives: the Ankara-Brasilia-Tehran tripartite deal on Iran's nuclear development program (2010), and the Astana/Sochi process.

By the end of 2009, and after several failed attempts by the P5+1 to broker a nuclear deal with Iran, Turkey and Brazil embarked on mediation efforts with Iran with the aim of finding a compromise over Tehran's uranium enrichment program and to broker a genuine deal that would be acceptable to all parties (Iran, the US, the EU, and the international community). On 17 May 2010, after months of negotiations, Ankara and Brasilia announced that they had achieved a tripartite deal with Tehran, by which Iran accepted a low-enriched nuclear fuel swap: Iran committed to send its low-enriched uranium (3.5%) to Turkey in exchange for receiving 20% enriched uranium from Western countries

to develop a medical reactor. Through this deal, two rising powers – Turkey and Brazil – demonstrated spectacularly their ability to solve a major international issue, thus asserting their “newfound role in global governance” (Turan, 2011). Despite the objective merits of this deal according to experts in nuclear development, Europe and the US immediately rejected it on the ground that the deal did not meet the requirements of the IAEA, that it does not call upon Iran to stop its higher enrichment, and that it may simply be an instrument in the hands of Tehran to save time and lure the international community (Parsi, 2011, pp. 150-190). EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton declared that: “From my reading of it, [the deal] only partly addresses the issue”, while France’s foreign ministry spokesman said: “Let’s not be duped by this [deal]. A solution for the medical reactor, while necessary, would in no way resolve the problem posed by the Iranian nuclear program”¹⁹. A month later, in June 2010, Western powers voted in the United Nations Security Council for a new sanction package against Iran, thus implying that the tripartite deal was null and void.

Such a negative stance vis-à-vis the Iran nuclear deal appears all the more surprising given that Western powers seemed to encourage Brasilia and Tehran to embark on the mediation of Iran’s nuclear development issue and implied they agree with the proposed modalities of such a deal. In fact, in April 2010, Obama addressed a letter to Brazil and Turkey where he expressed his support for their mediation efforts and outlined the parameters of an acceptable deal (Parsi, 2011, p. 194-207). Similarly, according to a high-level French diplomat, France gave - behind the scenes - its green light for the deal and put Turkey and Brazil under the impression that Paris fully agreed with its terms.

Europe’s rejection of the deal, and France’s and the United Kingdom’s vote in favour of new sanctions on Iran, reveal Europe’s unreadiness to accept the new role of rising powers in global governance. Brazil and

¹⁹ EU Observer, “EU skeptical about Iran nuclear deal”, 18 May 2010, <https://euobserver.com/foreign/30090>

Turkey's ability to succeed where Europe had thus far failed, and their ability to encroach on domains which Europe sees as under its exclusive competence (mediation, nuclear talks), is a reality that is difficult to digest in many European capitals. Through the tripartite deal, Europeans felt side-lined and bypassed by newly emerging powers, something that left them perplexed. Hence, as soon as the deal was announced, EU Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton declared: "Where we are at the present time, they have my phone number", implying that no deal can be reached without Europe. Her statement reveals an effort to reassert Europe's supremacy in global governance in the face of what is seen as the intrusiveness of newcomers: Brazil and Turkey.

Europe's attitude vis-à-vis the Astana/Sochi process is another example of its unreadiness to accept the growing role of emerging powers, including Turkey, in global governance. Initially, when the Sochi process was kicked-started by Turkey, Russia, and Iran, Europe believed that Sochi would be a one-off event linked to the Geneva process²⁰. Yet, Sochi/Astana gradually grew as the main platform for the settlement of the Syrian conflict. In fact, Sochi/Astana's predominance was brought home by the collapse of the European-dominated Vienna talks and the Geneva process. In the face of the Geneva process' failure to achieve tangible results and a concrete settlement to the Syrian conflict, rising regional powers – Turkey, Iran, and Russia – set out to launch another forum of negotiations intended to be more inclusive and directly engaging of all the stakeholders in the Syria *dossier*. Yet, there is a largely shared perception among European diplomatic circles that the Astana/Sochi process represents a "parallel" diplomacy launched by emerging powers, one that counters and bypasses the traditional Western-dominated diplomacy embodied by the Geneva process, hence their reluctance to fully embrace it²¹.

²⁰ Interview with a French diplomat, Paris, November 2017

²¹ Ibidem

Yet, what Europe fails to grasp is that Turkey's proactive attitude on important international and regional issues, such as the Iranian nuclear development programme or the Syrian conflict, is driven less by Ankara's will to challenge Europe or compete with it, than by its quest for enhanced status and recognition in world affairs. By mediating important conflicts and issues for the West, Turkey is doing *burden-sharing* to claim *power-sharing* (Jabbour, 2017): through its active involvement in Iran's nuclear crisis and in talks over the settlement of the Syrian conflict, Turkey is seeking to alleviate the burden from Western powers in order to obtain, in return, a recognition by the latter as a key regional player. In that sense, Ankara's growing tendency to make ambitious initiatives at the regional and international levels do not necessarily reveal a desire to *counter* Europe but are rather the sign of an aspiration to *encounter* Europe and become part of its "club" through demonstrating Turkey's relevance and added-value in solving important conflicts and issues of import for global governance.

A "New Turkey" that revives Europe's fear of the "Great Turk" (le Grand Turc) and the "Muslim Other"

Europe's unease with Ankara's foreign policy activism and growing emancipation in world affairs hides a deeply entrenched fear from a powerful Turkey that recalls the Ottoman Empire's past strength. In European collective memory, the "Turk" does not only embody the "Muslim Other" and the "Oriental", but it also evokes the figure of the "barbarian", the "dangerous savage", and the "cruel enemy" who is at the same time admired, despised, and feared (Massironi, 2005, p. 29). Such negative orientalist representations of the Ottoman Empire and the Turks, which proliferated in European literature since the 18th century, coupled with the history of Ottoman conquests and domination of Europe until the 16th century, have ended up creating in Europeans' imagery and collective unconscious a fear from a "Turkish peril" (Jabbour, 2001).

Ankara's increased emancipation in world affairs in the past years, combined with the country's resurgent nationalism and growing power, have reawakened in the collective memory of Europeans the image of "the Turk" as a historical competitor, challenger, and even enemy of the West. Such fear is visible in the way European media portrays Turkey. A close examination of European media reveals a triple process: a *securitisation* of Turkey, framed as a "danger" and "threat"; a *personification* of the country in the figure of President Erdoğan; and a *demonisation* of the latter so that he becomes the image of the "bad Turk" and the embodiment of the "Turkish threat/danger".

In fact, the country is almost always presented as a "powder keg/war zone" and as a threat to Europe because of its Muslim identity and its power ambitions. Hence, the French magazine *Le Point* clearly headlines in a special issue devoted to Turkey: "The country that scares the West", and *L'Observateur* titles "Erdoğan's threat: why he scares us". And while *L'Express* accuses Ankara of "infiltrating France", *Valeurs Actuelles* speaks of Ankara's "willingness to Islamise Europe".

Beyond reviving European fears of the "Great Turk", Turkey's increased power on the global stage has reawakened Islamophobia in Europe, further contributing to the *securitisation* of the country and its portrayal as a "Muslim threat". Just like in the past when the Sublime Porte was the most formidable emblem of the Orient owing to its conquests and strength (Massironi, 2005, p. 15), today's Turkey, because of its vocal stance in international affairs, is perceived as the strongest embodiment of an empowered Islamic world and revitalised Orient. In a sense,



Islamophobia in Europe crystallises around Turkey as the latter is perceived as the strongest - thus most redoubtable - state of the Islamic/Oriental world. In the French magazine *Valeurs actuelles*, an expressive headline reads: “Turkey – The man [Erdoğan] who wants to Islamize Europe”, while *Courrier International*’s cover page titles: “Turkey: from the Ottomans to the Islamists”. The threat posed by Turkey is therefore cast as stemming precisely from the country’s “Otherness” which derives from its Muslim/non-Christian identity and its practice of political Islam. Islamophobia and Turcophobia hence become the two sides of the same coin and nurture each other.

Europe’s historical fear of the “Great Turk” further crystalises around President Erdoğan. Seen from Brussels, Erdoğan’s nationalist rhetoric, pride, assertive character, and strong language are reminiscent of the Ottomans’ imperial grandeur. In the eyes of many Europeans, these features represent his personification of the image of “the powerful Turk” who dares to confront and defy Europe and the West. Europe’s “obsession” with Mr. Erdoğan, which could be labelled as “Erdoğanophobia”, is clear in the media and political literature. “The Eradicator” (*Le Point*), “The Dictator” (*Le Point*), “The world’s biggest terrorist” (*Morning Star*), “The Blackmailer” (*Stern*), “Democrat or Sultan?” (*The Economist*), “Erdoğan’s hatred discourse” (*Bild*), “Erdoğan’s way” (*Time Magazine*), “Erdoğan’s state” (*Der Spiegel*), “Erdoğan’s threat” (*L’Observateur*), “Focus on Turkey: The Dictator” (*Der Spiegel*), are all headlines of European magazine and newspaper cover pages devoted to Mr. Erdoğan. Seldom has any foreign leader been granted such attention in European media.

Similarly, contemporary European political literature has obsessively focused on Erdoğan’s persona, with dramatic titles like: *Dans la tete de Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [Inside the head of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan]* (Perrier, 2018), *La nouvelle Turquie d’Erdoğan [Erdoğan’s New Turkey]* (Insel, 2017), *Erdoğan: nouveau pere de la Turquie [Erdoğan: Turkey’s New Father]* (Cheviron, 2016).



Beyond this, a close examination of the media and political literature in Europe shows that Turkey as a country is reduced to the persona of its president, Mr. Erdoğan. In fact, every reference to Turkey is systematically accompanied by a photo of its president, creating the simplistic perception that Turkey is Erdoğan and Erdoğan is Turkey. For instance, the German magazine *Der Spiegel* headlines “Erdoğan’s state”, while *The Economist* titles “Turkey’s slide into dictatorship” with a photo of Erdoğan frowning and showing a hand fist, in a seemingly aggressive posture. Turkish foreign policy behaviour is also fully attributed to the president with titles and headlines implying that Turkish foreign policy is driven by the President’s personal will and commitment. For instance, the British daily *Morning Star* titles: “As he rains bombs on Rojava, thousands prepare to back the Kurds against the world’s biggest terrorist”, and the French *Liberation* headlines: “Against the Kurds, the dirty war of Erdoğan”, while *Le Point* asks, “Will we let him massacre the Kurds and threaten Europe?”.

In European media, the “Turkish threat” is therefore identified with Mr. Erdoğan, portrayed as an autocrat. This is clear in *L’Express* cover



page, which headlines: “Erdoğan: the Turkish danger”, or that of *L’Observateur* which states “Erdoğan’s threat: why he scares us”. The historical orientalist stereotype of the “cruel” and dangerous Turk who must be feared thus concretely materialises in the figure of the Turkish president.

Surely, like it is the case for other leaders and countries, President Erdoğan and Turkish foreign policy under his leadership could be criticised on several grounds. Yet, such sensational/hyperbolic media outburst on Turkey and its President, and their *securitisation* through their systematic portrayal as a threat, reveal subjective unease with Ankara’s rise on the international scene.

From the above, it is evident that “history still hinges on Turco-European relations” (Kerslake, 2010, p. 291) and that historical fears, prejudices, and stereotypes continue to haunt Europe’s collective memory and unconscious, acting as a filter that blurs Europe’s perception of Turkey and limits its ability to objectively assess Turkish foreign policy.

III- Overcoming the crisis of confidence: The need for a renewed encounter between the EU and Turkey based on mutual trust

The above analysis has shown that a major challenge in relations between Europe and Turkey is the lack of trust between the parties and mutual misunderstanding on a number of key issues.

In order for Europe to reset relations with Ankara, Europe first needs to develop a better understanding of Turkey. This requires first: getting Turkish foreign policy right. In the past decade, a “new Turkey” has emerged, one that is determined to play a more active role in global governance and in regional politics. As a rising middle power in a quest for status in international affairs, Turkey has adopted a more autonomous and independent foreign policy path and is seeking to diversify its network of partnerships and alliances in order to fully exploit the opportunities offered by globalisation and multipolarity. Europe thus needs to understand Turkey’s new strategic mindset: gone are the years when Turkey used to unconditionally align with the West (Europe, the US, and NATO), and act as a subservient ally. Today’s Turkey is determined to assert its sovereignty and independence in foreign affairs in order to best defend its national interests.

Yet, Turkey’s emancipation on the world stage does not mean that Turkey has abandoned its Western anchorage. Ankara’s new engagement in the Middle East, coupled with its increasing use of a “neo-Ottoman” rhetoric and its rapprochement with Russia, Iran, and China, may be interpreted as a sign that Turkish foreign policy has shifted away from its traditional Western alliances. However, Turkey actually remains bound to the West thanks to structural and geopolitical realities: Ankara is “heavily dependent on NATO and formally committed to its policies, including by hosting an early-warning radar station for its missile defence shield” (Pierini, 2013). Moreover, Russia, China, and Iran do not offer Turkey a credible strategic alternative to the Western security umbrella. Moscow and Tehran are Ankara’s peer competitors for regional leadership and for increased participation in global governance; this makes a solid alliance between them inconceivable, at least in the short term.

Turkey’s new relations with Russia, Iran, and the Arab States are rather “transactional partnerships” (Kirişci, 2019) aimed at helping Ankara achieve its objectives on particular issues (energy policy, defence industry, Syrian conflict) and increase its leverage and bargaining power

vis-à-vis Europe by becoming a “pivot state”. In a recent public opinion poll conducted in Turkey, 55% of respondents said that “Turkey should remain in NATO” and at the same time, 57% supported building “a lasting alliance with Russia” (Hoffman, 2018, p. 12-13). While such opinions can appear contradictory and inconsistent, they are actually in line with the Turks’ desire to cultivate independent ties with new actors of the international system, while keeping their place in the Western security architecture. For the Turks, Ankara’s rapprochement with Russia and engagement in the Middle East are therefore not incompatible with the country’s Western affiliation.

Second, Europe should get Turkey’s position vis-à-vis the EU right. While the Turkish leadership’s anti-EU statements and the country’s drift toward the Middle East have made some in Europe lose confidence in Turkey’s EU commitment, there are signs that Turks still have a strong desire for Europe. In the public opinion poll mentioned above, 49% of respondents said they still want Turkey to be part of the EU, but 78% believed that European governments do not want Turkey to join the bloc (Hoffman, 2018, p. 3-4). In fact, a large part of the population feels humiliated by Europe’s rejection of their country. In the words of Egemen Bağış, former EU minister & Chief Negotiator of Turkey: “European governments seem to be treating Turkey like a game on a football pitch, pushing the ball of inclusion around, but never really having the intention of allowing it to become an equal player on their field”²². As a reaction to what they perceive as Europe’s double standards when it comes to accession negotiations, Turks have developed Euroscepticism. In that sense, Euroscepticism in Turkey is nothing but a surface response to growing Turcoscepticism in Europe.

²² <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/opinion/migration-and-europe-the-view-from-turkey/>

Making the debate over Turkey's EU accession less passionate

As it stands today, Europe's political debate about Turkey's EU accession is passionate and mishandled. First, this debate is a proxy for a range of wider issues (Barysch, 2007, p. 2), in particular the question of Europe's cultural identity, Europe's boundaries, and the balance of power within EU institutions. European governments' fears and concerns are summarised in the following speech of a French Member of Parliament: "The stakes are numerous: What will happen when this country which will comprise nearly 100 million inhabitants there in ten or fifteen years is integrated into the entire community and has the largest number of deputies to the European Parliament? Will the EU accommodate Turkish Islam? What are the political and geographic limits of Europe?" (Düzgit, 2009, p. 62). More so, the debate over Turkey's EU accession is by and large handled by the media "who are happy to trade in stereotypes, thus reinforcing public prejudices" (Barysch, 2007, p. 2). "On television, Turkey means minarets, headscarves and the Bosphorus bridge", says Paul Taylor, Reuters' European affairs editor. "In the newspapers, a 'secular state with a predominantly Muslim population' gets edited down to 'a Muslim country'" (Barysch, 2007, p. 1). Sensational and orientalist media coverage of Turkey blurs European public opinion's views of Turkey and builds hostility towards the country's EU accession.

Yet, there are clever arguments in favour of Turkish accession, and it is in the interest of both Brussels and Ankara to steer their relations back onto a mutually beneficial path. For the EU, the benefits of Turkish accession range from the economic boost that would come from adding fast-growing and youthful Turkey to the soft power the EU would acquire from including a well-functioning Muslim democracy to the leverage it would gain over Middle East dynamics through Turkey's regional leadership. For Turkey, joining the EU would allow its economy to prosper and would fulfil its strategic interest in acquiring better status in

international affairs. “Renewed impetus on the accession negotiations will also factor into Turkey’s course on fundamental liberties and tolerance within its own society” (Pierini, 2013) and would stimulate Turkey’s democratisation process.

Turkey’s EU accession negotiations should therefore be given a political boost. This requires first that both sides refrain from employing negative language toward each other, and get rid of prejudices and stereotypes. Second, that Turkey and the EU focus on short-term, pragmatic, “transactional” engagement on issues of mutual interest. Potential areas of cooperation include counterterrorism, migration, energy, conflicts in the Middle East (most notably Syria), and a reinvigorated customs union. Third, that Europe acknowledges that Turkey’s quest for status and power is, by way of geography, history, and shifting international equilibriums, a legitimate one, and starts looking at Turkey as an equal and independent partner, rather than a subservient state. Lastly, European governments must be honest with Turkey, deal with it with respect, and engage the Turkish leadership more directly and actively. Such bold moves would require visionary and positive political leadership. They would require that EU politicians pluck up the courage to lead public opinion rather than follow it.

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How to Move Turkey-EU Relations Forward in Challenging Times?

Faruk Kaymakcı

Turkey-European Union (EU) relations have recently been going through another challenging period. How relations will develop in the upcoming period depends primarily on the EU. As a negotiating candidate country, Turkey expects to be treated on an equal footing with other candidate countries. The backbone of Turkey's relations with the EU is the accession process. It should never be forgotten that the debate about Turkey's EU membership is in essence a debate about the future of Europe and its potential role in the complex European and international system.

The recent course of events in our common neighbourhood has shown that the EU is bound to export stability. Therefore, it is of paramount importance for the EU leadership to have a strategic vision for the future of not only the EU but also for its wider region and beyond. The Union does not have the luxury to focus solely on intra-EU debates. An EU that aspires to be a global actor has to think and act globally.

In this regard, Turkey, a candidate country for membership, has the potential to help the EU to play a greater role regionally and globally. Cooperation between Turkey and the EU is of paramount importance on a number of issues including trade, investment, energy security, European security and defence, the fight against terrorism, irregular migration, radicalisation, cybercrime, climate change, etc... Being on good terms with Turkey will also help the EU strengthen its relations with the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Black Sea region, as well as Southern Neighbourhood and Eastern Partnership countries that

are geographically and historically within the sphere of interest and influence of Turkey.

The full implementation of the 18 March Statement is the way forward since it has opened a window of opportunity for both Turkey and the EU to strengthen their relations and rebuild trust. Therefore, the fulfilment of the expectations of the Turkish side stemming from the Agreement, such as acceleration of the accession negotiations, visa liberalisation for Turkish citizens, and an updated customs union, are much needed to pave the way to ease the already existing disappointment with the EU in Turkish public opinion. By addressing Turkey's legitimate concerns, the "Geopolitical Commission" can nurse the lack of strategic thinking and inertia within the EU.

2019: The most controversial period in EU history

For the EU, 2019 marked the final year of the Juncker Commission, which encountered a consecutive number of continuous crises throughout its five year tenure. In fact, we can consider the years between 2008 and 2019 as a lost period for the EU, as the Union could neither solve its structural problems nor develop meaningful answers to regional and global challenges.

As the recent course of socio-economic developments created an increasing resentment among EU citizens, some even began to question the necessity of the Union. The Commission has become the focus of criticism, generally described as the technocratic elite who do not care about what is going on in the economic field and the lives of ordinary people. While the consecutive economic crisis in the Republic of Ireland, Spain, and Greece from 2008 to 2010 fuelled the debate and the EU's handling of these crises were generally taken with discontent, consecutive crises that the EU encountered from 2009 to 2019 include: a) the financial crisis in the Eurozone and the discussion on the fundamentals of the Monetary Union, b) economic recession and high rates of youth unemployment, especially in the southern EU member

countries, c) low rates of economic growth, (the economic growth rate of the EU as a whole, including the non-Eurozone countries, was at around 1.4%, while China was growing at around 8% throughout the same period), and finally, d) the migration crisis which shook the very essence of the Union, triggered xenophobic tendencies, far-right political discourse, and led to the rise of ultranationalist, populist political movements and parties in Europe.

Brexit, in this sense, might be described as the concrete summary and the result of all these series of consecutive problems. It was a global shock when the British people voted for withdrawal in June 2016, and it seems like the debate about its reasons and consequences will last for at least another decade. However, after following the recent discussions and significant impact on British domestic politics, one might argue that the deal on the official withdrawal on 31 October 2019 ended uncertainty in some aspects. Now, the EU knows that the Union will continue its journey with 27 member countries. One of the three nuclear powers of NATO, holder of UN Security Council's permanent seat, and the second net contributor to the EU budget will no longer be in the Union. However, as of December 2019, the future of the relationship to be established between the United Kingdom (UK) and the EU is still unknown. A free trade agreement between the two sides is likely, but having in mind the existing mutual pertinacity, which turned into acute intransigence during the first phase of the negotiations, the future of the relationship is still unclear.

On the other hand, the recent policy preference of the Trump Administration to question the validity and the use of international organisations, as well as strong signs of turning back to geopolitical rivalry and replacement of the realist school of thought as the dominant discourse in international relations, have also added to these challenges at a time when the EU is in the midst of a quest to revitalise its own institutional reform and searching for ways and means to enhance its power projection globally, beginning from its neighbourhood.

As things stand right now, the reign of the EU in terms of financial capital, technological edge, and economic growth, is losing ground. Even the Union itself knows that it seems quite difficult for the EU to catch up with Silicon Valley giants or Far Eastern technological titans in the next decade. Financial capital and economic growth have already set sail towards the East. On the other hand, this period of transition has also brought together the questioning of the rules-based international system, which is also one of the most significant challenges for a sui-generis structure such as the Union which has established its own identity and paradigm as rule-setter in the international arena, first and foremost on trade and production standards.

It would be fair to admit that the regional and global challenges today are shaking and re-shaping the EU project's fundamentals. European integration is not immune to the shifting tides in the international system. The EU's inefficiency to address these challenges in a timely and appropriate way is leading to the questioning of the EU's institutional structure, and its future direction. The EU's inefficiency is undermining its own credibility and many people, including the EU citizens, have begun to question the future of the Union.

The European Parliament (EP) elections in May 2019 represented another critical juncture for the EU, as they were a direct consequence of the dramatically changing political environment in Europe. The results of national elections held across Europe were already showing us that the Europeans were asking for change, as they were not satisfied with the solutions provided by the mainstream political parties and their leaders in power. In that sense, the EP elections were a catch-up for the EU, a catch-up with what had already happened in Europe. Soon after the elections, it was already clear that these results would stimulate further changes in European politics. The balance of power is already set to change in some countries. Here, one should highlight the recent discussions in the formation of the Commission. For the first time in EU history, three candidates for different Commissioner posts could not

get approval from the EP, and the process, which used to be seen as a bureaucratic procedure formerly, turned out to be a political challenge. During the process, which lasted nearly three months, political groups on the edges of the political spectrum found a chance to come into play during political bargaining. The biggest question, however, is how to address these challenges in a way that strengthens the EU and its regional and global role.

The Geopolitical Commission amid new hopes

The von der Leyen Commission, which officially came into office on 1 December 2019, has inherited a difficult set of challenges from the previous one. Having set the motto as “Geopolitical Commission”, one naturally expects some concrete steps to increase the global outreach of the Commission, beginning in its imminent neighbourhood, which requires hard work, a paradigm shift, and new policy formulations.

In line with the idea of the “Geopolitical Commission”, despite vivid discussions between the member countries on the issue, the new political leadership of the Union managed to include enlargement as one of their priorities in the five-year programme, unlike their predecessors. It is still fresh in memories that the former President of the Commission, Mr. Juncker, had said there would be no new enlargement during the former Commission’s five years term in a very clear-cut manner.

As a matter of fact, Turkey has always been one of the advocates of EU enlargement. The sole reason for that is not her aspiration for membership. Turkey sincerely believes that despite all the challenges and difficulties surrounding the Union throughout the last decade, the EU is still a source of inspiration and role model for integration among countries and regions; a success story of stability, democracy and welfare, regardless of the criticism it receives.

With regards to enlargement, what Turkey supports is consistent. Enlargement is the most effective policy instrument of the EU that transforms the immediate neighbourhood of the Union, including the

candidate countries, in a positive way. Thus, if the EU aspires to be an overarching power, it should continue its enlargement policy. Constantly challenging enlargement would lead to the questioning of the very core of the EU. The EU history has well demonstrated that enlargement is the most successful policy that the Union has ever possessed.

In this regard, Turkey is of the opinion that any aspiring country matching up with the criteria set out in Article 49 of the Lisbon Treaty should be given the fair opportunity to set the sail along this path (Any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union), and that the process should be normative, transformative, and result in membership. Similarly, Turkey believes that it should not be discriminative, as we have been unfortunately witnessing throughout the whole process.

The EU, which widely represents the shared values and common interests of our continent, should be more vocal in defending a credible, fair, and sustainable enlargement policy, by recalling the fact that enlargement for Turkey and other Balkan countries, is a political, economic, and moral necessity. In this context, Turkey considers it a step taken in the right direction that six Balkan countries (Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, North Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo) have been given a clearer accession path.

Being herself also partly a Balkan country geographically, culturally and historically, Turkey strongly supports the integration of these countries with Euro-Atlantic institutions, including the EU. Ironically, for the last few years, Turkey has been subject to new attempts aiming at a de-facto discrimination to exclude her from the enlargement process by inventing an artificial division between “Turkey and the Western Balkans”, all of which are candidate countries.

As a negotiating candidate country, we want the EU to treat Turkey on an equal footing with the other candidate countries. In this context, Turkey should be allowed to take part in all platforms, including debates on the Future of Europe. All in all, we share a common future.

The added value of Turkey for the Union / Turkey-EU Relations: What went wrong?

Turkey as a NATO ally, a founding member of the Council of Europe (CoE), a member of the OECD and the OSCE, as well as the G-20, and the most senior EU membership candidate country can help the EU in meeting most of today's challenges. Therefore, it would be wise if the EU began to look into Turkey's accession process from a broader perspective.

Firstly, Turkey has been one of the main providers of Europe's security for decades, and a key partner of the EU on issues relating to foreign policy, irregular migration, the fight against terrorism, energy security, and so on. We have seen concrete and positive results of Turkey-EU cooperation and joint actions in these areas. Therefore, if the EU aspires to become and remain a real global power, it needs Turkey's contribution. This has become more valid following Brexit. However, deeper cooperation without accession can only deliver limited success and cannot go beyond transactionalism with untapped potential. The only way to fully unlock this potential is Turkey's membership in the EU.

Despite the setbacks and challenges in Turkey-EU relations, Turkish public opinion, especially among youth, still strongly aspires for EU membership. However, the standstill in the accession negotiations, which were hijacked mainly by the Cyprus Problem, has led to a deep crisis of confidence in Turkey vis-à-vis the EU.

Turkey, which started accession negotiations with the EU in 2005, has to date opened 16 chapters and provisionally closed only one. Long

before the heinous coup attempt on 15 July 2016, the Greek Cypriots had blocked, for their narrow-minded national agenda, 14 out of 35 chapters. This means that nearly half of the negotiation chapters are effectively under Greek Cypriot blackmail, including the most critical ones: Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) and Chapter 24 (Justice, Freedom, and Security).

For more than a decade, Turkish officials at all levels involved in the accession process have insistently demanded from the EU not to over politicise Turkey's accession process and continue with it on a technical basis for the sake of our general interests. In fact, the EU Commission perfectly knows that Turkey does not have a capacity problem in successfully concluding the negotiations if the talks are dealt with on a fair, constructive, and technical basis.

In other words, the problem lying behind Turkey's case is the insistence of some members to politicise the accession process for their selfish national interests. Unfortunately, the political obstacle is not limited to the accession negotiations. Other areas such as cooperation in energy, transport, security, defence and foreign policy, received their share from this unreasonable practice. The modernisation of the Customs Union was originally proposed by the Commission, based on a well-calculated impact analysis. This analysis shows that once realised, the modernisation of the Customs Union will significantly boost the trade and economic activity between Turkey and the EU. This potential has so far been also sacrificed to this self-destructive approach of the EU.

How to overcome the lack of confidence?

The lack of confidence toward the EU among the Turkish public has grown stronger since 2016 for two main reasons.

The first is the indifference of the EU member states towards Turkey in its fight against terrorist groups such as the PKK and Fetullahist Terrorist Organisation (FETÖ). Even though there is a court decision

stating that the 15 July 2016 coup attempt was masterminded by FETÖ, the perpetrators of the failed coup attempt and the militants of this terrorist organisation have found safe haven in some EU member states. Despite the insistent calls of Turkish authorities, concerned EU member countries mostly refrained from giving a positive response to extradition requests for these convicted of terror-related offences. Similarly, the tolerance shown towards the PKK in some EU member states has unfortunately strengthened the perception in Turkish public opinion that the EU and its members are supporting terrorist organisations against Turkey, notwithstanding the fact that PKK is listed by the EU as a terrorist organisation.

Secondly, the EU's slow and partial implementation of the 18 March Statement fuelled the feeling that Turkey was left in the lurch while confronting the refugee crisis, and that the EU was backtracking once again. Although EU public opinion, in general, has so far preferred to interpret the 18 March Statement as a migration deal, the agreement refers also to the acceleration of accession negotiations, modernisation of the Customs Union, visa liberalisation for Turkish citizens, cooperation on counter-terrorism and holding regular high-level dialogue as part of Turkey-EU summits.

On the question of migration, we see that the EU has not fulfilled all of its commitments. The implementation of the Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme, for instance, has never come into practice. Likewise, the EU did not work with Turkey in Northern Syria as Article 9 of 18 March Statement envisages.

By hosting more than four million refugees and halting the flow of thousands via the Aegean Sea, Turkey has prevented a major humanitarian crisis in Europe. Both former Council President Tusk and Commission President Juncker verified this fact with statistical data; namely, thanks to Turkey's effective efforts, the number of illegal migrants trying to cross the Aegean had dropped by 97% since 2015.

The model has proven to be so efficient that the Union has even begun to discuss how to replicate it with other countries to curb irregular migration flows in the Central Mediterranean.

In a nutshell, on the migration dimension, Turkey has done its share under the framework of the 18 March Agreement. Similarly, the EU is also expected to deliver its promises stemming from the same deal. Especially, the remaining part of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT) is expected to be disbursed in a speedier manner. The implementation of the Statement cannot be a one-way street. Turkey awaits for the EU to fulfil its end of the bargain.

In addition to these two issues that have fuelled the lack of confidence in Turkish public opinion vis-à-vis the EU, consecutive decisions taken in different formats of the EU Council meetings, as well as the EP during the second half of 2019, on highly sensitive issues for Turkey such as the drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, Operation Peace Spring, and the Maritime Zone Delimitation Agreement with the Libyan Government (subjects related to Turkey's sovereign rights), have added nothing but controversy to relations, at a time when open dialogue and joint action are most needed.

For the sake of the future of Turkey-EU relations, as well as the interests of our wider region, this approach should not be tolerated any longer. The EU should be bold and wise enough to warn its member states when they are harming the greater interests of the EU. "Membership solidarity" should not be placed above international law. Instead, the EU should better position itself as an honest broker and make sincere efforts to solve the Cyprus Problem. The "nationalisation" of the enlargement policy will serve no one's interests and will continue to erode ground for cooperation against our common European interests.

There is one more issue that has contributed to the deepening of the crisis of confidence between the two sides that is worth mentioning here. During the last couple of years, with the push of some political

groups and MEPs in the EP, as well as some EU member states, the EU preferred to choose another detrimental policy by curbing Pre-Accession Instrument (IPA) Funds which have a symbolic meaning for Turkey. This unfortunate move by the EU caused suspicion of its real intentions towards Turkey. IPA funds today are important, especially for the Turkish civil society and youth who still overwhelmingly see their country's future in the EU. By cutting these funds, the EU in fact dealt a blow to the more sincere supporters of the EU who form the reformist and progressivist part of the Turkish society.

Turkey is committed to the reform process

Despite this rather negative background, Turkey continues its efforts towards EU accession by showing its commitment to the reform process and its will to moving forward on this path.

Following the lifting of the State of Emergency in July 2018, the Reform Action Group (RAG), the driving force of reforms composed of the Ministries of Justice, Interior, Foreign Affairs and Finance, and the Directorate for EU Affairs, convened three times in August and December 2018, and on 9 May 2019, respectively. The latest RAG meeting chaired by the Turkish President also coincided with Europe Day. Particular attention is given to the judiciary and fundamental rights and freedoms. Consequently, the new Judicial Reform Strategy covering the 2019-2023 period was announced in May 2019. The First Judicial Reform Package was adopted by the Parliament in October 2019. Work on Human Rights Action Plan continues in close consultation with the EU and the Council of Europe. The work on the Second Judicial Reform Package is in progress.

Further steps were also taken with regard to the restructuring of the Justice Academy, adoption of the Code of Judicial Ethics, and National Action Plan on the Fight against Organised Crime. Three main circulars on visa liberalisation dialogue, managing pre-accession funds, and Union Programmes, as well as coordination of the work related to the

EU, were published. Special effort was made to accelerate the work on the visa liberalisation process.

As a large, strong, and secular state, Turkey is an important asset for the EU

Traditionally and historically, since the signature of the Ankara Agreement in 1963, which paved the way for Turkey's long and narrow path towards EU accession, there have been ups and downs in Turkey-EU relations. However, both parties have always found a way to maintain dialogue, as they need each other, and our region needs our joint efforts.

As the longest standing EU candidate and the most important partner of the EU on many key issues, it is really disappointing to still hear echoes from some circles in Europe thinking that Turkey is "too big, too poor and too Muslim" to join the EU. It is obvious that those narrow-minded circles cannot grasp either the potential of Turkey nor the dynamics of the current international system and European integration.

Turkey is indeed relatively large both by population and territory, but this is an asset rather than a liability for the EU as it has been for NATO. Indeed, Turkey's economic size, population, and territory will help the EU to become a more influential global actor.

It is true that Turkey is a predominantly Muslim country, but the Turkish Republic is a secular, democratic, and social state, governed by the rule of law. The potential membership of Turkey in the EU would be the most solid example of "unity in diversity". Moreover, an EU with Turkey can reach out to the Islamic world and better integrate its own Muslim population.

As regards the "poverty" issue, no one can anymore claim that "Turkey is too poor". This was the image of Turkey in the 1960s or 70s. Today, Turkey surpasses the GDP level of some EU member states with higher economic growth rates. By the time Turkey becomes an EU member,

Turkish agriculture and cohesion policies will overcome the EU's budget concerns. All things considered, these worries will prove to be misplaced and sound minds will soon realise that they would rather be positive factors for the EU, contrary to what they evoke in some people's minds.

Against all odds, accession to the EU is still a strategic objective for Turkey, which deserves more understanding, empathy, and dialogue in her relations with the Union. Therefore, the EU should adopt a new, consistent, and embracing policy towards Turkey considering the sensitivities and expectations of Turkish public opinion, and its own greater interests.

What should be done? / Where to begin?

We are still optimistic about having a new beginning with the EU following the formation of its new leadership. We hope that the new EU leadership as well as the new Commission and the EP will act with strategic vision and contemplate finding ways and means to adopt a more constructive approach to embrace Turkey.

For these early signals to be turned into concrete steps by the EU towards Turkey and Turkish people, I would humbly suggest our friends and colleagues in the EU consider taking the following steps. These, I believe, indeed can contribute to rebuilding the confidence between Turkey and the EU, at a time when most needed.

1. First and foremost, the EU should take imminent steps to regain Turkey's and the Turkish people's trust. To do this, the EU should strengthen Turkey's EU perspective and revitalise the accession process as it is the backbone of Turkey-EU relations. In fact, without keeping the accession perspective strong, no one can expect candidate countries to make meaningful reforms, which are difficult to absorb most of the time. So, the process is already challenging in itself, and artificial political blockages work for nothing but to detriment to the interests of the parties. Thus, the political blockages on accession chapters should

be lifted, and primarily, Turkey should be encouraged to work on Chapters 23 and 24 in particular.

It goes without saying that the EU should be a credible anchor for all candidate countries, including Turkey. To regain trust, the EU should treat Turkey on an equal footing with other candidate countries. The tendency to create artificial divisions between Turkey and other Balkan countries should come to an end. Being also a Balkan country itself, Turkey is an ardent supporter of Balkan integration into the EU. However, trying to shift the focus solely on a few countries and creating artificial divisions would not be for the sake of the enlargement policy. Thus, inviting Turkey to all the meetings where other candidates are invited would be the right approach.

2. It is also time for the EU to show its adherence to the 18 March Statement and implement it in its entirety. Turkey has shown compliance and contributed to the security, safety, and stability of the Union by saving it from the biggest challenge it has seen for the last couple of years. However, no country can accept to be treated as a safe deposit centre for refugees. In this regard, the EU should begin to review the implementation of the Agreement and come up with concrete proposals to fulfil its obligations stemming from it. Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT) is an important part of the Agreement, and the financial contribution of the EU in terms of burden-sharing should be strengthened and further accelerated. The EU should continue with financial assistance after and beyond FRIT-II as long as the migration crisis persists.

Although migration is important, it is not the only area of cooperation. The revitalisation of the accession process, holding of regular Turkey-EU Summits as well as high-level dialogue meetings, modernisation of the Customs Union, better cooperation against terrorism and visa liberalisation to Turkish citizens are long-standing expectations of the Turkish Government stemming from the Agreement. As the recent

events in Northern Syria, additional migratory waves from Africa, and especially from Afghanistan and Pakistan through Iran, has demonstrated, the migration pressure on Turkey is growing. In fact, the recent course of events has shown that the eastern and south-eastern borders of Europe do not begin from the Turkey-Greece-Bulgaria borders, but from Turkey's eastern and south-eastern borders.

3. Adopting nonconstructive conclusions towards Turkey, a candidate country, should come to an end. A negative atmosphere has been built towards Turkey. This negative trend, which is also further exploited by some member states, serves no one's interests. Therefore, Council Conclusions to halt dialogue and meetings should be revised. We should continue to hold meetings of High-Level Dialogues in crucial areas.

4. The EU and its member states should support Turkey in its fight against terrorism. This will also serve Europe's security. Turkey is the most terrorism-afflicted NATO ally. Over more than four decades, Turkey lost tens of thousands of citizens to violent PKK terror. Similarly, on the night of 15 July 2016, hundreds of Turkish citizens lost their lives and thousands were seriously wounded. The putschists even dared to attack the Turkish Grand National Assembly, the representative body of the collective will of the Turkish people. Thus, the EU should acknowledge and address Turkey's concerns about all sorts of terrorism.

5. Turkey should be included in the EU's security and defence-related efforts in a meaningful way. Increased defence cooperation is a priority for the EU and Turkey should be a part of it. As a principled supporter of NATO-EU cooperation, Turkey's strategic defence capacity and capabilities will significantly boost the added value of the EU's defence cooperation even before prior to EU membership.

6. The Pre-Accession Instrument (IPA) assigned to Turkey should not be further cut, but rather, it should be strengthened. It should be kept in mind that IPA is the financial instrument of the Union that is aimed to pave the way not only for actions towards membership but

also the inclusion of the candidate country in a series of important EU programmes such as Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020. The Turkish nation overwhelmingly believes that their future would be better within the EU. Brussels should reciprocate this belief by easing the way for Turkey to join the Union.

7. Last but not least, the EU should be in a position to develop a coherent strategic communication strategy towards Turkey. Turkish public opinion should clearly see that their country means a lot more to the EU than the migration issue.

Cooperation without accession can only deliver limited success

If the EU aims at being a global and visionary actor instead of a merely regional organisation with limited reach, it should incorporate Turkey post-haste. The EU should seriously consider the contributions Turkey can make. However, as mentioned earlier, deeper cooperation without accession can only deliver limited success. Turkey would definitely bring added value to the EU. A multicultural, stable, and geo-strategically powerful EU is only possible with the inclusion of Turkey.

During the tenure of the previous Commission and the EP, the European political landscape dramatically changed. The new leadership will have a heavy responsibility during a period dominated by change and challenge. One of the greatest challenges is the rise of populist policies and rhetoric. The seeds of mistrust sown by some politicians for short-term political gains will, unfortunately, have negative effects that could last for generations. Increased xenophobia, Islamophobia, and intolerance raise questions about the future of European culture. They pose a serious threat to peaceful co-existence and social cohesion in Europe. For this reason, we should give the parliamentary aspect of our relations the importance it deserves, and should not let the EP become an anti-Turkey platform.

At the same time, we are experiencing a regional and global environment where Turkey-EU cooperation is most needed. We believe that we can

overcome our disagreements with honest and visionary approaches. We wish to find ways to end the political blockage, as EU membership remains our strategic and ultimate goal. However, for this, we need constructive criticism from the EU, not hurtful steps.

Lastly, one word for the ardent supporters of a privileged partnership between Turkey and the EU as an alternative to membership: Turkey is already a privileged/strategic partner of the Union given the fact that she is part of the Customs Union, participating in some ESDP operations, community programmes and agencies; a country that the EU contributes to her social and regional cohesion in the form of pre-accession assistance. However, trying to turn the accession negotiations into talks on a privileged partnership or special relationship will not only erode the EU's credibility, but it will also weaken the influence of its conditionality and reduce the political incentive for reforms in Turkey. The road Turkey chose for itself in 1963 by signing the Ankara Agreement is already set: it is the membership in the EU and there is no alternative to that.

Instead of being just a passive witness, the EU could be an agent of change in the world, a trend-setter. In this respect, Turkey's membership offers a great opportunity. No other membership of the European Union, including previous and future ones, would be more beneficial and meaningful than Turkey's. Turkey offers weight, influence, and capacity to the EU with its geostrategic location, young and dynamic population, economic might, military and defence capacity, as well as its role in the arenas of energy and connectivity. It is now high time to place Turkish-EU relations in a new realm with a clearer accession perspective and to steer the wheel of change to the benefit of both sides.

This chapter examines the logic and character of Turkey's power politics regarding military involvement in the Syrian Civil War, which began in the spring of 2011. The study claims that the realist perspective of geopolitical theory is sufficient to understand the geographic system in

which Turkey is situated, and thereon at predicting developments in the said realm. As geopolitical theorist Richard Hartshorne suggests, global politics are shaped by centrifugal and centripetal forces. The author asserts that, by and large, while centrifugal forces naturally create separating impact, centripetal forces have an impact that increases unity of the political ends of Turkey's decision-makers at the highest level.

Turkey as a Powerhouse after the Military Operations of the Euphrates Shield and the Olive Branch

Kaan Kutlu Ataç

Introduction

Turkey has placed itself, at least for the time being, as a powerhouse on a global scale replacing the regional power statue the country had enjoyed last nine decades. With the successful Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch military operations carried out in Syria, Turkey has levelled up its regional actor status to one of powerhouse in the Middle East. Saul Bernard Cohen describes such problematic regions of geopolitics by referring to shatterbelt and compression zone concepts. Centrifugal and centripetal forces¹ have created “shatterbelt” lines in the geography of the Middle East in accordance with Cohen’s conceptualisation. To Cohen one of the main features of geopolitics we live in 21st century is the concept of shatterbelts which “are regions torn by internal conflicts whose fragmentation is increased by the intervention of external major powers in contention over the region.” (Cohen, 2015: 9). Using Cohen’s terminology, Turkey is located in a strategic position on a historical “shatterbelt” line.

¹ “Centripetal” and “centrifugal” forces are concepts developed by Richard Hartshorne. The unity of a state’s geographical territories and whether its political unity will continue or not is related to the centripetal and centrifugal forces, which are in conflict with each other. Thus, these two powers need to be in equilibrium with each other. Hartshorne claims that while the centrifugal forces create an impact that separates the society, the centripetal forces try to hold the society together. Accordingly, the centripetal forces are nationalism, a powerful national leader, and a government that is able to implement an effective and productive economy, welfare state programs. The centrifugal forces are the ethnic, racial and religious differences and conflicts, political corruption, bad economic performance, natural disasters or defeats in wars. Hartshorne, R. (1950, June). The Functional Approach in Political Geography. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 40 (2), 95-130.

Cohen indicates that the shatterbelt is one of the characteristics of geopolitics. The shatterbelt indicates a destructed region destroyed by internal conflicts whose disunity had been increased through the intervention of the external great powers. The interventionist powers increase their spheres of influence over their clients in the region through military, political and economic assistance. The compression zones are located in the narrower subsections within or in-between those types of geopolitical regions. These zones are under intense pressure and tensions are shattered through both Civil Wars and the combination of the interventionist actions of the neighbouring countries. As a traditional geopolitical concept, the shatterbelt refers to a geographical area where local conflict turns into serious conflicts between great powers, which are from outside of the region. The great powers intervene in local conflicts because they believe that they have significant interests in these areas (Cohen, 2015). On the other hand, local conflicts prepare the ground for the great powers to make alliances with neighbouring countries, especially in areas where the conflicts dominate (Kelly, 1986: 161). The increasing probability of intensification of conflicts includes the tensions that might lead to war between the great powers. At this point, Cohen points out that as a shatterbelt, the Middle East has started to shatter even more. While one edge of the compressed zone extends to Iran, Iraq and Bahrain and the eastern region of Saudi Arabia, the other end extends along the line of Syria and South Lebanon (Cohen, 2015: 9, 33).

The Middle East as a Shatterbelt

The Arab Spring, which began in Tunisia in December of 2010 with the demands of more democracy, human rights, and freedoms, triggered peaceful protests arranged by groups mostly composed of youngsters against the Assad regime in Damascus in March of

⁴ Flock, E. Syria revolution. (15 March 2011). A revolt brews against Bashar al- Assad's regime. Washington Post. Accessed on: 25 February 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/post/syria-revolution-revolt-against-bashar-al-assads-regime/2011/03/15/ABrwNEX_blog.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.447aa701835a. A Twitter user announced the demonstration in the following manner: "yes we did it guys. we had protested for freedom in Damascus we are following your steps in #Egypt #tunisia #Syria #15marchless than a minute ago"

2011.⁴ The demonstrations quickly spread across the country and quickly transitioned to demanding the resignation Bashar al-Assad. The countrywide pressures against the regime induced the policy of a non-regional actors' active intervention regarding the pressure on the Assad regime such as the US's implementation of limited sanctions in the month of April. The presidential order of Barack Obama numbered 13573 on May 18th targeted Assad, and his six high-level bureaucrats (White House: 18 May 2011, 18 August 2011).⁵ The process continued through the organisation of oppositional groups in political and military platforms in June of 2011. During this period, skirmishes began between the regime forces and armed groups. The skirmishes spread fast, and the country ultimately succumbed to a severe civil war. Under the tension of the centrifugal and centripetal forces⁶ in Syria, which is located on the northern edge of the shatterbelt in the Middle East, this development fit the "compressed zone" in the shatterbelt description of Cohen. The non-regional global actors have led to the direct and indirect interventions of the US and Russia in the Syrian Civil War. The regime's opponents started to establish their political and military umbrella organisations through the meetings that they had organised in Turkey in the summer

⁵ The following names took place in the sanctions list (As it is indicated in the decision): Bashar AL-ASSAD [President of the Syrian Arab Republic, born September 11, 1965], 2. Farouk AL-SHARA [Vice President, born 1938], 3. Adel SAFAR [Prime Minister, born 1953], 4. Mohammad Ibrahim AL-SHAAR [Minister of the Interior, born 1950], 5. Ali Habib MAHMOUD [Minister of Defense, born 1939], 6. Abdul Fatah QUDSIYA [Head of Syrian Military Intelligence, born circa 1950], 7. Mohammed Dib ZAITOUN [Director of Political Security Directorate, born circa 1952]. With the Presidential order dated 18 August and numbered 13582 Obama announced that the US has frozen all Syrian assets in the US.

⁶ "Centripetal" and "centrifugal" forces are concepts developed by Richard Hartshorne. The unity of a state's geographical territories and whether its political unity will continue or not is related to the centripetal and centrifugal forces, which are in conflict with each other. Thus, these two powers need to be in equilibrium with each other. Hartshorne claims that while the centrifugal forces create an impact that separates the society, the centripetal forces try to hold the society together. Accordingly, the centripetal forces are nationalism, a powerful national leader, and a government that is able to implement an effective and productive economy, welfare state programs. The centrifugal forces are the ethnic, racial, and religious differences and conflicts, political corruption, bad economic performance, natural disasters or defeats in wars.

months of 2011. The opposition held its first meeting in Antalya on 1 – 2 June 2011 under the title of “Conference of Change”.⁷ The second meeting was held in Istanbul on 16 – 17 June under the title of “Istanbul Meeting for Syria” with the participation of more than 300 members of the opposition. In another meeting which was held in Istanbul on August 23rd, it was announced that the Syrian National Council would soon be established in Syria. And on July 29th, the Free Syrian Army, which represented the military wing of the opposition, was established in Turkey (Al-Jazeera, 7 February 2012).⁸ Consequently, on September 15th, it was announced that the oppositional groups had united under the umbrella of “Syrian National Council” (16 September 2011, BBC, 15 September 2011).⁹

The fact that regional and global powers began to understand the civil war in Syria as a political and military sphere of influence constitutes a different dimension of pressures against the Syrian regime. In a period when the political and militaristic oppositional groups have started to emerge as a tool of pressure against the Damascus regime through Turkey, the then Foreign Minister of Turkey Ahmet Davutoğlu met the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Istanbul (exactly when

⁷ Coincidentally, the author was staying at the hotel where the meeting was held between these dates. The meetings were held under the title of “National Liberation Conferences”.

⁸ “Free Syrian Army was established under the command of Col. Riyad Musa Riyad Al Assad on 29 July 2011 who defected from the Syrian Army. Al Assad determined the doctrine of the new army as ‘defending the citizens of the homeland of all sects and religions’ and indicated that after the toppling down of the regime of Bashar Al Assad, the army was the ‘core of the future real army of the free and democratic state of Syria’ Al-Jazeera. (7 February 2012). Özgür Suriye Ordusu (Free Syrian Army). Accessed on: 25 February 2019. <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber-analiz/ozgur-suriye-ordusu>

⁹ “Suriyeli muhalifler İstanbul’da Ulusal Meclis ilan ettiler. (The Syrian Opposition announced the National Assembly in Istanbul)” Accessed on: 25 February 2019. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/suriyeli-muhalifler-istanbul-da-ulusal-meclis-ilan-ettiler/dunya/haberdetay/16.09.2011/1439014/default.htm>

“Syrian dissidents form new united front”, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14941382>. Accessed on: 25 February 2019.

the oppositional groups held a meeting in Istanbul) on 16 – 17 July 2011¹⁰. Regarding the meeting of the opposition, Clinton stated: “We are encouraged by the things that the Syrian people have done. This is not something that the US has been doing, this is a step taken by the Syrians. They try to create the opposition and they try to establish a future where they will be in peace with the government”. Davutoğlu stated that: “We think a reform process taking the demands of the people into consideration in Syria is necessary”. He also emphasised that this process needed to proceed without leading to many civilian casualties and away from violence. Davutoğlu further said that the reforms needed to start immediately and suggested the regime avoid using excessive power against civilians. While pointing out that the opposition should be able to develop in Syria, Davutoğlu stated that Turkey did not wish the holding of this meeting in Turkey to be perceived as an intervention into the domestic affairs of Syria. The Minister added: “Turkey is a democratic country; anyone may hold a meeting here” (Voice of America, 16 July 2011).

Turkey announced a series of sanctions against Syria in November following hosting the opposition groups. Then Foreign Minister of Turkey Davutoğlu indicated that it was the end of the road for the

¹⁰ “It was held one day after the meeting of the Libyan Contact Group in Istanbul hosted by Turkey and representatives of more than 30 countries have participated including the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.” Amerika’nın Sesi (Voice of America, 16 July 2011), Amerika’nın Sesi. (Voice of America) (18 February 2015). ABD ve Türkiye Eğitim-Donat Üzerinde Anlaştı. (The US and Turkey agreed on Train and Equip) Accessed on: 25 February 2019. <https://www.amerikaninsesi.com/a/abd-ve-turkiye-suriye-muhalefetini-egitime-konusunda-/2647921.html>

regime in Syria and they would continue the sanctions until a regime that is at peace with its people comes to power in Syria.¹¹ Supporting the opposition groups with military equipment and training by Turkey and the US started after the period called the Istanbul Process. However, a different stage emerged after the quick transformation of the structure of the opposition groups in the Syrian Civil War. In May of 2013, the Iraqi Islamic State united with Al-Nusra, operating in Syria and announced that it had changed its name to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Daesh). Developments that occurred following the creation of Daesh dramatically changed the course of the Syrian Civil War. In January 2014, Daesh captured the Iraqi city of Fallujah, the Syrian city of Raqqa, and Mosul in June 2014. On September 10th, it was signalled by President Obama that the US would intervene militarily in Syria. On September 22nd, Daesh instructed Muslims to carry out attacks where they lived in Western countries. Following Daesh's announcement, the US carried out its first airstrikes against Daesh targets in Syria, among which Raqqa, which became the capital of Daesh, was included.¹²

¹¹ "Türkiye'den Suriye'ye yeni yaptırımlar", <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/turkiyeden-suriyeye-yeni-yaptirimlar-19358356>

The announced sanctions were as such: 1- Suspension of the mechanism of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council until a legitimate government in Syria, which is in peace with its people, comes to power. 2- Placing travel bans on some of the authorities who are the members of the basic leadership structure in Syria and who were claimed to have used illegal methods against the people, and freezing the assets of those people in our country. Introducing similar measures for some of the businessmen who are powerful supporters of the Syrian regime. 3- Stopping the sale and procurement of all kinds of weapons and military materials to the Syrian Army. 4- Prevention of transfer of weapons and military materials from the third countries to Syria in accordance with the international law by using the Turkish borders, air space and territorial waters. 5- Stopping relations with the Syrian Central Bank. 6- Freezing the finances and assets of the Syrian government in Turkey. 7- Stopping loan relationships with the Syrian government. 8- Stopping transactions with the Syrian Commercial Bank except for the already existing transactions. 9- Suspending the Eximbank loan agreement signed for the financing of the infrastructural projects in Syria.

¹² BBC. (23 September 2014). Syria: US begins airstrikes on Islamic State targets. Accessed on: 25 February 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29321136>

Coincidentally, the author was staying at the hotel where the meeting was held between these dates. The meetings were held under the title of "National Liberation Conferences".

The US did not just intervene against Damascus with a policy of regime change, it also intervened in the geography where Daesh was located, which the US perceives as a threat against itself and the West. The US formed a regional and global structure of alliance to combat this threat: The Global Coalition of Struggling Against Daesh. There are 79 partners in this coalition including 74 states and 4 international organisations. The geographical spread of the organisation is as the following: Africa: 13 countries; Americas: 3 countries; Asia-Pacific: 10 countries; Europe: 39 countries; Middle East: 9 countries. The International Organisations include The Arab League, CEN-SAD, Interpol, and NATO. This struggle was reminiscent of the typical alliance structure of the Cold War period. In the relationship between diplomacy and military that the US experienced frequently during the Cold War years (the military intervention aspect of the overt and covert activities, the global alliance structure including the neighbours of the compressed zone in the Civil War and “Train-and-equip Programme”), has been put into practice in countries including Turkey, within the scope of the overt activities of the US military and covert activities of the CIA (Voice of America: 19 February 2015).¹³

Turkey and the US dramatically changed the course of the civil war in Syria in the compression zone of the shatterbelt of the Middle East. The support of both countries for the oppositional groups has been reinforced with overt operations as well as covert intelligence operations.¹⁴ This active role, which was played in Syria, emerged in different aspects. The US and Turkey started to implement the formula of forcibly changing the regime, which it had implemented in Libya vis-a-vis the Qaddafi regime. Both countries have realised this policy through military, diplomatic and economic support for the moderate opposition

¹³ VOA. “US, Turkey Sign Pact to Train Syrian Rebels”, Accessed on: 25 February 2019. <https://www.voanews.com/world-news/middle-east-dont-use/us-turkey-sign-pact-train-syrian-rebels>

¹⁴ BBC. “Obama signs order to ‘support Syrian rebels’”, Accessed on: 25 February 2019 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-19102374>

groups against the regime.¹⁵ The regime change project (which was carried out with moderate opposition groups) started to change course through the militant groups' gaining power in a very short amount of time. The chaos of the civil war, at least at the beginning, allowed the armed Sunni groups to become more effective against the Damascus regime.¹⁶ As Cohen indicates:

If we measure the intensity of the national tensions and conflicts according to the regions, the Middle East is ahead of all. [...] There is no single Middle Eastern state which lives peacefully with its neighbours... [...] In the future, the geostrategic environment of the Middle East will be a jungle.¹⁷

Shatterbelts have a structure of two layers. In the first layer, political turmoil, social and economic pressures and division dominate. The second layer is at the international level. This turmoil, which prepares the ground for the intervention of regional powers, is paired with the emergence of international actors that benefit from pressures and divisions. Russia did not turn a blind eye to the US policy in the region and directly intervened in response to US efforts supported by its allies as well as the oppositional groups against the regime. One can argue that Russian intervention in support of Assad prevented the regime change in Syria.¹⁸ One year after the active military intervention of the US, on 30 September 2015, Russia carried out its first military operation in Syria

¹⁵ The US then changed its support of moderate opposition and supported the PYD/YPG. The new policy in fact was not really interested in regime change that accommodated actually Assad. Heiko Wimmen, "The U.S. joins the Turkey-PKK fight in northern Syria", <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/syria/us-joins-turkey-pkk-fight-northern-syria> ¹⁶ Afshon Ostovar and Will McCants (2013). *The Rebel Alliance: Why Syria's Armed Opposition Has Failed to Unify*, CAN, Accessed on: 25 February 2019. <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a582040.pdf>

¹⁷ Cohen, *Geography and Politics*, pp. 85, 259, 273-274.

¹⁸ "Russia's Syrian Power Play", <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/31/opinion/russias-syrian-power-play.html>. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov emphasized in January 2012 that "the regime change is none of Russia's business" while saying that the Russian policy did not want to remove anyone from power.

(Reuters, 30 September 2015). However, this military intervention was different from that of the US: Russia began military operations under the official invitation of the Damascus regime. As of September of 2015, all global powers except China had entered into the military intervention process. As of 30 September 2015, Syria became a typical example of how global conflicts of interest would be shaped after getting out of the control of centrifugal and centripetal powers.

Two Different Terrorist Organisations on the Turkish-Syrian Border: DAESH and YPG/PYD

Turkey has intensely felt the impacts of the Syrian Civil War over its centrifugal and centripetal forces. The Syrian Civil War has made Turkey the neighbour of the “compressed zone”. This points out an inevitable process whereby such regions would become the scene of intense conflict. The burning impact of the developments in Turkey’s neighbouring country increased the cost of the failure of Turkey to resolve the ethnic-separatist terrorist movement, which is an inheritance of the Cold War period, in the first ten years of the 21st century. As of 2015, Turkey was affected by the chaotic geography of the Middle East in two ways in the Syrian crisis. The first crisis stems from the Syrian political, economic and social systems that led to war. Second is the active intervention of the great powers. The centrifugal forces which are ethnic, racial, and religious differences and conflicts, political corruption, and poor economic performance created significant social tensions in Syria. Its tumultuous domestic politics have simultaneously created great concern for Turkish political leadership. The ongoing developments in Syria forced Turkey to carry out cross border military operations right in the middle of this compressed zone in 2016.

53 civilians died and about 150 civilians were injured in two separate terrorist bombings that took place in Reyhanlı, Turkey on 11 May 2013. These attacks have been recorded as the terrorist actions that caused the highest number of casualties in Turkey’s history. When 2014 came to

end, the struggle between Daesh and the SDF (the Syrian Democratic Forces), which formed the ground front of the US in its fight against Daesh, intensified, and the civil war was carried to the Turkish-Syrian border. Whether the local war in the compressed zone would spread to Turkey or not became the top agenda issue both in Turkey and abroad. During this time, Daesh attacked a crowd in Turkey, which had gathered to fight alongside the SDF forces in the battles in Ayn Al Arab on 20 July 2015. The attack, which killed 31 people died, pointed out a period where the centrifugal and centripetal forces have intensified their power as a result of the political atmosphere created by the referendum for the presidential system in Turkey. The PKK began terrorist acts as of the month of August in many urban settlements located in the south-eastern region of Turkey with the aim of announcing autonomous regions. The reestablishment of security was achieved with the consequence of high numbers of casualties through the joint military actions of the armed forces, gendarmerie, and police forces, which were dubbed as the “trench operations”. On October 10th, Turkey was shaken by suicide bombings that took place at a meeting in Ankara where Turkey’s actions regarding the Civil War in Syria were being protested. The attack dubbed the ‘Ankara Train Station Attack’ was recorded as the largest terrorist attack in Turkish history with 107 killed and more than 500 injured.

Cross Border Military Operation into the Compressed Zone

Turkey has encountered a more complicated period after the coup attempt of July 15th. Multi-layered hot conflicts on its borders have forced Turkish decision-makers to make a critical decision in the shatterbelt¹⁹, alongside with the rolling of the centrifugal forces introduced by the coup attempt of July 15th, namely getting involved militarily in the Syrian Civil War. Although Turkey maintained a clear attitude against the Damascus regime since the Syrian Civil War erupted, the regions

¹⁹ Cohen, *Geopolitics*. p. 9.

which were subject to military operations were the areas where two terrorist organisations established their control, rather than the regime itself. Turkey appears to have given two important messages to the world, especially through the Euphrates Shield Operation in August of 2016 and later through the Olive Branch Operation in January of 2018. The first message was that the Turkish political leadership was clearly using its effective political power on the armed forces. The second message came from the armed forces. The armed forces showed that they had the ability to plan, organize, and apply the common armed forces operation.

Approximately 40 per cent of the commanding ranks of the Turkish Armed Forces at the general/admiral level and 59 per cent of the general staff were discharged after the coup attempt of July 15th. The number of generals/admirals in the Armed Forces dropped from 326 to 196 by July 2017. Before the coup attempt, there were a total of 198 generals on duty composed of 10 full generals, 23 lieutenant generals, 50 major generals, and 115 brigadier generals. After the coup attempt, the number of full generals dropped to 7, lieutenant generals to 14, major generals to 21 and brigadier generals to 76. In the Naval Forces Command of Turkey, on July 15th while 2 full admirals, 4 vice admirals, 12 rear admirals upper half, 38 rear admirals lower half were serving, after the coup attempt the number of full admirals has not changed. The number of vice admirals has increased to 5, the number of rear admiral upper half has decreased to 6 and the number of full admirals has decreased to 21. In the Air Force, 2 full generals, 6 lieutenant generals, 3 major generals and 33 brigadier generals currently serve. Before July 15th, in the Air Force Command, there were 2 full generals, 8 lieutenant generals, 17 major generals and 45 brigadier generals were on active duty. After July 15th, 119 out of 1894 general staff officers were discharged. In the Armed Forces Command, 617 of the 921 general staff officers were discharged, and the percentage of those who were discharged was 67 per cent. In the Air Force Command, 295 of the

The number of Generals and Admirals in Turkish Armed Forces dismissed after 15th of July Coup Attempt

Number of Army Generals		
	July 15, 2016	May 2017
Full Generals	10	7
Lieutenant Generals	23	14
Major Generals	50	21
Brigadiers	115	76
TOTAL	198	118

Number of Flag Officers		
	July 15, 2016	May 2017
Full Admirals	2	2
Vice Admirals	4	5
Rear Admirals	12	6
Commodores	36	21
TOTAL	54	34

Number of Air Force Generals		
	July 15, 2016	May 2017
Full Generals	2	2
Lieutenant Generals	6	6
Major Generals	17	3
Brigadiers	45	33
TOTAL	70	44

	Total Number of Generals and Flag Officers	Number of Officers	Number of Non-Commissioned Officers	Number of Reserve Officers	Number of Professional Enlisted
July 15, 2016	322	32189	68978	5792	13088
May 2017	196	24705	62781	8736	16743

Source: Anadolu Agency

545 general staff officers were discharged. In the Air Force Command, the percentage of those who were discharged was determined to be 55 per cent. The percentage of those who were discharged in the Naval Forces Command was 48 per cent. Out of 428 general staff officers, 207 officers were discharged.²⁰ The military operations are Turkey's politics of elimination of the traumatic impacts of the centrifugal and centripetal forces. As such, both military operations are strategic decisions.

Another reality that the cross border military operations demonstrated is that Turkey was able to display its ability to fight against two different terrorist formations, namely Daesh and the PYD/YPG.

Besides its military capabilities, Turkey has created an impact across the border through its humanitarian aid and administrative organisation. Through cross-border military operations, Turkey was able to create a stable safe zone for 2.3 million people²¹ in an area comprising 6 per cent of Syrian territory (roughly 11,000 square kilometres). Thus, it is possible to mention the role of Turkey in stabilising both domestic and regional security in its neighbourhood in a period where the balance of the security pendulum has become upset in the shatterbelt of the Middle East.

Turkey was able to use its power with an effective will against semiautonomous and state-like structures created in the border region. The cross-border military operations may be defined as a "pre-emptive

²⁰ Anadolu Ajansı (Anatolian News Agency). (23 July 2017). TSK'da general ve amiral sayısı yüzde 40 azaldı. (Number of generals and admirals in the Turkish Armed forces has decreased by 40 per cent) Accessed on: 03 March 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/tskda-general-ve-amiral-sayisi-yuzde-40-azaldi/867529>, NTV. (06 August 2018). TSK'da kurmaylık sistemi değişti. (The system of general staff in the Turkish Armed Forces has changed) Accessed on: 03 March 2019. <https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/tskda-kurmaylik-sistemi-degisti,TOYbeYPKiU6WabkhNdDCEw>

²¹ Suriye Gündemi. <https://www.suriyegundemi.com/suriye-deki-nuefus-rakamlari>. Accessed on 15 January 2021, Washington Post. "What Trump just triggered in Syria, visualized", <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/10/17/what-trump-just-triggered-syria-visualized/> Accessed on 15 January 2021.

strike” in terms of Turkish foreign policy. This pre-emptive strike means that “Turkey involved proactively in the game” against developments that relate to its national security. Even under the extreme stress conditions that the negative impact of the centrifugal and centripetal forces created within its borders, Turkey has shown its ability to protect its national interests. More importantly, the pre-emptive politics points out how stability in Syria needs to be read from an Ankara-centred perspective alongside both non-regional great powers and regional powers.

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Turkey's New Role and Aspirations in a Changing Energy and Security World

Mehmet Öğütçü

As a direct result of fundamental shifts in power, global energy dynamics are changing and a new world energy and geopolitical order are in the making. Countries including Turkey have to reassess their policies and standing in world energy and increasingly in climate change. Economy, energy, geography and security are inseparable. It was so in coal, oil, increasingly natural gas, and now more evidently in renewables, other strategic natural resources including water and food, technology, financing, where they affect economies and security of countries fundamentally.

Energy supply security is a strategic matter for Turkey — not only for oil and gas but also for national and economic security, as it has a sizeable energy-deficit economy (ranking the world's 18th and Europe's 7th largest), and depending on foreign imports for 98 per cent of its gas and 93 per cent of its oil supply. This chapter will consider how world energy dynamics could affect Turkey's aspirations. It will also look into new opportunities and constraints in Turkey's energy economy and geopolitics, and gas market dynamics in the EU, and the energy-rich region around Turkey, before proposing some recommendations for government and business leaders.

The energy industry that emerges from the present pandemic crisis, economic downturn and greening campaign will be significantly different from the one that came before. The shockwaves to both worldwide civilisation and the international economy of the coronavirus continue to escalate, with energy being the latest front¹. Energy markets

¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/danielmarkind/2020/03/09/how-the-coronavirus-is-changing-the-world-energy-situation-and-what-it-means-for-russia-the-middle-east-and-american-shale-producers/>

are still reacting to global shifts in oil, gas, power generation, as well as to the Covid-19 crisis and other developments. Longer-term trends that have been reshaping the energy landscape in recent years are also continuing to exert significant influence on markets across the world.

The new dynamics in world energy and our region that are unfolding include, inter alia: greater demand growth over the long-term emerging away from the OECD area, the continued dominance of fossil fuels, new supply sources beyond the Middle East and the former Soviet Union, strong growth of unconventional fuels, price volatility, inadequate investment due to uncertainties and risks, conflictual IOC vs. NOC relationship, geopolitical tensions, heightened climate change concerns, and green deal requirements. If we are to meet our global climate targets and avoid dangerous climate change, the world also needs to push for a significant and concerted transition in its energy sources.

World energy dynamics

Global dynamics are set to change the way that we live over the next decades. The traditional balance of power and great power competition is no longer enough to describe our world. New players have entered and are to be factored in any government policy and business decision options. The chessboard is too crowded. Not only are there too many players, but there are also too many games and new rules to the game. The ongoing transition to renewables is not just a shift from one set of fuels to another. It involves a much deeper transformation of the world's energy systems that will have major social, economic, and political implications, which go well beyond the energy sector. The term 'energy transformation or transition' captures these broader implications. The global energy transformation will have a particularly pronounced impact on security and geopolitics. It is one of the undercurrents of change that will help to redraw the geopolitical map of the 21st century. The new geopolitical reality that is taking shape will be fundamentally different from the conventional map of energy geopolitics that has been dominant for more than one hundred years.

The Covid-19 pandemic has tested the resilience of our societies as never before since World War II and has taught countries and multilateral institutions that they must become more resistant to threats and attacks. There is a need to ensure that we can bounce back from such crises and emerge stronger². International capital available for long-term energy investment is scarce all around the world and has declined by \$400 billion to \$1.5 trillion in 2020. Global energy investment could sink to its lowest level in history due to fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

Oil is bearing the brunt of this shock because of the curtailment in mobility and aviation, which represent nearly 60 per cent of global oil demand³. After oil, the fuel most affected by the crisis is set to be coal. Coal demand could decline by 8 per cent. The pullback in energy spending cuts across all sectors, from fossil fuels, renewables, and efficiency. It means lost jobs and economic opportunities today, as well as lost energy supply that we might well need tomorrow once the economy recovers. The slowdown in spending on key clean energy technologies also risks undermining the much-needed transition to more resilient and sustainable energy systems. The need to incentivise private capital flow into clean energy development is greater than ever, and will likely become more urgent with time⁴.

² The resilience of societies must be constantly trained. One way of doing so is working together as countries, institutions and people, as public and private sector, as civilian and military personnel to better plan for pandemics in the future, to protect critical infrastructure and to improve business continuity planning, both in the public and private sector.

³ https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2020/05/27/Energy-investment-on-pace-for-record-decline-IEA-analysis-says/5531590579451/

⁴ Many international banks have largely withdrawn from parts of Africa, Russia, Central Asia, and the Middle East in the aftermath of the financial crisis, or because they have become much more selective and demanding in their choice of projects.

Turkey's transition

Turkey, a country so intertwined in the global energy economy by virtue of its heavy dependence on imports of oil and gas, 93 and 98 per cent respectively (also in a considerable degree of imports in coal, renewables, and nuclear technology, finance and technology), can hardly escape the winds of change now in the making as a result of the new dynamics in world energy and geopolitics. With the ongoing new game-changers in regional and global energy, investment and geopolitics, Turkey could well sit on the global energy board as a regional power if it changes the way its energy diplomacy and strategy have been thus far handled. Undoubtedly, Turkey has big ambitions for the future, aspiring to become one of the world's top 10 economies by 2023 (which is difficult to occur under the global economic challenges, but the ambition remains, even if it is achieved at a later date, perhaps 2030); it has a young and increasingly better educated, mobilised population; its middle-class is developing and the urban transformation has gained incredible speed — all these factors generate stronger energy demand, significantly above the world average. Therefore, energy is not simply a commercial commodity for Turkey to fuel its ever-demanding economic machine, but it is a “soft-belly”. Energy represents a vital national security matter, linked inextricably to the global system. It is not only energy supply security that Turkey strives to achieve through the diversification of energy sources and fuels, but also the attraction of massive international capital (to the tune of \$100 bn over the next decade), into major energy projects and deployment of the latest low-carbon technologies.

Turkey has to find ways of unlocking new sources of finance and investment, via the growth of bond, securitisation, and equity markets, and potentially by tapping into large funds held by institutional investors, IFIs, insurers, sovereign wealth funds, Islamic finance, and companies. Perhaps creating an energy fund to provide seed capital to major energy projects could be considered as one way of enticing further international investors.

Turkey is no longer the same Turkey that has been a “loyal ally” of NATO during the Cold War era. There is now a more assertive Turkey within the Alliance and in the region, and there are serious divergences in security prioritisation between Turkey and its traditional allies. Yet, Turkey is a much more indispensable “partner” (and in some cases, “disrupter”) in a broader Eurasian region, the Middle East, the Gulf, the East Mediterranean and Africa. That may lead to more sustained and constructive partnerships in shaping the future of the region—or it could crack open fault lines of disagreement. “NATO would undoubtedly be weaker without Turkey⁵”, as indicated by its Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg. Despite some deep differences over the past few years, both NATO and the EU recognise the need to work together with Turkey to achieve relative stability and security from Russia to Saudi Arabia and China to South-East Europe.

Turkish energy and hub aspirations

Turkey’s development as a regional energy hub looks natural, given its privileged location between countries that harbour the world’s oil and gas reserves to its east, north and south, and one of the world’s biggest energy markets in the West. However, there is a long way to go for this to be realised. The oft-quoted cliché about Turkey’s bridging role in energy needs to be redefined in light of the revolutionary rise of renewables, coupled with declining costs for wind, solar, geothermal and efficiency, the ascendancy of electrical and hydrogen cars, lesser use of gas in power generation and climate change-induced decarbonisation efforts. Pipelines may turn into pipedreams in the not too distant future.

Understandably, Turkey is not content only to be a simple “bridge” over which energy flows. It aspires to become a regional “hub” that can serve its strategic and commercial interests. Certainly, the country has the potential to become a major regional “hub” in the true sense of the

⁵ https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2020/05/27/Energy-investment-on-pace-for-record-decline-IEA-analysis-says/5531590579451/

word, for energy flows in the next decade or so if smarter policies can be possibly put in place to both ensure its energy security, and serve as a reliable partner for producing and consuming nations, investors and operators. It is on the way to become a major transit provider, but it is currently far from becoming a hub.

Turkey's priority is to ensure energy security for its heavily energy-dependent economy, which is larger than many of its neighbours combined. Then comes serving other destinations with excess capacity as a transit country. Turkish strategists also see the turning of their country into an east-west and north-south energy corridor as part of a broader plan aimed at enhancing Ankara's geopolitical and economic role in the global system.

Turkey is already the largest economic powerhouse in the region, although its dream of becoming a trillion-dollar economy in the next few years ("2023 Vision") seems to have become a difficult target, at least for the foreseeable future, as a result of the currency crisis and Covid-19 pandemic. The biggest concern is the large current account deficit that is being financed mostly by short-term volatile capital inflows. Still, Turkey is a country that grows fast, is urbanised, and hosts a growing middle class with a strong energy consumption tendency. A few years back, it was not far behind China in economic growth and the energy demand has been continually on the increase.

Turkey's excessive dependence on external sources does not only bring heightened energy security concerns but also brings about a serious financial drain on the economy. The energy import bill is expected to total \$181.3 bn in the next three years. Energy imports cost \$42.99 bn in 2018, a 15.6% increase in 2017 and 20% of the total Turkish imports of \$223 bn. Turkey's overall import bill, including energy and other items, totalled \$18.81 billion in March 2020, with energy accounting for 14.5 per cent of the overall import figures⁶.

⁶ https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2020/05/27/Energy-investment-on-pace-for-record-decline-IEA-analysis-says/5531590579451/

Over the past few years, the Turkish government has made significant structural changes in the country's energy sector. In particular, it has reduced the share of gas in power generation⁷ and substituted it via locally produced lignite and renewable resources⁸. Reducing gas for power consumption has been possible thanks to Turkey's current excess generating capacity, which has forced down power prices on Istanbul's EPIAS power market⁹. There is also a deliberate policy of bringing in more competitively priced spot LNG cargos vs pipeline gas. The Turkish leadership aspire to pursue a national goal of becoming a natural gas trading hub, selling excess gas to third countries from TANAP, TurkStream and others that Turkey will have access to. For this purpose, Turkey insists on easing destination clauses in both current and future contracts.

Competition over the development of Caspian petroleum and largely untapped natural gas reserves, and control over future export routes, remains intense. Russia is seeking control over export routes for these oil and gas resources for its own commercial and political ends. But Russian influence is being challenged. New oil pipeline routes to China and the Mediterranean via Turkey are being built. Turkey aspires to become a key transit state for moving both natural gas and oil from the Caspian region and from the broader Middle East via pipelines crossing its territory¹⁰. There are also two new additional potential sources of gas supply to mobilise for Turkey in the future - Iraq and the East Mediterranean region — but they are fraught with political,

⁷ Out of April 2020's total production, 47.6 per cent was generated by hydro plants, while 13.7 per cent was derived from imported coal and 7.7 per cent from natural gas power plants. The share of local coal plants in electricity generation was 14.1 per cent. Wind plants generated 10.3 per cent and the remaining 6.4 per cent came from geothermal, fuel oil and biogas plants.

⁸ <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/share-of-renewables-in-energy-generation-soars-in-turkey-154434>

⁹ <https://www.oxfordenergy.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Gas-Supply-Changes-in-Turkey-Insight-24.pdf>

¹⁰ https://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR1144z2.html

geopolitical, and economic difficulty, so their materialisation remains relatively remote. It is also possible for Rosneft to emerge as a gas supplier to Turkey from the Kurdish region of Iraq where it has expanded its footprint for the past few years. In parallel, Novatek could also become a gas supplier from the Eastern Mediterranean in Lebanon or Syria.

Hydrocarbons are valuable only if they can be transited from where they are produced to where they are consumed. Turkey has historically been one of the most important transit corridors between the East and the West (now, increasingly the North and the South as well) and provides the only marine passage from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. Its control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles has dictated much of the geopolitical history and economic flows of the region. Turkey is not only a major transit country but also a consumer, investor, and security provider to cross-border energy infrastructure in its region. Although it is poor in resource endowment, Turkey enjoys a privileged geographical location (sitting on one of the world's most valuable real estates), as a neighbour to a significant portion of the world's proven gas and oil reserves, in particular those in the Middle East, East Mediterranean and the Caspian basin

Turkey has the opportunity to progress from being a regional gas transit country to become a hub and reshape its natural gas ambitions, given the changing dynamics in world energy markets and the new “window of opportunity” opening to revisit the existing “take or pay” contracts expiring from 2021 onwards. TANAP and TurkStream pipelines have become operational by the end of 2019 reinforcing Turkey's volume and transmission capacity. Further liberalisation of Turkey's gas markets, legal and institutional framework, financial viability and the convergence of foreign/security policies and energy goals will substantially contribute to Turkey's “hub” aspiration.

Turkey has four international gas import pipelines with a total technical import capacity of 146.9 mcm/d (52.9 bcm/year), through which it imports gas from Azerbaijan, Iran, and Russia. Four cross-border gas pipelines are in operation: the West Gas (16 bcm) and Blue Stream (14 bcm) pipelines from Russia, the Tabriz-Erzurum (10 bcm) pipeline from Iran and the South Caucasus (6.6 bcm) from Azerbaijan. TANAP started carrying its first gas molecules to Eskisehir in June 2018. The first leg of the TurkStream pipeline was also completed in November 2018, with the first gas started flowing. It is unclear whether and when TurkStream-II will be able to transit Russian gas via Bulgaria to south-eastern Europe. Each of these pipelines has a take-or-pay clause in its bilateral agreements, which obliges Turkey to make periodic payments of specified amounts whether the gas is delivered or not. The obligation to pay is thus independent of the consumption of the product. Due to the highly concentrated nature of Turkey's suppliers of oil and gas from Middle East countries and Russia, Turkey would benefit from diversifying its source base from both pipelines and LNG. TANAP and TurkStream provide three new entry points, doubling Turkey's send-out capacity and reducing the likelihood of gas shortages during times of peak demand. However, further efforts are needed to capitalise on Turkey's unique position as a consumer and transit provider to bring Iranian, Iraqi, the East Mediterranean, and Turkmen natural gas flows into Turkey in the future without being lost in complex foreign policy and ideological wrangling.

Asymmetrical relationship with Russia

The TurkStream pipeline launched in November 2019 is a relatively small component of the wider gas supply chain to the EU, representing just over 6 per cent of such imports. Yet, seen from Moscow, this pipeline is a potentially significant addition to Russia's capabilities to export gas to Europe and Turkey. When TurkStream's second phase is complete, it would represent between 16 and 19 per cent of Russian sales to the

EU and Turkey¹¹. While the pipeline will surely significantly reduce transit revenues for transmission system operators, including Ukraine's \$3 billion earnings from transitions¹², it will facilitate South-Eastern Europe's interconnectivity through the building of a second-string capacity through Bulgaria and Serbia, paving the way for Russian gas to reach Hungary. Additionally, TurkStream is expected to further enhance Turkey's geostrategic importance as an energy hub, coupling Ankara's ambitions in this field with Russia's drive to protect its share in the Turkish and EU natural gas market¹³.

TurkStream's other implication is that Turkey is contributing to an essential element of Russia's multi-pronged, long-term strategy of remaining Europe's major gas supplier while creating a "third gas corridor" in addition to the Ukrainian and Baltic Sea supply routes. TurkStream-2, reaching the final destination of the Baumgarten physical gas trading centre in Austria, is unlikely to affect the markets of South-East Europe, targeted by the EU-backed "Southern Gas Corridor" ending in Italy after the completion of the TAP linked to TANAP. However, if additional gas supplies come from Shah Deniz-3, Absheron, Ümit, Nakhchivan areas, even across the Caspian from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, the Kurdish region of Iraq and the Eastern Mediterranean, coupled with further LNG supplies, then there will be an inevitable gas-gas competition with Russian gas pipelines. As part of a balanced

¹¹ The offshore component of the system consists of two parallel pipelines running through the Black Sea, which enter the water near Anapa, on the Russian coast, and come ashore on the Turkish coast in the Thrace region, near the town of Kiyikoy.

¹² Gazprom's 31.5 bcm/year TurkStream pipeline — delivering gas to Turkey through one 15.75 bcm/year string, and transiting gas to Bulgaria through the other — has provided a powerful trump card in negotiations with the EU and Ukraine in replacing the existing export line through Ukraine. Gazprom's transit contract with Ukraine expired at the end of 2019 and was extended for five years under a re-negotiated deal with the Ukrainian Gas Transmissions Systems Operator re-mapping how they transmit energy, making it more of a European-style system.

¹³ Historically, Russia has taken its responsibility to provide reliable gas supplies seriously and has fulfilled its contractual obligations even in times of crisis when many people feared possible disruptions.

diversification strategy, Ankara is actively participating in and strongly supporting all pipelines and LNG projects, almost equally. One thing, however, is clear: pipelines are not only to connect the producing areas with consumers, but they also create strong bonds and mutual dependencies between countries in and across which they are built, with at least 50 years of the life cycle.

The US has opposed TurkStream (alongside the Nordstream-2) on the grounds it would strengthen Russia's economic and political grip over Turkey, Europe and also erode Ukraine's role as a natural gas transit. The real intention also includes opening more room for its own LNG exports to Europe and Turkey. Turkey and Russia both should prepare themselves for a new era in global natural gas dynamics. The "buy or pay" long-term contracts will need to be more flexible, prices adjusted accordingly to hub-based indexes, with the provision of export to third countries provided. Declining costs and rising capacity factors of renewable energy sources along with increased competitiveness of battery storage, will also affect the prospects for the natural gas business. The growth in LNG supply, competitive prices, and the FSRU facilities mushrooming will likely have consequences for pipeline gas.

There is also a growing anti-natural gas lobby in the context of a non-fossil fuel green future¹⁴. These trends will affect the course of the decades-long gas partnership between the two countries. Despite the existence of a robust energy partnership as it stands, Turkey and Russia do not often see eye to eye in their perceived geostrategic spheres of influence along the belt of the Black Sea, the Caucasus, Syria, Iraq and East Mediterranean. They find themselves supporting the opposite sides of the Libyan, Syrian, Georgian, Ukrainian and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts. Black Sea security, peace and stability in the Caucasus, S-400 air defence, tourism, construction, nuclear power plants, and the targeted

¹⁴ The gas industry's challenge is to better explain the connection between infrastructure projects and a long list of public benefits: more reliable energy supply, lower energy costs, more efficient energy use, and improved safety among them.

trade volume from today's \$26 billion to \$100 billion will no doubt continue to define the future of the Turco-Russian partnership.

When analysed in-depth, one hindrance in the “strategic partnership” or “marriage of convenience” forged between Turkey and Russia is that it appears to favour Moscow more than Ankara for the time being in terms of what each side gains from the commercial and political standpoints. All in all, it will be difficult to sustain the current intensity of relations unless both sides are resolved to take concrete steps to redress the asymmetry and ensure a “win-win” development of the partnership in the newly emerging global order.

Turkish-EU “Green Deal” energy partnership

The pandemic crisis has further highlighted the EU's shortcomings, such as an over-dependence on extended global value chains in areas such as medicines or over-reliance on raw materials from Asia or Africa. Thus, there is a pressing need for the EU to build strategic, sustainable and resilient industrial value chains in key sectors, including energy, critical raw materials, clean game-changing technologies (5G, AI), pharmaceuticals and medical equipment, and defence and space industry.

The decades-long Turkish-EU relationship is under serious strain. Accession talks are no longer credible, in both Ankara and Brussels. There are question marks even over the modernisation of the existing Customs Union (to add services and agriculture sectors), signed back in 1996 as part of the full membership process. New problems continue emerge as the channels of dialogue cease to function as they should and interests collide. Yet, both the EU and Turkey have strong strategic reasons to preserve and develop their partnership as they share a common destiny and geography. There is a need for a genuinely positive and feasible agenda. The questions are: how to separate issues of strong disagreement or even confrontation from areas that could advance and foster closer co-operation; is it possible for this to be done outside the

stalled succession discussions; and will the two parties benefit enough from such a move so that they engage in such a plan?

Infrastructure co-operation is one area of increasing mutual interest, while at the same time most of it is not in the area of potential confrontation. Turkey is the one economy that can connect the east and west, and the north and south involving the EU. Turkey is a world leader in mega infrastructure investments. Over the past decade, the country is building tunnels, bridges, airports, and canals, while its energy companies are contributing to massive pipeline projects spanning Eurasia that will deliver Caspian, Russian and Middle Eastern oil and gas to European markets. Turkish firms are not only helping to address the infrastructure gap in Turkey itself, but also across the regions.

The EU-Turkey dialogue and partnership needs a powerful energy agenda that is detached from the accession process and the energy chapter, as these are delayed or close to termination for various reasons. Over the last decades, gas and electricity have been at the heart of EU-Turkey energy cooperation. These sectors are highly visible and make for impressive announcements, but the impact in these areas is likely to prove limited in practice, given the small scope of regional gas transit and electricity trading. On the contrary, co-operation in other fields—such as renewables, energy efficiency, nuclear power, and emissions trading—could bring real benefits for long-term energy, climate and environmental sustainability. It could even shore up the region's shaky macroeconomic and geopolitical stability¹⁵.

Energy is a particularly important field that attracts high business, political and public interest. Often international energy relations are seen through the prism of trans-border gas infrastructure. There are a number of possible gas projects on the EU-Turkey diplomatic table such as TANAP, TAP and Turkish Stream I-II. The question of the development of a regional liquid gas market is not less important than

¹⁵ <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/mehmet-ogutcu-julian-popov/energy-could-energize-the-degenerating-turkish-eu-partnership-129289>

the pipeline-only focus. Turkey must be involved in this gas market debate and development. There are however other key energy areas that need to be included. Electricity infrastructure is one of them. Turkey trades electricity with the EU and the trading volume is likely to increase in the future. Turkish grid operator, TEIAS, is an observer in the ENTSO-E and the Energy Community. TEIAS is also a shareholder of the SEE Coordination Auction Office. The EU and Turkey should work towards acceleration of the electricity infrastructure and market integration and they should do so separately from the accession process and the progress with the negotiation of the Energy Chapter. Hydro-energy and new nuclear power plants under construction are other areas that need to find their place in the EU-Turkey talks. Variable renewables, in particular, need larger territory to balance their variability and closer energy cooperation will be very helpful in that respect.

Several other topics need more business-like and less politically coloured discussion: electric car infrastructure and power demand; gas demand projections that might significantly reduce the development of stranded assets; energy efficiency plans; cross border air pollution; cross border demand management tools; cybersecurity of the increasingly digitalised energy systems. All these issues could be brought together into the emerging new approach to energy security.

In terms of governance, there are a number of important formats where Turkey could activate its participation. The EU-Turkey Summit is clearly one of them. Other EU-Turkey energy-related formats could also be involved. The role of Turkey in the Energy Community could be reassessed and strengthened. Turkey could also establish close relations with the already established high-level group energy ministers group CESEC.

Energy is a vital part of the EU's increasingly strained relationship with Turkey. There needs to be a broader, beyond oil and gas, and more sustainable approach to EU-Turkey energy relations. There is a need

for a new framework that does not depend on confrontational issues like natural gas offshore Cyprus. The framework should not be legally binding but open and project, business and security-based. This bridge needs to be built separately from the accession process and must not be seen as a substitute for the accession negotiations.

The shaky strategic partnership with the US

Relations between Turkey and its Western allies in the United States and Europe have been on a steady downward trajectory for some eight years. While Presidents Donald Trump and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan established a measure of rapport, their highly personalised dealings only papered over the structural differences undermining the relationship. With President Joe Biden unlikely to continue Trump's *laissez-faire* approach, several of these simmering disagreements could bubble over in 2021 and lead to a deeper rupture in relations if not well managed by both sides. Beyond the change of tone and approach from a new U.S. administration, several key strategic and energy decisions could determine Turkey's direction for years to come¹⁶.

The time has come for the US to rethink its approach toward Turkey. What we are witnessing is the gradual but steady demise of a relationship; Turkey may be an ally in the formal sense, but it is no longer seen as a "strategic partner"¹⁷. Although the bilateral relationship has always had its share of irritants, the overarching threat posed by the Soviet Union allowed both countries to look past these disagreements. Now, thirty years after the Cold War, the US and Turkey often find themselves on different sides of a variety of important issues. In the absence of a common threat or a larger shared strategic objective, this list of disagreements is likely to dominate the relationship. Due to close ties with Russia, Ankara often disagrees with the NATO consensus concerning the threat that Moscow poses to the alliance and

¹⁶ <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2021/01/19/494738/flashpoints-u-s-turkey-relations-2021/>

¹⁷ https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/CSR82_Cook_Turkey_0.pdf

its interests. Turkish leaders seek a regional status that allows Ankara to shape the immediate geopolitical environment and maximise Turkish economic, political, diplomatic, and military influence. Energy may be such an area to bolster the bilateral relations and create new ties of dependency and interests¹⁸. For both Washington and Ankara, the stakes are high, possibly higher than many experts and officials in the two capitals realise. Not only is a new Eurasian economic partnership of significant proportions emerging to the north and east of Turkey's borders, but the shift in the global balance of power emanating from this new energy-driven partnership could send powerful and consequential reverberations into the Caspian and the Middle East petroleum-rich regions¹⁹.

The Middle East and the Gulf region are in no state of stability, and the social contract is almost over. They will likely keep the agenda busy over the next decade or so. The implications for both the US and Turkey could not be clearer. How both countries recognise and treat these sets of new circumstances will determine how well their regional interests and objectives will be protected and sustained. These include commercial, energy and security matters of the highest priority. Clearly, both countries can act unilaterally, but as recent history has demonstrated, such actions can end up being counter-productive and spawn the worst of political and economic consequences, both domestically and internationally. Rather, at this critical junction in the affairs of Central Asia, the Middle East, the Black Sea, and the Eastern Mediterranean region, both Turkey and the US should invest in a systemic and time-framed comprehensive re-evaluation of their multi-tiered relationship. The purpose would be to lay the foundation for a more robust engagement of common interests and common goals that would greatly assist in crafting a new economic and security architecture that would have real influence and capacity in these four critical sub-regions adjacent to Turkey's borders.

¹⁸ <https://www.turkheritage.org/en/multimedia/tho-expert-interviews/exclusive-expert-chat-mehmet-ogutcu>

¹⁹ <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/-turkish-us-energy-partnership-ii-67261>

In the new era ahead of us there are opportunities, giving substance to the 2009 “model partnership” beyond the outmoded Cold War-era “transactional” relationship that shapes our agenda today.

The energy partnership, carrying serious geopolitical caveats, is an area of mutually beneficial engagements that Ankara and Washington, should consider in the context of the changing world energy dynamics. There is a need for both sides to commit to a serious Energy Security Dialogue at both the ministerial level, chaired by the US Secretary of Energy and the Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and joined by senior business leaders. Ankara and Washington should focus on energy trade, investment in domestic energy production, clean technologies, efficiency, carbon emissions, and market liberalisation.

The energy relationship with the US is right now limited to growing LNG trade. Turkey has managed to receive at least one-third of its natural gas supply from LNG as of April 2020 and, surprisingly, 40 per cent of this volume came from the US as part of an ambitious \$100 billion trade target with the US²⁰. Political and security matters are preoccupying the minds of two countries more than anything else.

The US has committed to working with Turkey, assisting on a larger regional strategy for increased energy production and diversification of oil and gas transit routes from the Caspian basin, collaborating on the energy projects identified as a priority — for the development, financing, and insurance of energy projects such as pipelines, power plants, and electricity distribution systems. There is also interest in working together to deploy renewable energy and clean coal technologies, increase the reliability and efficiency of electricity generation and delivery, and decrease energy intensity.

²⁰ Trade target of \$100 bn is far from being met anytime soon, particularly at a time when the US is upping the game to sell more, buy less and relocate the US firms back home for generating more employment and keeping technology transfers in check.

In the Bosphorus, US disaster response capabilities and the lessons learned from the Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico could prove useful for helping Turkish civilian and military leaders plan emergency responses to oil and chemical spills and other events that could block this critical waterway. Informal talks at the senior leader and staff levels could now expand beyond pipeline security to include reducing such vulnerabilities²¹.

There are a number of serious flash-points in the region concerning energy and geopolitical tensions that require a closer Turkish-US partnership. With a diversified and dynamic economy, regional energy hub status, a strong member of NATO and a not so perfect democracy, Turkey's standing as the key regional play-maker during this period of flux should not be disregarded or under-estimated by Washington policy-makers and politicians. The world is rapidly changing and evolving, leaning forward to meet current and unexpected challenges in a re-defined US-Turkish strategic partnership awaits, but not necessarily for long. All in all, the resumption of the American-Turkish discussions and negotiations aimed at hammering out a tangible, "special relationship" including in energy between the two countries is overdue.

Conclusion

Turkey no doubt has realised that the age of superpowers has passed and that countries belonging to what Parag Khanna called the "second world" are coming to enjoy greater opportunities for global influence²². However, having greater opportunities does not mean that everything is possible, much less that leaders always know how to use those opportunities correctly.

It is not easy to play the new game on all fronts at once: by trying to join the EU, fostering strategic partnership with the US, using Russia

²¹ https://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR1144z2.html

²² <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/jun/8/turkey-mirror-new-world/>

and China as bargaining chips when it so fits, hoping to become the leading power in the Middle East and East Mediterranean, testing the waters for participation in the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation in Eurasia and by positioning itself as a world player with the intention to actively participate in resolving the problems. The result has been major tensions at both the regional and global levels.

In this changing and challenging new setting, Turkey will have to forge a novel strategy to respond to a mind-bogglingly complicated array of current and anticipated developments. By redefining its national interests in realistic terms, away from rhetorical discourse, under a smart strategy and leadership, Turkey could well be one of the new regional powers impacting the new global energy and geopolitical order. In this vein, going forward, Turkey could benefit a lot from working together with its traditional allies and partners, as well as with Russia, China and neighbours on energy and security matters.

TurkStream: A win-win project for Ankara and Moscow

Nursin Ateşoğlu Güney

The TurkStream pipeline is a win-win project for both Turkey and Russia. But just as there are winners, so too are there losers in this strategically important undertaking. The opportunities and risks embedded in this project became the subject of debate, even before the first gas was pumped on January 1, 2020. In this chapter, a brief examination will first be given to how the TurkStream project developed and replaced the South Stream project. Then, how the energy dynamics of Europe will be affected by the launch of TurkStream, and simultaneously how Turkey and Russia are now becoming the winning side of the project, will be explained. Lastly, this chapter will forecast how the new energy equation stemming from TurkStream is likely to affect Turkish-Russia relations in future.

The conjunctural background of TurkStream

In this first section, the likely impact of TurkStream on the East-West gas supply game will be assessed. In the second section, the mutual benefits gained both by Ankara and Moscow as the two winners of launching the TurkStream pipeline project will be evaluated. Finally, a forecast related to the future impact of TurkStream on bilateral Russo-Turkish relations will be made.

After the downing of a Russian fighter jet by Turkey in 2015, relations between the two countries soured for about six months. The deteriorated relationship between Moscow and Ankara negatively affected the pace of the TurkStream project, which replaced the South Stream project in 2014. It was only after 2016, when relations between the two were normalised, that the TurkStream pipeline began to be constructed, thanks to the determination of the Russian and Turkish leadership to

keep Turkish-Russian energy relations on the right track. It is known that in the follow up of the normalisation period, relations between Ankara and Moscow diversified and were strengthened beyond trade, tourism, and energy. The most important development in this regard was realised in the realm of the defence sector. Ankara, in the face of proliferating missiles in the Middle East, purchased Russian S-400s to meet its missile defence needs.

Given the rapidly growing relations between Moscow and Ankara, the S-400 deal caused a fair amount of concern in Western capitals. Both Europe and the US presumed that this rapprochement was a potential threat to the NATO alliance's existence. Accordingly, energy cooperation between Ankara and Moscow obtained new geopolitical importance. During the inauguration ceremony of TurkStream in Istanbul, when the Russian and Turkish presidents came together, the US, in particular, reached the conclusion that there must be more to the agenda of the Istanbul Summit than merely the natural gas trade. The US in this regard tried to exert great pressure on Turkey to not buy the S-400s, or at least not make them operational. As declared by Washington, the US decided to impose five out of 12 CAASTA sanctions when Ankara tested the Russian anti-missile system. According to this widespread misperception in the West, Turkey, by "aligning with Moscow" is now "turning its face against the West" and has wholeheartedly changed its strategic axis or outlook. This assessment was a mistake in the geopolitical reading of Turkey's current foreign policy. On the contrary, Ankara, in the conduct of its foreign and security policy, established a compartmentalised relationship with Moscow, which has enabled it to both cooperate and conflict simultaneously with Russia on various issues.

Compartmentalisation has become a useful foreign policy strategy for Ankara since the meaning of alliances radically changed after the end of the Cold War. Accordingly, Turkey has preferred to construct an issue-based cooperation network with interested parties, including not only its allies in NATO but also Russia. Within this framework, Ankara is seeking to verify its relationship with Moscow by expanding

the number of issues on which cooperation is possible such as tourism, trade, energy and defence.. The intensification and multiplication of Turkish-Russian issue-based cooperation is, on the one hand, a risk management strategy for Ankara. On the other hand, Turkey has also increased some areas of cooperation with Moscow. These issue areas can be used as linkages by Ankara to have advantageous bargaining space in the Turkish-Russian mutual interdependency equation. Keeping Russia within the framework of mutual interdependency has been essential for Turkey since Moscow and Ankara have confrontational relations in areas including Libya and Syria. Because of changes in the European energy market after the Crimean crisis, Russia started to give more importance to Turkish-Russian energy cooperation and the TurkStream project. TurkStream has emerged as a win-win project for both capitals in the current geopolitical and geo-economic landscape.

The TurkStream Pipeline and European Gas Market

TurkStream has been operational since January 1, 2020. It consists of two 930-kilometre-long offshore lines extending from Russia to Turkey across the Black Sea and two separate onshore lines at 142 kilometres and 70 kilometres long. This important pipeline project has a capacity of 31.5 billion cubic meters (bcm). Ankara, with the first line, is aiming to supply 15.75 bcm of gas for domestic purposes (Turan, 2018). With the second line, another roughly 15.75 bcm is expected to be carried to Europe via Bulgaria. The new TurkStream pipeline project is now replacing the South Stream project, which was designed for the transportation of Russian gas to Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Slovenia, and Austria. When the EU previously insisted on the implication of the Third Energy Package, this brought South Stream to an end. The Third Energy Package requires an anti-monopoly rule to be observed within the Union. This rule says that energy companies (in this case it is the Gazprom), cannot own both the transit infrastructure and at the same time sell gas through it. By foreseeing the destiny of South Stream (especially in the atmosphere where Western-Russian relations were tense because of the Crimea crisis)- Putin announced that Russia

was withdrawing from the project. It was not a coincidence that this announcement came during President Putin's official visit to Turkey on December 1st, 2014.

Switching from South Stream to TurkStream was an attempt of rapprochement to Ankara by Russia. Moreover, it was a damage limitation strategy for Moscow as Russia had invested a lot in the South Stream pipeline. Sergei Kapitonov, a natural gas analyst at the Skolkovo Energy Center in Moscow, stated that Russia previously had built "huge gas transportation corridors across Russia during the preparations of South Stream pipeline project" (Bechev, 2019). When Russia switched from the South Stream to the TurkStream pipeline, Moscow managed to avoid potential economic losses. The TurkStream project, currently with the first line, is fulfilling only the domestic needs of Turkey, however, it is soon expected to extend Russian gas further to Europe. To avoid the anti-monopoly regulations of the EU, some of the Balkan countries - including Serbia and Bulgaria - obtaining gas via TurkStream, are now building their own extension pipelines on their own territory (TurkStream, 2020).

Since its inception, the TurkStream pipeline was a controversial project because of the enduring and intensifying geopolitical and geo-economic competition between the West and Russia, particularly after 2014. Several times in the past due to Ukraine's unpaid gas debt, Moscow severed Russian gas being transported to Europe via Ukraine. Europeans, having experienced this shutdown, decided to upgrade their energy supply strategy from 2010. By this strategy, Brussels aimed to diminish European dependence on Russian gas. However, by 2020, the EU's 2010 energy supply security strategy has not become as successful as originally desired. While North-West Europe is doing better in terms of energy supply security, some of Europe's South-Eastern countries, such as Bulgaria, still depend on Russian gas exports.

Russian intervention in Georgia of 2005 and the gas crisis with Moscow of 2009, were the first wake-up calls for the EU that an assertive Russia had emerged. Despite these warnings, until the annexation of Crimea

in 2014, neither the EU nor NATO understood that the mindset in Moscow had changed. Instead, most European countries – first and foremost Germany – and even the US, had been optimistic regarding the change in Russian attitudes via trade, special relations, and moderate cooperation. These hopes were the main rationale behind the “Russia First” strategy of Europe (Ateşoğlu Güney et al. 2019). It was only at the 2016 Warsaw Summit of NATO that the Alliance came to the conclusion that they were mistaken about the positive approach to their problems with Russia. The Europeans, in the face of a resurgent Russia coming close to their borders, decided at the 2016 NATO Summit to take countermeasures. These measures aimed to hinder Russia as much as possible at the eastern flank of the Trans-Atlantic Alliance. This new perception of assertive Russia has been strengthened when Russia stationed their newly attained Anti Access-Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities from the Baltics to Eastern Syria.

A resurgent Russia at the eastern and southern borders of Europe/the West is a geopolitical risk for Western actors. Military precautions have been devised but cannot be adopted fully by the West because of the associated geopolitical cost to military rivalry and confrontation. That is why Europe, after seeing the rise of a different Russia, began to give more importance to diversifying their gas supplies from different countries. It is damage management and a less risky balancing strategy against increasing Russian influence on European borders.

Within the context of diversification, the realisation of TANAP that brought Azeri/Caspian gas via Turkish territory as part of the Southern Gas Corridor Project was welcomed. However, 10 billion bcm amount of gas that was going to be delivered to Europe, and 6 billion bcm of gas, which was going to be delivered to Turkey via TANAP, was not enough to allay the EU’s gas dependency on Russia (Southern Gas Corridor: SGC, n.d.). In this regard, TurkStream is also a new diversified gas pipeline route for the Europeans. This new gas path bypasses the Ukrainian route so it can be seen as an alternative to Western Line, but it has not calmed European concerns about Russia. Hence, most EU countries have continued to doubt whether there would

be a shutdown of the flow of Russian gas in future. However, according to Kapitonov, “it would be suicidal for Russia to cut off gas supplies [going through] to Europe since Russia equally depends on the revenues from gas sold to Europe” (Bechev, 2019). Moscow’s natural gas sales to Europe represent approximately 15 per cent of all Russian export revenues (Bechev, 2019). There are two more factors that led Russia to act in a more moderate and cooperative fashion in the energy trade via TurkStream. The first factor is related to the fact that the European regional gas market where Moscow is aiming to become dominant has become more competitive in the last years thanks to LNG-delivered conventional and unconventional natural gas supplies. Therefore, any intentional gas cut will be a reckless move for Moscow. The second factor is related to the low oil prices that the world is experiencing as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst oil prices are falling, the ongoing EU-US sanctions are hurting the Russian economy more than ever. Hence, Moscow is in no position to make a mistake that might cause the European gas market to be lost to new gas producers such as the US.

One of the new potential impediments before the initiation of the TurkStream is American CAATSA sanctions. On August 2, 2017, then-President Donald Trump signed into law the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), which is a basket of sanctions targeting Russia, Iran, and North Korea. However, the TurkStream pipeline project was announced by Putin on 1 December 2014 during his state visit to Turkey. After this visit, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between BOTAS and Gazprom. Thus, since the TurkStream project was signed before the imposition of CAATSA it is expected to be immune from US sanctions.

To sum up, Turk Stream has the potential to bring more gas to Europe via a second line that is going to be linked by newly built national pipelines of the various Balkan states. It will provide a window of opportunity for gas-receiving Balkan States to balance their relations with Russia and the EU while strengthening their energy supply security. It will provide an access route for Russia into the European energy market, and it will

strengthen Turkey's dream of becoming an energy hub. However, in today's geopolitical landscape an energy project is not only an energy project. Pipelines always have more implications than being vehicles for economic development. That is why the potential winners and losers of TurkStream should be highlighted to evaluate the real geostrategic story behind the Turkish Russian energy partnership via TurkStream.

Who are the winners and losers of TurkStream?

Without a doubt, the two winners of the TurkStream are Russia and Turkey. On the one hand, the benefits of TurkStream to Moscow are numerous. First, Russia via this new pipeline project is deepening its influence in Europe's backyard, namely the Balkans. When the second phase of TurkStream is extended via pipelines first to Bulgaria, and Serbia and then to Hungary and Austria, Russia, despite the EU's existing anti-monopoly rules, will have become successful in its dream of bringing 15.75 bcm Russian gas to Europe (Bechev, 2019). However, winning the hearts and minds of Balkan leaders is priceless for Moscow. That is why Russian president Putin was for some time courting the Serbian and Bulgarian presidents. In the end, Moscow succeeded in convincing both Serbia and Bulgaria to participate in TurkStream. Yet it is not certain how Hungary and Austria will fare with TurkStream (Southern Gas Corridor: SGC, n.d.). Despite this uncertainty, Russia seems to know that stepping into the backyard of Europe is more important and beneficial than staying and waiting outside of the European market. Secondly, with the inauguration of TurkStream, Russia is gaining an opportunity to further strengthen its relationship with Turkey. Ankara and Moscow are not naïve partners. Both countries are aware of the conflict of interests among them on a number of geopolitical issues. Moreover, Russia and Turkey are also aware that Ankara is a NATO ally and it is an important gate-keeper in the Black Sea-Mediterranean nexus. In this regard, Moscow, by gaining Ankara's consent on important issues like TurkStream, is hoping to send a signal to the Transatlantic Community that it could jeopardise unity in NATO. Thirdly, Russia is assumed to be fortunate in getting the approval of Ankara on TurkStream, otherwise Moscow could not have

replaced the EU rejected South Stream and it would have had to suffer significant economic losses. Moscow, with the help of Turkey, got the chance to transcend the anti-monopoly rule of the EU.

Turkey, like Russia, is also one of the main countries that have gained from the initiation of the TurkStream pipeline project. The geographical proximity of Turkey and Russia has helped the realisation of TurkStream, but most credit should be given to Ankara, which has shown its ability to act at the right time and right place (Ateşoğlu Güney et al., 2019, p. 116). Currently, with the initiation of the TurkStream pipeline route, Ankara's hope of becoming an energy hub is increasing. This is because Turkey, by acquiring natural gas directly from Russia, is avoiding the risks of cut-offs associated with the Western Line. Before TurkStream, Ankara used to acquire most of its gas from Russia via the Ukrainian transit route. Political and economic tensions between Kyiv and Moscow in the past, however, have led to the interruption of natural gas transmission via the Western Line. With TurkStream, this risk has been overcome. Turkey is simultaneously strengthening its energy supply security as well as emerging as a more reliable transit country in East-West energy trade. Turkey's importance is expected to increase with the realisation of the second line of TurkStream planned through Bulgaria, Serbia and finally to Hungary, where each of these states is expected to build their own national pipelines on their territories. Turkey will then begin to earn economic benefits from this new Balkan gas transmission process.

Turkey, by being an energy-dependent country, continues to consume an annual average of 50 bcm of natural gas. As part of its energy supply security strategy, Turkey has been diversifying its energy mix and source countries. In this regard, to decrease its gas dependency on Russia, Ankara has aimed to increase its storage capacity by around 10 bcm by 2023. What is more striking, in March 2020, Turkey's gas imports from Russia dropped by 72.13 per cent compared to March 2019. This was due to Ankara's ability to replace some of the imported Russian gas both with US shale gas in Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) form and natural gas from other sources such as Azerbaijan. While taking measures

to reduce its gas dependency on Russian gas as much as possible (simultaneously creating new linkages like TurkStream and other issues of cooperation with Moscow), Turkey is trying to guarantee increasing Russian dependency on Ankara. According to the strategic mindset of Ankara, Turkey is planning to use this new Russian interdependency card as balancing leverage against either Western countries or regional competitor states in the Middle East.

The winners list can be expanded by including Bulgaria and Serbia and those who are expected to become part of the extension of the TurkStream pipeline construction. As mentioned above, TurkStream will provide a window of opportunity for gas-receiving Balkan States to balance their relations with Russia and the EU while strengthening their supply security. However, unlike Russian and Turkish gains, their benefits are not yet absolute mainly because they are more sensitive and vulnerable to the geopolitical rivalry between Europe and Russia.

When the second line of TurkStream is extended to the Balkans via the planned construction of the pipeline in Bulgaria, Kyiv is expected to be the main loser (Makohon, 2020). Likewise, other losers of the project can be listed as Poland, Slovakia, and some of the Baltic states. Since TurkStream aimed to bypass Ukraine as the transit country to carry Russian gas to Europe, naturally the mentioned states are becoming deprived of transit tariffs. Though most commentators are inclined to put Ukraine on the losers' side, Kyiv after signing a five-year gas transit contract with Moscow in 2019, seems to be now compensating for some of its losses stemming from the launch of TurkStream by directly importing gas from Russia through the mid-2020s (Bechev, 2019).

Conclusion

With the inauguration of TurkStream, Ankara has succeeded in its aim of becoming an energy hub. Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary, have all decided to build their own pipelines to get Russian gas via TurkStream. This new situation has increased Ankara's importance in terms of the creation of an alternative gas route for Europe. Turkey has gained the

opportunity of taking most of the natural gas directly from Russia via TurkStream instead of the Western Line, thereby increasing its natural gas supply security. The claims stating that Ankara has become more dependent on Russia after the initiation of TurkStream are exaggerated. In the last decade, Turkey has succeeded in shifting the weight of mutual dependency in its favour by establishing new linkages (not only the launch of TurkStream but also, the start of building the Akkuuyu nuclear reactor, obtaining of S-400s and such) that have increased the areas of cooperation between the two countries. Therefore, TurkStream should be seen as a win-win project for both Turkey and Russia. Even though Russia and Turkey are confronting one another in certain key geopolitical arenas, Ankara has skilfully demonstrated its ability to compartmentalise issues with Moscow in the conduct of foreign and security policy. That is why both Moscow and Ankara have managed to consolidate their relationship as the result of furthering cooperation in the fields of energy, tourism and even in the defence realm. What is more important is that this newly increased cooperation with Moscow is strengthening Ankara's hand in the conduct of its balancing strategy towards others, be it in the region or beyond.

As it is stated, TurkStream brings benefits to both Russia and Turkey, especially in the business of gas trade/transmission fees. Due to Turkey's location in TurkStream where Ankara is connecting Russian Black Sea shores to Europe, TurkStream is surely making Ankara an unavoidable factor in the creation of an alternative importing gas route to Europe for the Russians. By observing this, one can expect in the future, economic and trade relations will enhance despite any continuing geopolitical competition between them in other areas. Ankara, with the initiation of its new diversified energy supply security policy, has proven that Turkey can change the percentages of gas attained from other source countries at the expense of Russia (Toktay, 2020). This could be a crucial message to Moscow that Ankara needs to be consulted as Moscow seeks to consolidate its influence in the European hydrocarbon market.

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Arab Uprisings and the GCC Countries: Opportunities and Risks

Mahjoob Zweiri & Muyassar H. Suleiman

This chapter argues that most of the interventions within the context of the Arab uprisings (or “Arab Spring”), led to the creation of fragile states. The Arab uprisings created new threats or “risks” to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The most important threat was the role of non-state actors, refugees, and the infringement of sovereignty. This chapter will illuminate a broader understanding of GCC policies within the context of the Arab uprisings by focusing on the failure of the state’s structure and its centralisation, which led to the emergence of new security, political, economic, and social challenges for states in the region. Finally, the chapter will investigate the new dynamics in the region and their impact on the foreign policy of the GCC countries and their internal affairs.

It has been ten years since the Arab uprisings began in Tunisia in late 2010. The Arab uprisings represented an earthquake in the region, causing shock to all countries as the revolutions changed the political scene. They simultaneously created confusion in the foreign policy of the other regional countries. This was especially evident within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

In some countries, these effects were felt both directly and indirectly. Regarding the GCC countries, the effects were different and varied on several levels based on the level of their interaction due to GCC countries adopting different tools in dealing with these uprisings. In fact, GCC intervention depended on all available tools, including financial

support, personal relations, and soft power, especially the employment of the media, and diplomatic relations to limit potential threats.

Given the variety of regional action and reaction, this chapter examines the engagement of the GCC countries with the Arab uprisings. Specifically, it will look to how the Arab uprisings of 2010 influenced GCC policies, and how the GCC interacted, responded, and sought to counter the non-stop ramifications. The political developments which manifested out of the Arab uprisings created new dynamics which pushed the GCC to adopt new approaches and strategies to observe these new changes. Indeed, there were some demonstrations in Oman and Saudi Arabia along with serious demonstrations in Bahrain. The GCC countries were divided over their interest and assessment of the Arab uprisings. An analysis of their reaction in Yemen, Syria, and Egypt, illuminates the presence of this dynamic. Countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE wanted to maintain the status quo, while other GCC countries, like Qatar, welcomed the changes as long as they were welcomed by the people themselves. Consequently, this political division led to tension and a crisis in the relationship between GCC countries. The twin crises of ambassador withdrawal in 2014 and the blockade on Qatar in 2017 by three Gulf countries, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain, in addition to Egypt, confirms the great impact of the Arab uprisings on both internal and external policies of the GCC.

GCC Reactions towards the Arab Uprisings

The Arab uprisings began in Tunisia and quickly moved to Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria; the wave of uprisings even reached Bahrain, one of the six GCC countries. All Arab uprisings demanded political, social, and economic changes and reforms (Kinninmont & Spencer, 2013). Governments rejected protester's demands and responded to them with violence, widespread arrests, and marginalisation. This resulted in escalation with the protesters demanding regime change (Abushouk, 2016) and the separation of powers (executive, legislative and judicial),

believing that these would be the only ways to guarantee the elimination of corruption and achievement of social justice, accountability, and transparency.

Starting with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, the Tunisian fruit seller, in December 2010, images of mass gatherings and protests throughout the Arab world became ubiquitous on both social and traditional media. As protests gained momentum and international support, the GCC attempted to adapt to rapid regional transformations. From the beginning of the Arab uprisings, the positions of the GCC countries were divided by their positionality regarding most of the Arab uprisings. In fact, some of the GCC countries, such as Saudi Arabia and UAE, rejected most, if not any, new changes in the region in an effort to maintain the status quo. Whereas, by comparison, Qatar became an active and unequivocal supporter of the regional uprisings.

Rapid transformations and geographical proximity required the GCC to move from their by-stander positions to active engagement. Resulting from a difference in understanding sources of security threats between the GCC, as well as a difference in interests and goals, GCC countries evolved differently in their reactions to the 2010 uprisings. In some cases, the Arab uprisings in 2010 were faced with counterrevolutions to restore the regime to its prior status and eliminate uprisings and popular movements (Almusfir, 2018). Consequently, the clear position was to oppose the uprisings by elimination and opposing the people's demands to topple the ruling regimes.

The lack of agreement in the Gulf was clearly shown regarding the aftermath of the Egyptian revolution of 2011, and left serious tension on intra-Gulf relations, while also creating new tensions between and threats to the GCC countries (Almarzoqi, 2014). GCC countries differed in their support or condemnation of different Islamist opposition groups. After the election of Mohammed Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood candidate, to the Egyptian Presidency, Saudi Arabia and the UAE

became increasingly anti-brotherhood. For example, in March 2013, Saudi Arabia characterised the Muslim Brotherhood and the Nusra Front and Islamic State (ISIS) as terrorist groups in a statement issued by the Saudi Ministry of Interior (Reuters, 2014). In a similar step in November 2014, the United Arab Emirates formally designated the Muslim Brotherhood and local affiliates as terrorist groups. Also, the UAE assigned this designation to the al-Islah group (an Islamist group based in the UAE and is considered part of the Muslim Brotherhood), Nusra Front, and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), along with Shi'ite militant groups, such as the Houthi movement in Yemen (Reuters, 2014). In part, this was due to perceived pan-Islamist alliances, which would potentially have included Iran, and fear of unrest or disruption domestically. In contrast, Qatar offered both financial support in the form of broad-based investments and clear political support for the Muslim Brotherhood (Roberts, 2014). Other GCC countries kept quiet or offered their support for regional Islamist groups.

The unified policy towards the Arab uprisings was visible at the beginning of the Libyan uprising. Support for the uprising in Libya was under the umbrella of international legitimacy and regional consensus for intervention. To implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, in response to events during the Libyan Civil War 2011, a multi-state North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, (NATO)-led coalition began a military intervention in Libya on 19 March 2011. Both the UAE and Qatar provided military support for opposition forces within Libya. However, this unified support for intervention eventually faced factionalism as the revolution progressed, and Qatar took an increasingly emboldened role in assisting Libyan opposition which meant standing with the legitimate government in Libya. The United Nations Security Council recognised the Government of National Accord (GNA) as the sole legitimate government of Libya. The UAE then financially and militarily backed Khalifa Haftar against the internationally recognised Government of National Accord. To some extent, there was a unified

Gulf position against the Syrian regime, but their support was diversified between several groups within the Syrian opposition. Similarly, there was Gulf consensus that the uprising in Bahrain should be thwarted, but by which means to do so differed between Gulf states.

The GCC reactions regarding the Arab uprisings can be explained by looking at the domestic situation of each country, and its relationship with their respective foreign policies. While the Gulf states have much in common due to shared history, geography and culture, and governmental structures, there are domestic differences that contribute to the varied positions. This section explores the ways in which internal strengths, as well as weaknesses, influenced the approach of each Gulf government.

Saudi foreign policy can be understood within a broad understanding of certain Islamic practices. Changes in any regime are considered sedition (*fitna*) and destruction, whether through revolution or displacement. However, sometimes it is necessary to contribute to the removal of injustice for oppressed peoples and this is considered a duty. So, the concept of *fitna* is used, or injustice is lifted according to the situation (Almusfir, 2018). Saudi Arabia's attitude toward revolution is determined according to three objectives. The first objective is to secure the allied systems. This was clearly evidenced in the ways Saudi Arabia responded to the revolution in Bahrain. The second objective is to combat the progress of interests of competing regimes. Saudi Arabia did this in Syria by supporting the revolution, because the fall of the Syrian regime would lead to a curbing of Iran's interference in the region. The third objective is securing the home front from any side and preventing any effect from the revolution (Almusfir, 2018). Saudi Arabia has faced some political unrest over the years and is often acutely aware of the potential for political disruption arising from the Eastern Province. It must be considered that the Saudi interior was affected by the Arab uprisings. There was limited internal Saudi mobility and demands for reform and change, such as the Citizens Without Borders movement,

and the Youth and Liberal Coalition. Based on these three objectives, Saudi Arabia's decision to support some revolutions and reject others can be understood.

Qatari foreign policy pursued the following major strategies. First, they sought to stand with the United Nations in recognising the legitimacy of both governments and movements. Second, they sought to pursue an International Alliances Strategy (Kabalan, 2020). Third, they wanted to maintain good neighbourly relations in the Gulf and the Arab world (Kaussler, 2015). Fourth, the Qatari government wanted to consolidate a positive image internationally (Kabalan, 2020).

These strategies are based on the following principles. Since the 1990s, Qatar has pursued an independent foreign policy that would free it from the hegemony of its larger Gulf neighbours. It adheres to the principle of supporting the right of peoples to self-determination and supporting them towards achieving justice and freedom. Additionally, much of its foreign policy stems from an emphasis on mediation and conflict resolution, and on care for refugees (Wright, 2013). The Qatari role was clear in the Arab uprisings because of the absence of the regional powers: Iraq, Syria, Egypt. Qatar's foreign policy relies heavily on soft power through the media, sports, mediation, and diplomacy, opening itself up to the world (Kamrava, 2013). The dynamism of its foreign policy and influence through soft power was most evident in its contributions to intensive coverage of all Arab uprisings through the Al-Jazeera channel.

The UAE, which was a major player during the Arab uprisings, was among the least affected countries due to the strength of the Internal Security Agency. As a result, it was able to preserve the current system. It was also able to stand against the Egyptian revolution while deporting several members of the Muslim Brotherhood from the Emirates. This was because of a strong personal relationship between elites in the Emirates, and some people related to the previous regime of President

Hosni Mubarak. Finally, the UAE was also able to stand beside the Bahraini government in the face of the popular movement (Almusfir, 2018).

In contrast to the other member states, neutrality was the official position of the state of Oman in the revolutions of the Arab uprisings. The Omani interior was affected by the revolutions of the Arab uprisings, and this was evident in the Green march by Omani youth and their calls for reform. During this time, there were peaceful demands on civil and political rights, including amending the powers of the Shura Council. Sultan Qaboos responded positively to the people's demands with the assistance of the other member states' financial support (Worrall, 2012).

Much like Oman, Bahrain was directly affected by the wave of Arab uprisings. However, in comparison, the uprising in Bahrain lasted longer and was more politically disruptive. In February 2011, mass demonstrations and slogans were raised at the Pearl Roundabout, calling for political reform, social justice, and citizenship rights based on decades of grievances held by Bahrain's various communities. The situation worsened when the security forces launched a violent attack on the protesters shortly after their occupation of the roundabout. Thus, their demands evolved to include the fall of the political system in Bahrain and the removal of a long-standing political elite from office. Subsequently, in March 2011 the Peninsula Shield forces were sent by participating states of Saudi Arabia and the UAE to Bahrain to protect the political system and put down the uprising (Shehabi & Jones 2015). Bahrain was able to weather its political unrest in part due to the support of its neighbours, and the efficiency of its widespread crackdown on any and all political dissent.

The interior situation in Kuwait was as affected by the surrounding revolutions like some of its neighbours, but there was the insistence on calling for political reforms in accordance with the national constitution of 1962. Moreover, Sheikh Jaber bin Mubarak dissolved the parliament

and the government resigned as a result of accusations toward 13 deputies of accepting bribes to influence the Parliament (Almusfir, 2018, p:263). Additionally, Kuwait is a constitutional state which means the reform process is ongoing. Further, the existence of the parliament in Kuwait and the civil society organisations make the process of demanding social change and other rights occur continuously, and not just for a specific period.

Foreign policy determinants of dealing with the Arab uprisings: Opportunities and risks

The Arab uprisings opened a new wave of necessary and urgent change in the region, not only in the countries that carried out revolutions but also in neighbouring countries. It also brought new opportunities to the countries of the region, especially the GCC countries, most of which remained the most stable and secure. The GCC countries have benefited from the Arab uprisings in numerous areas, including attracting regional and international investments, influencing the political scene as an influential actor in regional politics, demonstrating military capabilities, emphasising the strength of internal cohesion and demonstrating the Gulf state's ability to maintain security. For example, the GCC countries sent the Peninsula Shield forces to Bahrain in order to protect the Bahraini regime and to put down the uprising (Abdulla & Salem, 2010). The Peninsula Shield force is a military arm of GCC, and its role is to prevent and respond to, military aggression against any of the six GCC member countries. Indeed, through intervening in Bahrain's uprising, GCC countries proved to the world that they were able to maintain their own security and coordination, independent of Washington.

Furthermore, the Arab uprisings pushed the investments in their countries to migrate to the GCC countries, from countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Syria. The Arab uprisings led to relocating of Arab investments as investors fled from the disruptive effects of

Arab uprisings to countries to the GCC countries. The Arab uprisings provided an economic stimulus to the UAE, and in particular to Dubai, as a business hub by attracting Syrian and Egyptian businessmen. The share of the United Arab Emirates from their investment was about \$8.2 billion over the past two years, 2011-2012 (Abdulla & Salem, 2010) and the reason, according to Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, is due to “the political stability the country is witnessing as well as Dubai’s position as a global business hub. Also, UAE is ranking into the top 20 of the first kind regional economy makes” (Bridge, 2018). In 2011, the UAE attracted foreign direct investment of \$7.68 billion, compared to \$ 5.5 billion in 2010, and according to the estimates of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, this figure exceeded ten billion in 2012 as a natural result of the contribution of fleeing investments from the countries with significant, prolonged uprisings and the resulting flow to the GCC countries (Abdulla & Salem, 2010).

As a result of the absence of a unified position towards the Arab uprisings, this prompted some GCC countries to diversify their alliances and form new ones, and the regional system began to witness the rise of new regional powers. Furthermore, the GCC countries started taking serious steps towards change and became aware after the Arab uprisings that they could not postpone reforms (Abdulkhaleq & Salem, 2010). Among these considerations were the importance of acceleration and the issue of democracy, accountability, and other economic reforms.

However, much opportunity has also been accompanied by heightened risks. One of the major risks that the Gulf region has faced is the fragmentation within the Gulf states, and if such fragmentation lasts, it will lead to serious fragility on the state level. The disputes between the GCC countries after 2011 showed the fragility of the regional system of the GCC because of the emergence of a crisis of confidence (Ulrichsen, 2018). The dual crises of 2014 and 2017 showed that there is no firm or strong system in the council to resolve differences and regulate the

relationship of member states with each other. Furthermore, these twin crises demonstrated a lack of mechanisms for resolving disputes between member countries. Furthermore, according to *realpolitik* differences in views, positions and policies normally result from states' preferences and interests being different. There is no independent institutional work that follows up on the decisions of the Gulf Summit and monitors the work and mechanisms for implementing these decisions. The crisis among the GCC states still exists, even after the return of the ambassadors, with the 2017 blockade of Qatar serving as proof.

The Arab uprisings created crises and disputes between the GCC states as a result of their different positions toward these revolutions, in addition to the new security threats that emerged as a result of the presence of fragile and security-infiltrated countries unable to maintain security within their borders (Almezaini & Rickli, 2017). The GCC countries were affected by these new security threats as a result of geographic proximity, and the political unrest which unfolded within the region. This was in addition to political, military, and financial attrition, especially in Yemen and Libya (Shield, 2018).

The 2014 diplomatic crisis demonstrates the heightened risks emanating from the turmoil out of the Arab uprisings. The crisis of withdrawing ambassadors in 2014 resulted from different positions and policies of the GCC countries towards the Arab uprisings, especially the revolution in Egypt. Saudi Arabia and the UAE supported the coup, financially and politically, by President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi against the rule of President Mohamed Morsi (Kablan, 2018). The first Riyadh agreement of 11/3/2013 is a Gulf reaction to political chaos and instability in the region, and it stipulated that member states should not interfere in the internal affairs of any of the GCC countries. Furthermore, there would be a lack of support for those who threaten the stability of the GCC countries, and additionally, it specified that hostile media is not supported (Hassan, 2015).

On March 5, 2014, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors from Doha to force Qatar to change its foreign policy toward the revolution in Egypt. They claimed that Qatar did not commit to the Riyadh agreement (Al Jazeera, 2014), and this consequently later explains Egypt's participation with the three GCC countries as a fourth party in the most recent Gulf crisis, which started with the blockade on Qatar in 2017. This was not the first time GCC countries had adopted such a strategy. In fact, in 2002, Riyadh withdrew its ambassador from Doha in protest against Al-Jazeera broadcasting a program that addressed the Saudi royal family (Hassan, 2015). Furthermore, historic disputes exist between the GCC countries regarding borders and competition, but the crisis of withdrawing ambassadors 2014 was the first time that the dispute between the GCC countries appeared to the public due to the difference in their foreign policies toward regional issues. However, Qatar continued to support the demands of the people, especially in Egypt, and thus, it continued to support the popular movement and support for the legitimate elections of President Morsi. Moreover, it furthered its independent stance by standing with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and its rejection of the military coup (Almusfir, 2018, p:255).

Kuwaiti mediation attempted to resolve the dispute through the Riyadh Supplementary Agreement on November 16, 2014 (Kablan, 2018). This agreement led to the return of the ambassadors of the three countries to Doha because of the presence of new security threats represented by terrorism and the presence of ISIS. These new security threats led to reconciliation (Hassan, 2015). Furthermore, in this period, negotiations on the Iranian nuclear agreement were ongoing (Kablan, 2018). Consequently, these regional circumstances influenced the GCC countries to settle the crisis, but not to solve it. These regional issues were in addition to the presence of local factors represented at the level of citizens, trade, education, research, common Gulf culture, kinship relations, geographical neighbourhood, and common history.

The result of the ambassadorial withdrawal resulted in a crisis of mistrust between the GCC countries and the emergence of political blocs, or alternatively, “a division in the Gulf House” (Ulrichsen, 2018). Kuwait and Oman remained neutral while the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain adopted the policy of counter-revolution. As for Qatar, its policy continued to support peoples’ demands for change. The crisis of withdrawing ambassadors created a new political and strategic depth, given the fact that an end to the Gulf crisis 2014 was reached without a change in Qatar’s foreign policy principles or abandonment of its allies (Wright, 2011).

Another major risk was evident in Operation Decisive storm in 2015. This was an Arab military operation led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This began on March 25, 2015, against the Ansar Allah group, otherwise known as the “Houthis”, and former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, an ally of the Houthis, in a coup against the internationally recognised authority, President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi. There was a joint statement from the GCC countries, except for Oman, to intervene with an intention to protect and defend the Yemeni people. Coalition forces began intense military operations and airstrikes on areas affiliated with the Houthis (Al-Jbarat, 2017).

The objectives of Operation Decisive Storm included restoring Yemeni legitimacy to legitimate government in the capital, Sanaa, and restoring the state’s institutions. Furthermore, they sought to work with all Yemeni parties through negotiations, while also stipulating that the Houthis withdraw from all the provinces they seized. Additionally, they aimed to prevent the expansion of Iranian influence in Yemen and to prevent arms smuggling to Yemeni lands (Ghassan, 2015).

Unfortunately, the Decisive Storm did not achieve any of these objectives for several reasons; the most important one was a miscalculation of the military situation, and the absence of coordination between the coalition countries (Almusfir, 2018, p:268). Each of these countries had

its own projects in Yemen. (Esfandiary &Tabatabai, 2016). As a result of fractured approaches and divergent interests, the Gulf states face heightened risks due to failures of their own military pursuits.

The Gulf crisis of 2017 also represents a significant risk that emerged from tensions and fractures from the Arab spring. Historically, relations between Qatar and the four blockade countries are in a state of ebb and flow and have traditionally been marked by differences. Common security concepts were the basis for the formation of the GCC (Kechichian,1985). However, 2011 marked the first year for the appearance of fundamental disputes between the GCC countries, including, but not limited to ideological, political competition, and media-related issues (Almusfir, 2018).

On May 23, 2017, Qatar News Agency (QNA) was hacked and transmitted a false statement about Prince Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani at the graduation ceremony of Qatari officers (BBC NEWS, 2017). The most recent Gulf crisis erupted on June 5, 2017, when diplomatic relations with the State of Qatar were cut, and all air, land and seaports with Doha were closed. As a result, Iran opened its airspace for Qatar Airways and its territorial waters to Qatar, which led to Qatar's ability to continue its export of natural gas and provided the country with food imports to compensate for the previous dependence on Saudi Arabia (BBC NEWS, 2017).

Conclusion

The environment of the Arab spring has impacted many of the countries that were involved across the region, including GCC countries, in various political, economic and social levels. The impact of the Arab spring can be seen in different chapters of the Gulf-Gulf relations such as the Diplomatic crisis 2014 and Gulf crisis 2017, which would likely never have happened or be so sharp if the Arab Spring had not occurred. Taking into consideration that the disputes within the GCC countries were

always there, without the Arab Spring it is likely these disputes would never reach this level. Indeed, the Arab Spring created challenges to the GCC, and these challenges faced different levels based on the level of their involvement. For example, Saudi Arabia is still involved in a war in Yemen, and the spending and financial depletion in the Yemen war is still high. Saudi reports showed that the cost of war-participating aircraft amounts to about 230 million dollars per month, including operation, ammunition, and maintenance. This means more than \$8 billion in three years of Saudi losses in the Yemen war (Hamdani, 2018). Likewise, for the UAE, financial and military support for Khalifa Haftar's forces has gone beyond aerial and financial, military, and diplomatic support. This money spent in the Yemen and Libya wars internally affects domestic spending on development operations as well as on sovereign wealth reserves.

All GCC countries assumed that they should engage with the Arab uprisings and seek to influence the political scene, but the degree to which they did remain uneven based on calculated decision making. Accordingly, there was a clear difference in the mechanisms and methods of involvement. The calculations of each GCC country regarding opportunities and risks resulting from support or intervention created a dynamic geopolitical scene that remains under-investigated in much of the academic literature. In fact, GCC foreign policies aimed to reduce the negative impacts of the Arab uprisings and to secure and protect their respective internal situations. Those two targets represent the main drivers that guided the foreign policies of the GCC countries and explained their positions towards the Arab uprisings.

The counter-revolution against the Arab uprisings is ongoing by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, most clearly in Yemen, and Libya, and, more recently, Sudan. The process of destroying any peaceful change in the region is continuing in an effort to maintain the status quo in the region as it was before 2011 and play an active role in the region in seeking to influence the political landscape. This has been facilitated due to a

political gap in the region that has emerged as a result of the weak state of traditional regional powers such as Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. GCC countries have sought to fill this gap and influence the uprisings using different tools. Each country tries to work with the developing situation on the ground and is motivated by these grounded political realities. GCC countries offer media platforms, financial support, and influence political actors.

Yemen has turned into an arena for regional competition between Tehran and Riyadh. Saudi Arabia is working to eliminate the Iranian project in Yemen. Iran has retaliated by escalating and arming the Houthis, which threatened the national security of Saudi Arabia and turned Yemen into a failed state.

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Egypt: Political Stalemate or at a Crossroads?

Maha Azzam

The legacy of military dictatorship in Egypt and the policies pursued by the regime of Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi in order to entrench his power, carry within them the very components of stagnation and fissures on the political, economic, and social levels in Egypt. Therefore, despite the success of the coup against Egypt's nascent democracy, the regime's subsequent policies carry the seeds of the military's ultimate demise after almost seventy years of political dominance. However, the level of damage and stagnation that is a result of decades of dictatorship and of particularly the last seven years since the coup of rapidly increasing failure, threatens state and society and not only the political system.

The uprising of January 25th 2011 and the first free and fair elections of 2012 which brought to power the first civilian head of state, President Mohamed Morsi, after decades of dictatorship offered a new direction for the country in terms of political freedoms and rights, of economic progress, and possibly most threateningly to both the military and the business elite's interests, an early drive to combat corruption. Furthermore, there were clear signals for the emergence of different regional (Syria, Gaza, Turkey, Iran), and international, alignments. This potential was reversed by the coup of 2013 and since then, the focus has been on entrenching the military order and particularly its head, and on regional alliances which share a common agenda of combatting democracy in the region.¹

¹ Steven, A.Cook 'Egypt Doesn't, Matter Anymore, Foreign Policy 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/06/19/egypt-doesnt-matter-anymore-morsi-sisi/>

Arab regimes are threatened by any government in Egypt that might be an example of a political system that would be competent enough to provide its citizens with any genuine form of participation and accountability. Such an example was seen as posing an existential threat to many Arab regimes because their populations would increasingly be making similar demands for freedoms and rights and in their estimation, there could be no opportunity provided for such development. Therefore, regimes in the region are essentially agents of maintaining the status quo rather than agents of change that could open the door to any real political reform or a transparent and more equitable economic structure.

The structure and dynamics of the military regime itself and the beneficiaries of the system whether in the judiciary, business or media over many decades, has meant that they seek to maintain control at all costs and ensure there is no change that can possibly undermine their authority and economic interests, as was potentially the case following the elections of 2012.²

The overwhelming militarisation of the state since 2013, in conjunction with unprecedented levels of repression, have stifled political development in the country. In addition, decisions regarding key economic and national security issues have also contributed to increasing challenges to the military's standing and role in society, which could ultimately contribute to its demise.³

What Egypt is experiencing following the Arab spring is an authoritarian dictatorship but given the broader historical and political experience of other states which have transitioned to democracy, we can see that what is happening in Egypt as a hiatus and that the struggle for freedom and rights will continue as it is in other countries of the region, such as

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XnhD2UnVug>

³ T. Stevenson, 'Egypt: Land of the Generals, Middle East Eye, February, 2015, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/features/egypt-land-generals>

Algeria and Libya, and that the old order faces insurmountable political and economic obstacles.

The legacy of dictatorship and the military state's attempts to entrench itself

If we look at different parts of the world throughout the twentieth century, we have several examples of democratically elected leaders who were overthrown by military coups from Allende in Chile, Mosaddeq in Iran. We also have examples in Southern Europe where countries remained under dictatorship into the 1970s as in Spain, Portugal, and Greece, and we also have the particular Turkish path to democracy that was riddled with military interventions.⁴

In all these examples, where countries suffered long periods of instability with coups and counter-coups, while the democratic path was constantly being stifled, we observe that social and political divisions increased and were reflected in growing political turmoil. During these periods, these countries suffered from weak economies, weak industrialisation and underdevelopment, but despite authoritarianism, new social groups continued to emerge who strived for democratic politics and civil freedoms. In most of these examples, the inability of dictatorship to deliver and provide different social groups with economic benefits contributed to political change.⁵

However, it is never easy to initiate change after decades of dictatorship because the legacy of dictatorship on the psychology of a nation and successive generations can be paralysing in terms of affording the possibility of a rapid demise of a system that has a monopoly of armed power and has erected a barrier of fear. From 1952, successive regimes

⁴ C. L. Sulzberger, Portugal, Spain and Greece, New York Times, June 8, 1974, <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/06/08/archives/portugal-spain-and-greece.html>

⁵ Richard, J Evans, The Age of Dictatorships 1918-1989, The Little Dictators, Gresham College Lectures, 28 September 2006.

in Egypt have promoted iron fist policies, emergency laws, torture chambers, propaganda and corruption to silence and win over support.⁶ Egypt remains in the grip of this today, and it did not join the globalised world when it came to greater rights and freedoms for so many across the world, and in common with other Arab states remained behind the curve (Huntington, 1991; Thiery, 2019). In 2005, with the idea that some political opening up in the region was a good thing began to take hold in the US, and a belief that an attempt to shake off the barrier of fear can be made when some space was afforded to it.⁷

With the Arab Spring, deep cracks began to occur in the dictatorial edifice. Experiences of both freedom and repression became part of the national experience. Even the short-lived freedom experienced in 2012 has had its effect; today more Egyptians than ever are critical of the military regime than they have been over decades of military rule. A military order, once held in high popular esteem, has seen its star decline since the coup and continues to do so till this day as it came into full view (after it had been overshadowed during the Mubarak era), and became increasingly seen as responsible for national and economic crises.⁸

The coup of 2013 was a fully-fledged attempt to regain the complete control of the military over the political affairs of Egypt and to ensure that the democratic and constitutionally legitimate government and democratic process were not only rolled back but defeated and destroyed. The violation of constitutionalism and legitimacy in its

⁶ Omar Ashour, 'Egypt's Revolution: Two Lessons from History', <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/42533>

⁷ Condoleezza Rice, <https://www.pacificcouncil.org/newsroom/condoleezza-rice-democracy-must-be-promoted-and-celebrated>, Freedom Agenda- George W. Bush White House Archives, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/freedomagenda/> Alessandri, Hassan & Reiner, US Democracy Promotion from Bush to Obama, University of Warwick April 2015, https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/research/researchcentres/irs/euspring/publications/us_dem_promotion_april15.pdf

⁸ <https://politicstoday.org/why-is-there-an-ever-growing-opposition-towards-the-sisi-regime-in-egypt-1/>

very essence undermined change and progress on all levels of state and society and undermined the chances of the country's political and economic development. The coup leader, Abdel Fattah Al- Sisi (the then defence minister and former head of military intelligence), wanted to wrest full control and manage the reversal not just to the status quo ante before 2011 and 2012, but to ensure greater direct military control and a weakening of the Mubarak power base and the defeat of the main political and social movement, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), that had abided by the rules of the democratic process.

The military's aggressive and relentless show of power after the coup of 2013 was exemplified in its carrying out of various massacres, the most notorious of which was the Rabaa massacre on August 14, 2013, which involved the violent massacre and burning of a peaceful sit-in; "the killings not only constituted serious violations of international human rights law but likely amounted to crimes against humanity, given both their widespread and systematic nature and the evidence suggesting the killings were part of a policy to attack unarmed persons on political grounds" (Human Rights Watch, 2014). These policies were supported by the coup government of the time, as well as non-military political and media figures from the old regime.

Repression of opposition and severe human rights violations continue to this day in Egypt in a systematic manner to ensure control and containment, and to attempt to break any opposition to the regime. Furthermore, violations by the Ministry of Interior and its security forces were carried out partly as an act of vengeance for 2011, when the uprising was initiated on the anniversary of 'Police Day', and was spurred by the abuses carried out by the MOI during the thirty years of Mubarak's rule (Amnesty International, February 2020). The very extent of the repression is unprecedented in Egypt's recent history; it echoes the Nasser era in terms of torture and fear and the domination of an abusive security apparatus. But in terms of the sheer numbers of those incarcerated in prison, it supersedes the numbers during the

Mubarak era. We are talking about over 60,000 political prisoners, which is more than half of all the prisoner population in the country.⁹

The lack of due process has meant that as a matter of course arbitrary arrests, disappearances, torture and executions have taken place on a wide scale. These features of a repressive military and police state that is fearful of any opposition and in turn instil fear through incarceration, torture and killing will find itself unable to make any political changes out of fear that this may upset the fragile and unstable status quo that is part and parcel of its existence and identity.

The security state and its apparatuses that are used to control the population, instil fear and ensure the protection of the regime is part of a multi-pronged approach, encompasses the use of judiciary, the parliament, the media and the harnessing of religious figures to advocate a religious discourse that suits the regime.

The Judiciary

One of the worst channels of oppression has been the use of the judiciary as an arm of the military regime. This echoes other authoritarian regime's use of the judiciary as a channel for repression, for example in Chile.¹⁰ As a whole, the Egyptian judiciary was not supportive of the principles of democracy and was manipulated by the military both before and after the coup, first, against President Morsi and later as an arm of the executive.¹¹ Sisi has used the judiciary to consolidate his power and has found willing allies among its ranks, despite the reputation of the Egyptian judiciary as having a degree of impartiality and independence in the past. Except for an orchestrated show of opposition against the transfer of two islands, Tiran and Sanafir to Saudi Arabia in 2016, the Egyptian judiciary has been subservient to the regime. Within the institution itself, Sisi's brother, Counsellor Ahmed Al-Sisi, has played

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/24/threat-of-jail-shapes-egyptian-lives-nine-years-after-uprising>, <https://countryeconomy.com/demography/prison-population/egypt>

¹⁰ <https://digitalcommons.law.utulsa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1167&context=tjcll>

¹¹ <https://time.com/97636/egypt-judges-morsi-muslim-brotherhood/>

a leading role in selecting the heads of judicial bodies, including the president of the Supreme Judicial Council and the president of the Court of Cassation. Furthermore, the Judges Club tried to get his support to convince Sisi to stop tax breaks for judges.¹²

The judiciary has passed a notoriously high number of verdicts of executions with an unprecedented number carried out since the coup. Although Egypt does have the death penalty on its statutes, the verdicts of executions were carried out without due process, in some cases following forced disappearances and ‘confessions’ extracted following torture. According to reporting by the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), authorities carried out 49 and 43 executions in 2017 and 2018 respectively, a stark escalation from years prior. In 2008, for example, two executions took place. In February 2019, 15 individuals were executed in three different cases. EIPR has also documented a continued rise in recourse to the death penalty; death sentences continue to be issued by courts despite reports of torture, due process violations during the trial, failure to implement domestic legal protections, and international outcry.

TIMEEP reported that in 2018, Egyptian criminal courts issued 543 death sentences in 205 cases and the Court of Cassation issued 59 final death sentences in 16 cases; while Egyptian military courts issued 52 death sentences in six cases and two final death sentences in two different cases. Minors have also received the death penalty; between June 2013 and December 2018, at least two minors were sentenced to death.¹³

Parliament: No more than a rubber stamp

Parliament, likewise, has become an extension of the military executive, and if there are any differences of opinion to speak of then they represent echoes of the deep state. The 596-member parliament is tightly controlled by intelligence agencies and dominated by Sisi’s

¹² <https://www.alaraby.co.uk>, 11 November 2011

¹³ <https://timep.org/reports-briefings/executions-and-the-death-penalty/>

supporters. It acts as a rubber stamp for Sisi's projects, with MPs seeing their interests as tied to his and also fears change and is therefore supportive of the iron fist policies against opposition of any kind. As a result, Parliament approved constitutional changes that have extended Sisi to remain President to 2030.

Among these is the amendment that 50% of Parliament is chosen through a closed list of political parties and the remainder as independents. The closed list is entirely made up of parties loyal to the president and he can appoint a further 28 MPs, thus assuring himself of control irrespective of elections. The newly created advisory senate has also been established to assure Sisi of complete control with 100 out of 300 chosen from the closed lists and the president appointing directly a further 100.¹⁴

These changes ensure that the current head of state will have the power to carry through any domestic or international policies with the endorsement of Parliament.

It is an indication of Sisi's desire for complete control (and possibly continuing insecurity), that he used the Covid-19 pandemic to push Parliament to approve a further 18 amendments further sweeping powers and designated them as part of the Emergency Laws. Only 5 of these had any relations to public health but the wording allows the president to invoke them in any emergency he declares. These were meant to supplement the 1958 law that he resurrected in April 2017 that gives the government sweeping powers to detain indefinitely, interrogate and try civilians in military courts under judges appointed by the president, with no right of appeal. It also gives the government power for mass surveillance and censorship, seizure of property, and forcible evictions, all without judicial supervision. There is an automatic tariff of 15 years for anyone accused of violating any of the government measures. These

¹⁴ <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/egypt-passes-electoral-changes-could-bolster-sisi-influence-parliament>

are clearly legal instruments specifically designed to silence even the slightest whisper of dissent.¹⁵

The Media

Key to Sisi's control of the Egyptian population is his control of the media with two aims in mind. The first is the promotion of a specific narrative that supports his claim to legitimacy. This revolves around the idea that the military is the guardian of Egypt's interests and that without its overall control Egypt would fall into chaos. This was the narrative that the pro-army and deep state media (given freedom of expression under the Morsi regime), promoted in the run-up to the coup and post the coup to justify the reversal of democracy and the brutal security measures used to consolidate the power of the military. The controlled media also pushes out constant 'feel good' messages about the supposed achievements of the regime.

Thus, the Egyptian state media is simply an arm of the regime as in the worst police states. Intelligence passes on scripts to anchors and tell them what to say on a daily basis.¹⁶ Moreover, the regime also controls the private sector media through substantial holdings in private television channels, as well and thereby directs the same narrative and messages through these so-called independent channels.¹⁷ The effect of this combined control is that the regime controls and manipulates all the information the public receive, whether regarding natural occurrences such as flooding of their streets or political issues such as security in Sinai to present as reality only what the regime wants the population to see as reality.

¹⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/07/egypt-covid-19-cover-new-repressive-powers>

¹⁶ Cited on <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/listeningpost/2017/12/sinai-sisi-media-171203140232594.html>

¹⁷ <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/listeningpost/2018/02/arrested-banned-exiled-egypt-dissenting-voices-180224074458275.html>

The second aim of this control is to stifle any expressed dissent. This ranges from social media censorship to traditional media censorship culminating in the Supreme Council for Media Regulation simply banning any reporting of what it deems to be sensitive political or economic topics other than direct official statements.^{18 19 20} It also includes the control of religious discourse as well. In general, Fascist tendencies want to do away with any religious space or religious calling that opposes tyranny (Bano and Benadi, 2018)

An example of the sheer intolerance and brutality of Sisi's regime towards any voicing of opposition, even outside of Egypt were reflected in the comments made during a visit to Canada by the Minister of Immigration and Expatriate Affairs, Nabila Makram Ebeid, when she said that anyone speaking "against Egypt abroad will be punished", her words recorded on video show her making a slicing motion across her neck while making the remark.²¹

In reality, the emblems of fascism are promoted through every channel of the state leaving no room for freedom of expression which might offer political alternatives. This is a recipe for stagnation as has been the case with other fascist states in the past particularly when they fail to deliver economically to society.

The potential power of the political opposition in bringing about change

The military overthrow, imprisonment, torture and subsequent death of the first freely and fairly elected civilian head of state, President

¹⁸ <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/egypt-leads-the-pack-in-internet-censorship-across-the-middle-east/>

¹⁹ <https://timep.org/commentary/analysis/how-the-egyptian-state-codifies-media-censorship/>

²⁰ <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2020/7/2/the-final-demise-of-free-expression-in-egypts-media>

²¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/egypt-nabila-makram-threat-1.5225059>

Mohamed Morsi, was the most serious blow to democracy in Egypt.²²

The failure of all opposition parties to oppose the coup and rally around the President both in Egypt and internationally, even if they did not support him but out of support for democracy, strengthened Sisi's hand, empowered him and weakened the opposition to him both at home and abroad. The quest for democracy remains tentative, because there is a vociferous tendency, albeit a minority, within the Egyptian opposition that does not accept the idea that the majority will of the people represent a different set of values or political direction to theirs. They, therefore, want to ensure a political arrangement that ensures that the Islamist majority is represented, but with an equal share to the minority. While this is acceptable to some Islamists who are ready to 'take a step back', and do not want to be at the political helm, it remains highly distasteful to many (both Islamists and non-Islamists) who believe that such a conditionality by its very nature undermines democracy. This is a key disagreement that has undermined the democratic path.

Furthermore, the prohibition of the Muslim Brotherhood, the main political and social movement in Egypt and of the Freedom and Justice Party (the political party that won the largest number of seats in the last legitimate parliamentary elections in 2012), and the incarceration of other political parties, leading political figures, parliamentarians and activists has been a blow to free political life in Egypt. In addition, the systematic and concerted attempts of the regime to break the structure of the Muslim Brotherhood on the ground has been a significant setback to the struggle against the Sisi regime, given that the Muslim Brotherhood represent the single most formidable and organised opposition to the coup. However, this setback is by no means irreversible given the tenacity of the organisation and the growing opposition to the regime.

²² <https://www.guernica37.com/post/press-statement-guernica-37-files-investigative-report-with-un-into-death-of-president-morsi>

As far as Sisi is concerned, all political opposition is a danger to him and are presented as enemies of the state and in the majority of cases labelled as Muslim Brotherhood or affiliated to the organisation even if they have nothing to do with it or may even be very inimical to it. Thousands of dissidents languish in prison today who have opposed the Muslim Brotherhood and were supportive of the June 30 protests that enabled the military coup. The liberal political elite was ultimately ready to compromise with the results of the elections of 2012, and the nascent democracy and ally with the army but are paying the price of their betrayal of the democratic process alongside the Muslim Brotherhood they so vehemently opposed.

Thus far the level of repression has succeeded in suppressing a strong enough opposition from shifting the balance of power politically against the regime. The voices of dissent inside Egypt are quelled through intimidation and severe repression. However, since the coup, there have been a large number of Egyptians who have gone into exile and who have continued to voice their opposition from abroad. This opposition although it has in common a rejection of Sisi, nevertheless varies in terms of its political agenda between leaning towards a compromise with the deep state, and those who desire profound political and economic change. However, the significance of this opposition is that it is unprecedented in terms of its numbers in Egypt's recent history, and because of the provision of some media outlets as well as social media, it has become an important vehicle for exposing and opposing the military regime to those inside and outside Egypt.

There is much debate as to whether the opposition outside of Egypt is capable of achieving its goals, whether it be for some of them the end of the military regime, or for others a compromise with it, or whether the opposition as a whole is weak and incapable of any significant influence on the current political stalemate in Egypt. I would note the following. First, The military regime, given its brutal tactics inside Egypt, did not expect this level of opposition from outside, particularly given that

previous regimes since 1952 have not had this widespread opposition to it expressed so openly. Secondly, the Sisi regime sought recognition and legitimacy from day one, and this has been denied to it openly by the various parties to the opposition, albeit more strongly by some than others. Thirdly, the opposition in its different ways has kept the cause alive and remained an important source of encouragement to those inside who sacrificed either in terms of relatives who died at the hands of the regime or are imprisoned, or who believe in the legitimacy of the democratic process but remain silent out of fear. These factors have helped undermine the legitimacy the regime needs and have highlighted its failures and violations outside Egypt despite western governments dealing directly with the regime. The importance of this opposition is that it is a component of instability, at the very least to the dictator and helps undermine a system that is archaic serving only the interests of a military Junta and its supporters. Its connectivity with the outside world is crucial at a time when Egypt itself has become a massive prison, where any voice critical of the regime is persecuted.

As the economic and political situation becomes increasingly untenable for the majority of the population, the desire for change will increase. The opposition's role will come into its own in supporting and aiding the movement on the ground and helping direct it towards real change when that gathers momentum, rather than another version of the status quo. That possibility of another version of the status quo is what is likely to happen if the route to change comes from opposition from within the army or what is described as 'a coup on a coup'. Such a development that could possibly bring about some cosmetic changes but would forestall yet again the aspirations of the January 25 revolution for real political change. However, in order to forestall even such a possibility or just a change in who is at the helm of the regime by replacing one military man with another, Sisi has taken rigorous steps against military colleagues and those who dared put themselves forward in the last presidential elections, arresting former General Anan

and other candidates who dared run against Sisi in the last presidential election in 2018.²³

Although there are increasingly critical voices of Sisi among the military establishment and business interests. The process of entrenchment by the military in Egypt was also about a tug of war between, on the one hand, Sisi keeping the support of other military officers (because they know they represented a conglomerate that had common interests who could all go down together if they did not stand with him). On the other hand Sisi's drive to dominate and acquire overriding power to ensure he would not be replaced by another military general, who can forge a better alliance with the other officers or with Mubarak's sons and their support base among the deep state and business elite.²⁴

Unless the Egyptian opposition ensures a real and deep change to democracy through a mass movement of peaceful civil disobedience that puts it in a position to dictate the terms for the restoration of democracy as a unified force, then it is likely that the military will continue to make deals to ensure their privilege and dominance is maintained, even if from behind the scenes and it will attempt to find allies from the same elite that undermined Egypt's nascent democracy in 2012. The opposition to Sisi from within the army or deep state will attempt to use the same script of 2012 "to entice pro-democratic liberal Egyptian elite into a Faustian deal, similar to the one it used to offer to their authoritarian predecessors: we will protect your vision of democracy against mass threats from the country's poor, Islamist majority in exchange for the perpetuation of our political and institutional autonomy" (Svolik, 2013).

The vast majority of Egyptians continue to suffer under the yolk of dictatorship and poverty, therefore the struggle of the opposition needs to go beyond the politics of competitive political parties to how they can improve the lives of ordinary citizens.

²³ <https://madamasr.com/en/2018/01/23/news/u/former-armed-forces-chief-of-staff-arrested-referred-to-military-prosecution-after-announcing-presidential-bid/>

²⁴ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/egypt-army-officers-who-staged-sisi-s-bloody-crackdown-get-immunity-3x0flf3np>

Failures of Authoritarianism: The Economy

The Egyptian economy under the Sisi regime since the military coup represents both a conundrum and also proof of a hypothesis on the detrimental effects of military coups against democracies on the economic front. The conundrum that Egypt presents is this. On the surface and according to several metrics used by international institutions such as the IMF and World Bank, Sisi's Egypt is making progress on the economic front. Headline economic growth figures stand at 5.5% in 2019, having grown by 5.3% in 2018 and 4.18% in 2017. The low point in 2011 (the year of the revolution), saw growth of only 1.765% and 2.185% in 2013, the year of the coup.²⁵

However, the situation below the surface is nothing short of dire. This burst of top-line economic growth (obviously dented in 2020) has not translated into a benefit felt by the population at large. The Egyptian Human Development Index has barely moved, or moved only marginally, from 0.69 to 0.7 in 2018 ranking 116 out of 189 countries, and when the index is adjusted for inequality it crashes to 0.49.²⁶ Moreover, Egypt's external debts have continued to rise. From the end of the fiscal year to June 2019, and before the most recent borrowing of some \$5 billion, it stood at \$108 billion, while domestic debt stood at \$260 billion.²⁷ Total debt is now estimated to stand at about 90% of GDP while inflation hovers above the 20% mark (up from 10.2% in 2016).²⁸

In human terms, these broad economic numbers have translated into great economic hardship for the majority of Egyptians. Some 60% of Egyptians live under the world poverty line although the Sisi government has used a lower level of \$1.45/day to arrive at a figure of

²⁵ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?end=2019&locations=EG&start=1961&view=chart>

²⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/egypt-economy-debt/egypts-external-debt-climbs-17-3-in-year-to-june-c-bank-idUSL3N27F4DU>

²⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/article/egypt-economy-debt/egypts-external-debt-climbs-17-3-in-year-to-june-c-bank-idUSL3N27F4DU>

²⁸ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/377354/inflation-rate-in-egypt/>

“only” 32.5%).²⁹ Meanwhile, the official unemployment rate stands at some 10.7% (which is likely an underestimate given other indicators), while youth unemployment is at a staggering 32%. It appears as if the full impact of the macroeconomic growth is being syphoned off to the top sections of society, in a greater disparity than that implied by the raw Gini index. which would tie into the experience of the majority of Egyptians as reflected in their falling below the poverty line.³⁰

This conundrum ties into a hypothesis by Svolik (2013) that coups conducted against democratically elected governments (which is the case in Sisi’s Egypt) invariably lead to “distinctly detrimental” economic effects for the country. Macroeconomic growth in Egypt prior to the 2011 revolution failed to benefit citizens in any meaningful way because of the endemic corruption under the Mubarak regime (the third officer to hold power after the 1952 coup). Egypt has for several years scored around the 32-36 mark in Transparency International’s corruption index, despite the sham of strong anti-corruption legislation mainly because crony capitalism was one of the ways in which the officer class and the business elite maintained power and was a factor in supporting the President.³¹ One could argue that this was part of the long term detrimental effects of the 1952 coup as per Slovik’s thesis, and despite a brief attempt at tackling it under the democratic government of President Morsi in 2012/2013, remained in full force post the 2013 coup. However, the Sisi coup of 2013 brought a step-change in the level of inefficiency of the economic system with its massive inflation of the hold of the military establishment over large swathes of the economy. In 2013, Egypt was essentially a rentier economy with wide sections either controlled by the military or a private sector whose boards were dominated by retired officers, which led to a rough assumption that

²⁹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/04/30/world-bank-group-to-extend-current>

³⁰ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?locations=EG-1W>

³¹ <https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=26e2ddc8-95df-49ab-b2f2-e1b0ec-de3c78>

the military ended up controlling directly or indirectly 30-50% of the economy.³² Following the 2013 coup, the influence of the military expanded dramatically, and while one could argue the exact percentage of direct control, the effect has been a deep penetration of the military in all aspects of economic life, but particularly in the executions of large megaprojects that are the poster children of the macro growth fawned upon by the likes of the IMF, such as the extension of the Suez canal or the new administrative city (Sayigh, 2019).

This expansion of the role of the military beyond an entrenching and expansion of a rentier economy has had two further effects on the Egyptian economy. First, by using conscripts essentially as free labour, and connections with the military-economic network to secure contracts and resources it squeezed out further the private sector from an ability to compete. This is partly why we started to see rumblings of opposition to the military government by the old private sector economic elite, who had previously been beneficiaries of the rentier economy and supporters of the Mubarak regime. It also had a negative compounding effect on the middle class already suffering from soaring inflation. Thus any positive effects of macro growth become increasingly siphoned off to a military elite (whether serving officers or officers in charge of supposedly private sector concerns), which in turn explains why the wealth divide has increased despite strong top-line numbers, and why so many Egyptians have now sunk below the poverty line. This in turn further weakened an already weak social infrastructure that includes healthcare, education and housing to a point of near collapse, which with the IMF demanded the removal of subsidies, finally broke the original concord of the 1952 coup with the population that promised a basic social safety net in return for a removal of civil liberties and democratic rights.

³² <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/egypt-economy-military/>

Secondly, it allowed full rein to what can best be described as incompetent decision making by a military government that subjugated economic interests to what it perceives to be strategic ends. This can be seen in decisions ranging from the disadvantageous gas deal with Israel to white elephant projects that might impress international institutions, such as the new administrative city which is beyond the means of most Egyptians to the expansion of the Suez canal just as global trade was declining but which will have a little real effect on stimulating the economy for the majority.³³

Finally, such a corrupt rentier structure is particularly ill-equipped at being able to meet Egypt's looming existential threat from a combination of sinking further into water poverty against a growing population (with a near term shock from the Ethiopian Renaissance dam), and a longer-term threat to the fertile delta region (and Alexandria) from rising oceans due to global warming both of which threaten Egypt's food and water security.

Seven years on from the coup of 2013, the Sisi Junta have managed to transform a creaking corrupt crony capitalist economy into an inefficient hyper rentier economy that, despite what appears on the surface to be reasonable economic growth performance, has pushed 60 million Egyptians under the poverty line, undermined its middle class, presided over large youth unemployment, subjected its citizens to very high levels of inflation and laid the foundation for a catastrophic future by failing to rise up to its existential water threats. It has not only failed to deliver benefits to the Egyptian people, but it has also in fact inflicted great harm on the economy, battered the livelihood of the vast majority of Egyptians while enriching an ever-smaller elite. It has thus laid the foundations for social instability in the short term and possibly state economic failure in the long term.

³³ <https://www.trtworld.com/middle-east/why-is-gas-rich-egypt-importing-fuel-from-israel-33295B>

Regional Relations

Egypt's present regional relations were shaped in the period in which the military prepared for and then executed the coup. Like other aspects of the State, Egyptian foreign policy was subjugated by the military junta to serve its objectives, chief among these were the relations with the major Gulf states, notably Saudi Arabia. Historically, relations between Egypt and the Gulf states were based on close economic ties, the remnants of the idea of Arab nationalism and a 'Sunni' block mentality against the perceived threat from Iran. Sisi, however, realised and then exploited the deep ideological (perhaps personal) antipathy of Muhammad Bin Zayed, Crown Prince of the UAE, to the Muslim Brotherhood; an antipathy shared by MBZ's friend Muhammad bin Salman, the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia. That his coup in 2013 must have been discussed with and sanctioned by the UAE before its execution is implied first by the visit to Egypt by MBZ soon after the Raba massacre, and secondly by the massive injection of \$30 billion (equivalent to 1/3 of total current Egyptian foreign debt) which bolstered the coup government and allowed it incidentally to restart its arm purchasing programme.³⁴

Secondly, Sisi clearly saw that ratcheting up closer relations with Israel would serve a dual purpose. First, by proving his unconditional support to the Israeli State, arguably the single most overriding principle of US Foreign Policy in the Near East, Sisi would have a clear path to winning over the support of the US administration in his crackdown against the MB, while trampling on the neo-conservative idea of exporting democracy and on any notions of adhering to human rights, even under the Democrat President Barak Obama. This became an increasingly powerful tool for the Egyptian military government with the Presidency of Donald Trump, especially given President Trump's even more extreme pro-Israel stance, and his favouring of dictators. Secondly, Israel formed a natural ally against Hamas in Gaza, which Sisi saw as an extension of the MB. This in turn led to much closer ties in military

³⁴ <https://reader.chathamhouse.org/egypt-and-gulf-allies-and-rivals#>

cooperation but equally importantly for Israel in economic cooperation whether in signing the gas deal or in the Qualified Industrial Zones. Israel is also working on deepening its roots in the region by working with its allies, especially the UAE, but also Egypt, on a long term programme of remoulding the religious narrative in the educational curriculum of its neighbours and bolstering secularism for the Gulf States and Egypt. This is a way of weakening the Islamist current and, for Israel, of removing the notions of tying the Palestinian issue to the right of Islamic sovereignty over the Holy Land, especially Jerusalem. Unlike the Gulf, however, Sisi has had to tread carefully despite a de facto close alliance with Israel, and cultural diplomatic moves such as the renovation of the main synagogue in Alexandria or of the Jewish cemetery in Cairo, the coup government still had to pretend to protest against US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Both these moves were arguably dictated by the tactical need of Sisi to secure and maintain power. Since then, however, Sisi has been trying to rebalance his relations with the UAE to something closer to near partners rather than a senior/junior relationship. This in turn dictated his deal to secure \$12 billion in loans from the IMF, with its demands for dismantling the welfare state as a means of freeing himself from financial dependency on the UAE in particular. He remains a staunch partner in the UAE's crusade against the MB but refused to physically join in the quagmire of its Yemen adventure, and arguably his anti-Qatar stance was equally motivated by his antipathy to the MB and Qatar's balanced position towards the organisation (although by no means unconditional).

The crossroads Sisi faces at present is exacerbated by two factors. First, the rise of Turkey as a rival regional power to Egypt and the Gulf states, with its own agenda increasingly limits his ability to act as a free agent. In the case of Libya, for example, he sees the legitimate government as an echo of the Morsi government he overthrew and hence his support for general Haftar. He is likely, however, to be reluctant to fully commit

troops even with Turkey's intervention there, because he fears to test his popular support in the army and the country at large should the Egyptian forces become mired in a long and costly fight. After all, the Egyptian army, even with intelligence and other support from the IDF, has not exactly acquitted itself well in the Sinai against Islamist militants and local insurgents. This would put him at odds with both the UAE and Israel who would want to counter Turkey physically there, so he is likely to come under pressure to engage more fully in Libya.

Secondly, by aligning himself so closely with Israel and with the UAE, Sisi has effectively boxed Egypt in a position where it is increasingly difficult to manoeuvre. Moreover, his ambitions to revive Egypt's position as the regional Arab superpower puts him on a course of continuous friction with Turkey that is seeking to re-establish its pre-eminence in the region. His problem is that his economy, and therefore the resources at his disposal, is less than half that of Turkey's. That in turns binds him closer to the UAE and Saudi who are effectively waging a cultural war with Turkey that they cannot win because they do not have the hearts and minds of the peoples of the region who find a close affinity with the Turkish vision and see it as dynamic as opposed to a stale agenda of regime survival the expense of development and independence.

Last and by no means least, the economic mismanagement of his government, which I allude to elsewhere in this chapter, will increasingly occupy his attention. This has been made worse by a slow realisation among the wider population, even amongst his supporters, that Egypt's future is looking decidedly shaky, especially when it comes to the very serious and threatening issue of water security so that Sisi now has to open another diplomatic front against Ethiopia, itself an ally of his other supporter, Israel. As his space for manoeuvring decreases over time due to these factors, he is likely to become more erratic, which in turn might alarm both Israel and the United States which may reconsider their position towards President Trump's "favourite dictator".

Conclusion

Increasing control by the military of the institutions of the state and the economy created a more repressive regime that undermined any distinction between the executive and the legislative. There has been the closure of all political spaces, independent political parties and civil society. Parliament itself has become no more than a rubber stamp. The judiciary and the media have become increasingly manipulated and controlled as executive arms of the military.

The coup of 2013, despite the apparent ensuing grip on power, has brought into focus the failures of the military state, exhibited more starkly than ever since 1952, and an increasing societal fissure between the military and society at large. However, rolling back the military's political and economic power will be an extremely challenging hurdle to overcome.

The absence of any accountability or alternative policy options has led to stagnation and lack of progress on different levels of the state and its institutions because of the security mentality of police and military state dominated by the military intelligence service of which Sisi was once head, and which reports to him and is directed by him and serves his policies.

While repression as a means of control and containment could be seen to have succeeded in the short term, it has also become an obstacle to any form of progress at any level, whether for the wider economy or for the individual citizen. Thus, the struggle of the military regime to ensure that there is no repeat of 2011 has led it down the path of an ever-tightening spiral of repression, which in turn increases its own isolation from, and fear of society, which then results in further repression. In such a political climate Egypt remains in a stalemate, unable to move forward or to defend its interests while fissures within the state between the ruling elite and the rest of society continue to widen so that some view the situation as leaving a zero-sum equation as an inevitable outcome.

One may wonder at the absence of any active opposition movement on the ground, given the dire reality lived by the majority of Egyptians, the level of repression, of corruption, and the increasingly obvious signs of national failure whether over the Nile or the economy or national sovereignty. The reason is simply that the barrier of fear is very great. However, the components for real political change are greater than in 2011 and the military regime, despite its apparent dominance, is in an increasingly precarious position. Despite keeping a lid on expressions of disaffection, discontent is increasing with economic hardship and the excessive repressive practices that the regime is increasingly forced to use. Moreover, 2011 and the first democratic elections of 2012 created an irreversible crack in the old order which is still to reverberate in response to the failure of the old military order to deliver and break the current stalemate.

The Sisi regime is the culmination of now almost seven decades of failed military rule, but with all aspects of previous versions of officer rule exaggerated. Repression is greater than at any previous period, corruption is at a higher level, economic failure is greater, national security and independence are weaker. As Sisi retreats into an ever more paranoid military intelligence mentality, he is driving a bigger wedge between the army and its previously close allies among the business elite, between the army, once a source of national pride, and the wider population and trying to keep the state knitted together through a fascist narrative of the primacy of the motherland defended mainly against internal enemies by the military.

His weakness lies in the fact that his apparatus is largely incompetent and incapable of managing the economy, and the price for his ascension to power was to surrender Egyptian interests to outside powers, notably Israel and the UAE who have their own agenda in the region. By doing so, he is alienating ever-larger sections of the population. Some are those who believed in the democratic dream of 2012 and having tasted freedom once, find it impossible not to strive for it again. Others are those

who once benefited from close ties with the military under Mubarak but find themselves and their economic interests frozen out. Perhaps a majority that grew up knowing no different under military rule, but who bought into its nationalist narrative, find it is being eroded over the giving up of Tiran and Sanafir, and concessions to Israel and over the Nile. For them, the covenant struck with the military by their fathers in 1952 for accepting the centralist state in return for a reasonable life with some semblance of basic rights in fields other than free expression or politics have become meaningless in the context of increasing poverty and state dysfunction. For all the efforts of the intelligence service at creating a new nationalist secular narrative, the old narrative which holds the Zionists as the enemy still holds at a popular level and the adherence to Islamic values remains deep and creates dissonance for the regime's plans.

Such a mixture of internal tensions within society against a backdrop of an economy failing for the majority and an increasingly erratic ruler boxed into a spiral of increasing repression and need for direct control is a recipe for instability and state decay.

The old order is unsustainable. The struggle in Egypt and the region is over whether an authoritarian and corrupt system that belongs to and serves the few over the many survives and entrenches itself, or whether the many can shift the balance of power in their favour sooner rather than later towards democracy, accountability, and respect for the rule of law.

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Palestine: The Roots of Conflict & Muslim-Jewish Relations

Azzam Tamimi

This chapter is about the original causes of the conflict in Palestine. Its purpose is to show that the roots of that conflict are traceable to Europe and that contrary to widespread misconceptions it is neither religious in nature nor the result of a territorial dispute between neighbours. The chapter will endeavour to show how, with the passage of time and due to the success of world powers in sustaining and consolidating the status quo that emerged out of the First World War in what became known as the Middle East, legitimacy was bestowed upon what was an entirely Western colonial project.

A common Zionist attitude is to avoid discussing the roots of the conflict in Palestine. There is no better way to do this than by denying the very existence of the Palestinians as a people. Former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir (1898-1978) famously said there was no such thing as a Palestinian people (Shlaim, 2014, p.315). Such denial is usually buttressed by the claim that “the Palestinians had no unique history, culture or language” ... that “they were Arabs who had entered Israel in the early 20th Century to threaten the fledgeling State of Israel” therefore “should return to Arabia” where they came from (Sizer, 2004, p.10).

In contrast, according to a no less preposterous Zionist claim, “the Jews had a divine right to *Eretz Yisrael* (the land of Israel) which extended from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates” (Sizer, 2004).

This century-old conflict is often portrayed by the media as a mere territorial dispute, or even worse as “a clash between two cultures, Palestinian and Israeli or Oriental and Western” (Sizer, 2004, p.17).

Far from it. As I explain in my *Hamas Unwritten Chapters*, until the beginning of the twentieth century, Muslims, Christians and Jews, coexisted peacefully throughout the Muslim world where, for many centuries, Islamic empires (whose terrain extended over three continents), provided a milieu of tolerance under a system that guaranteed protection for those who are today referred to as minorities. Islam, whose values and principles governed the public and private conduct of Muslim individuals and communities, recognised Christians and Jews as legitimate communities within the Muslim homeland, designated them as People of the Book, and accorded them inalienable rights. The followers of both Christianity and Judaism participated on equal footing with the Muslims in building the Arab-Islamic civilisation on whose fruits European renaissance philosophers were nourished.

Therefore, the roots of this conflict are to be found not in Palestine itself, nor in any part of the Muslim world, but in Europe and more specifically in late 19th Century Europe. It is to be found in the European Christian attitude toward the Jews.

Talmudic Covenant

For many centuries, since 135 CE when the Romans completely banished them from Palestine, (Cattan, 1988, p.6) Jews maintained the position that their return to the ‘promised land’ was conditional upon the coming of the Messiah. According to the Talmud, God is said to have imposed three oaths on the Jews: 1) Jews should not rebel against non-Jews; 2) as a group, Jews should not massively emigrate to Palestine before the coming of the Messiah; and 3) Jews should not pray too strongly for the coming of the Messiah, so as not to bring him before his appointed time (Shahak & Mezvinsky, 1999, p.18).

This doctrine has been the foundation for what some writers describe as “religious (or spiritual) Zionism” as opposed to political Zionism. Roger Garaudy notes that this religious Zionism gave rise to a tradition of Jewish pilgrimage to the “holy land” and even to the establishment of spiritual communities, notably at Safed, when the persecution by the “Catholic Kings” of Spain (after a long and happy co-existence of Muslims and Jews in that country), led some pious men to go to Palestine in order to live in accordance with their faith. (Garaudy, 1983, p.6) Many of the Jews who fled Spain settled down in various parts of the Ottoman Caliphate, where they were not only welcome but where they also developed and prospered (Grayzel, 1984, p.375).

Over the centuries, Jews repeatedly suffered persecution in European lands. Whenever that happened, they sought refuge in Muslim lands where they were welcomed and treated as people of the book in accordance with the “Covenant of God and His Messenger”. Muslims, therefore, saw no issue with Jews wishing to visit or even live in their midst. Such Muslim perception of the Jews remained unchanged until the Zionist movement, which was born in Europe as a reaction to the emergence of European nationalism and rise in antisemitism, started recruiting Jews in Muslim lands for a project that was seen by the Muslims as an attack on their faith and their homeland.

Empowering Political Zionism

It is here where a distinction should be made between political Zionism and the aforementioned religious one. Garaudy observes that religious Zionism never encountered opposition from the Muslims, who regarded themselves as belonging to the posterity of Abraham and his faith. That is why *“this spiritual Zionism, alien to any political programme for creating a state and any domination over Palestine, never led to clashes between Jewish communities and the Arab population, whether Muslim or Christian”* (Garaudy, 1983, p.7).

Since 1517 CE until the defeat of the Turks in the First World War, Palestine had been part of the Ottoman Empire. As Cattán explains, Turkish rule over Palestine never involved colonisation or immigration. The administration of the country remained in Arab hands, except for certain key posts that were held by the Turks. Contrary to a prevalent misconception in certain circles, Ottoman rule was not perceived by the Palestinians as a foreign power. After all, they “were not subject people, but were citizens of a sovereign and independent country. The Palestinians enjoyed full civil and political rights equally with Ottoman citizens.” (Cattán, 1988)

In the summer of 1917 British forces in Egypt launched a campaign against the Turks for the seizure of Palestine, Lebanon and Syria. This brought to an end the Turkish rule in Palestine. According to Cattán, the year 1917 marked a turning point in the history of Palestine, not only because of the end of Turkish rule but also because of the issuance of November of that year by Britain of the Balfour Declaration. This was the British promise to the leaders of political Zionism that they would be enabled to set up a homeland in Palestine (Cattán, 1988, p.7-8).

This political Zionism, as Avi Shlaim explains, “*was a secular movement a phenomenon of late-nineteenth-century Europe; it was born out of a combination of factors including the failure of Jewish efforts to become assimilated in Western society, the intensification of antisemitism in Europe and the parallel and not unrelated upsurge in nationalism.*” (Shlaim, 2014, p.2)

Yet, two world wars had to erupt for the Zionist dream to be accomplished. The First World War resulted in the destruction of the Ottoman Empire, paving the way for the Zionist colonisation of Palestine. The Second World War led to the massive conversion of Jews

in the West to Zionism as a reaction to the crimes perpetrated against them by Nazism culminating in the Holocaust. The Nazi's proved the Zionists to be right in claiming that Europe was no longer safe for the Jews. After all, their own fellow countrymen turned on them and their governments abandoned them.

Conflating Zionism with Judaism

With the passage of time, a growing sense of guilt on the part of Western nations at what happened to the Jews in Europe led to ever more conflation of Judaism with Zionism, first among the Jews and then among non-Jews around the world. This is what Rabbi Ahron Cohen from the anti-Zionist Neteurei Karta group in the United Kingdom once told me in a television interview:

“Sadly, a large section of the Jewish community in the UK and probably around the world do associate themselves strongly with the Zionist state. They’ve lost the knowledge that Zionism and Judaism are two totally differing and diametrically opposed concepts. They themselves consider Zionism to be part of Judaism and the world has come to that kind of understanding that Zionism and Judaism are one and the same. And this is what the Zionists want. Zionists like to present themselves as the representatives of the Jewish people. And of course, when it comes to looking at the wrongs that Zionists have done, and are doing, it is understandable that the victims of those wrongs associate Jews with Zionists” (Alhiwar TV, 2015).

Indeed, as Elmessiri explains, “many of the founders of Zionism had little concern with Judaism and even evinced a marked hostility toward its precepts and practices. During his visit to the Holy City, Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), the Austro-Hungarian journalist and founder of Political Zionism, consciously violated many Jewish religious practices in order to emphasize his new nonreligious outlook as distinct from a traditional religious stance. Max Nordau (1849-1923), the German

writer and Zionist leader, and Herzl's close friend was a self-avowed atheist who believed that the Torah was inferior as literature compared to Homer and the European classics and that it was childish as philosophy and revolting as morality" (Elmessiri, 1977, p.2).

It is no wonder that Orthodox Jews view with utmost contempt the advocates of Zionism, whom they regard to be apostates and heretics. Rabbi Yisroel Dovid Weiss, the New York-based spokesperson of the Orthodox Neteurei Karta community told me in an interview:

"Zionists themselves try to use, or abuse ... they take the words of the Tora, the five books of Moses, and especially the Talmud, they pick out statements out of context, and totally not what they're supposed to be about, in order to legitimise ... we say they hijack the Star of David and name Israel and all these statements of the Talmud."

Condemning the Zionists for violating the three covenants of the Talmud that forbid the Jews from returning *en masse* to the "promised land" prior to the coming of the Messiah, Rabbi Weiss goes on to accuse them of violating the basic concepts of the Torah:

"Zionism flies in the face of every concept of the Torah ... such as how you should treat your fellow human beings. You're not allowed to kill, you're not allowed to steal, you're not allowed to oppress. In every facet of Zionism, they contradict the Godliness, what the Torah is ... yet, they use the identity of the Torah and wave the Torah as a deed to the land."

Victims of Zionism

The Palestinians may have been the main victims of the Zionist project, but they were definitely not the only victims. Jewish-Muslim coexistence in much of the Arab world suffered severely and Muslim perception of the Jews and Judaism has been gravely impacted.

I asked Rabbi Weiss about the impact Zionism had on Muslim perception of the Jews. He said:

“That’s again part of the tragedy, the *nakbah* of Zionism, because we’ve enjoyed the hospitality, the friendship and the warmth of all the Muslim countries for hundreds of years. Jews have been thriving and flourishing, as Jewish communities, as very religious communities that upheld the Torah totally [...] we were able to thrive and serve God because we followed to the letter of the law the Torah. Zionism came along and endeavoured, having a lot of control over the media, holding the microphone in their hands for over fifty years, they’ve been bombarding the world with the picture as if the Muslim people and the Arab lands have an inherent hatred of the Jews and that they’re inhospitable. Whereas the facts on the ground and in history attest that they were our best friends. They were the place, during the inquisition, during the Crusades and during World War II, when the Jews found a home and found a safe haven [...] in the Muslim lands.”¹

Narrating to me the story of his own Iraqi Jewish family experience, Professor Avi Shlaim said:

“It’s an interesting story, the story of the Jews of Iraq and the departure to Israel *en masse* in 1950. The Jews of Iraq were very prosperous, were well-integrated and were part of Iraqi society. Many of them were professionals, doctors,

¹ In an unprecedented event on an Arab television station, on 1 May 2002 Aljazeera satellite channel hosted Rabbi Yisroel Dovid Weiss, spokesperson for the Neturei Karta International - Jews against Zionism. His 90 minutes live appearance on Ahmad Mansour’s Bila Hudud (Without Frontiers) weekly show shocked many viewers. Some of them were so sceptical as to suggest that perhaps the guest was a Hamas member disguised in the robes of a Rabbi. The programme can be accessed via this link: <http://www.aljazeera.net/programs/n...002/5/5-3-1.htm>.

lawyers and writers. There was no tradition of antisemitism in Iraq or in the Arab world. Antisemitism is a European phenomenon. The relations were pretty harmonious on the whole between the Muslims and the Jews in Iraq. But there were one or two episodes of violence against the Jews like a pogrom that took place in 1941 during the nationalist uprising of Rashid Ali Al-Kaylani.² This, really, wasn't a move against the Jews but it was a nationalist rebellion against the British. In the course of that conflict, there was an attack on the Jews and that was one of the ugliest incidents in the history of the Jewish community in Iraq. Otherwise, it was a pretty good example of coexistence and harmony between Muslims and Jews. My father was a very rich merchant and we were very prosperous. We had a very large house and a lot of servants. My father was well-connected. The real backlash against the Jews happened only in the aftermath of the 1948 war [...] as a reaction to the first Arab-Israeli war and the creation of the state of Israel. The Iraqi army fought in Palestine. They sent an expeditionary force to Palestine. At the end of that war, the Iraqi army refused to sign an armistice agreement and went back to Iraq without ever signing this agreement. In the aftermath of this war and the comprehensive Arab defeat at the hands of the infant Jewish state, there was a backlash against the Jews throughout the Arab world and within Iraq as well. There was one famous incident in which a hand grenade was lobbed into the central synagogue in Baghdad and that created a panic. No one really knows who was behind that episode. But there was panic and

² From Encyclopaedia Britannica: Rashīd 'Alī al-Gaylānī, Gaylānī also spelt Gailānī, Gīlānī, or Kaylānī, (born 1892, Baghdad, Iraq, Ottoman Empire [now Iraq]—died August 28, 1965, Beirut, Lebanon), Iraqi lawyer and politician who was prime minister of Iraq (1933, 1940–41, 1941) and one of the most celebrated political leaders of the Arab world during his time.

the Jews felt insecure in Iraq and the Iraqi government offered them the possibility of leaving the country. They passed a law which said, without mentioning the Jews, any Iraqi citizen who wants to leave the country is free to do so. They had to register by a certain date and relinquish their Iraqi citizenship. About a hundred thousand out of a hundred and thirteen thousand Jews registered to leave the country. And after that, after the deadline, another law was passed saying any Iraqi who relinquished his citizenship thereby lost his rights as an Iraqi citizen. So, they were free to leave the country but all their assets were frozen and their bank accounts were frozen, so they couldn't sell their houses. So, they left for Israel but without their properties and without their wealth.”³

When I asked Professor Shlaim about his own assessment of the claim that Zionists were behind the attack on the synagogue to provoke a Jewish community exodus out of Iraq, he said:

“All my relatives, the Iraqi relatives in Israel, believe it was a Zionist agent who was behind the attack and that the purpose was to create fear and to prompt the Jews to leave Iraq and go to Israel. I am very interested in this question. I tried to investigate it by going to the Israeli archives but I couldn't find any evidence. So, I did some research and I never came across any hard evidence of Israeli involvement in this incident. So, we simply don't know, the evidence isn't there. But what I would say is

³ Interview with the author, Alhiwar TV, May 2010. Here is the link to the interview: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIEVxZiN_Kw&t=163s

that my family and I are not refugees. No one mistreated us. No one expelled us. No one told us to get out of Iraq. We left out of our own free will. So, we are not refugees. But in a very real sense, we are victims of the Arab-Israeli conflict. My two sisters and I were little kids, and kids are adaptable. So, we quickly learned Hebrew and became Israeli children. But for my father, and to a lesser extent my mother – because she was much younger than him, it was a catastrophe. My father was an Arab Jew, our family – we were all Arab Jews, our language was Arabic, our music was Arabic, and my father was fifty years old when we arrived in Israel and he was a broken man. He had to struggle with learning Hebrew. He lost all his wealth. He wasn't successful in starting a new business and he was a broken man because of this upheaval. The point I'd like to make is that Zionism had its price and the main victims of Zionism are the Palestinians. But in a sense the Jews of the Arab world were also victims. They also paid the price for the rise of Israel."⁴

⁴ Naeim Giladi, an Iraqi Jew who later became an American citizen testifies in his book *Ben-Gurion's Scandals: How the Haganah and the Mossad Eliminated Jews* as well as in other writings that Iraqi Jews were victims of Zionism. See: <http://www.inminds.co.uk/jews-of-iraq.html>. This is what he says in the introduction to his paper in the above link: "I write this article for the same reason I wrote my book: to tell the American people, and especially American Jews, that Jews from Islamic lands did not emigrate willingly to Israel; that, to force them to leave, Jews killed Jews; and that, to buy time to confiscate ever more Arab lands, Jews on numerous occasions rejected genuine peace initiatives from their Arab neighbours. I write about what the first prime minister of Israel called "cruel Zionism." I write about it because I was part of it."

Misconceptions and Misperceptions

It was, therefore, inevitable for a change in the Arab and Muslim attitude toward the Jews to occur. This came in response to the Zionist movement's claim that it was undertaking a project on behalf of the Jews and in the name of Judaism. It is true, as has been discussed, that the Zionist project was rooted in a secular nationalist ideology, and that many of its pioneers and founding fathers were unashamedly atheist.⁵

Yet, Zionists always sought to justify the creation of the State of Israel in Palestine and the dispossession of the Palestinians in religious terms. They felt the need to bestow some sort of religious legitimacy on their project to gain the support of Jews around the world, most of whom had initially been opposed to political Zionism. To do this, the Zionists invoked the Bible although few of them truly believed in it or showed any respect for it.

As I argue in my book *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*, this problem is not confined to Palestine but exists across the Arab region, and even beyond, where Jews once lived in large numbers. Following the creation of the State of Israel in Palestine in 1948, Jews living in various Arab countries were encouraged, at times intimidated, to migrate to Israel which, having expelled close to a million Palestinians, was in dire need of beefing up its nascent population.⁶ Additionally, Jews from Iraq, Yemen, and Morocco provided a source of cheap labour and performed functions not 'befitting' for the Ashkenazim (Eastern European Jews) who presided over the Zionist colonial project in Palestine and treated

⁵ For the secular origins and biblical justifications of political Zionism see the following: Abdelwahab Elmessiri, *The Land of Promise: A Critique of Political Zionism*; New Brunswick, N.J., 1997; Michael Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism: a moral critique*; Sheffield Academic Press, 1997; John Rose, *The Myths of Zionism*; London: Pluto Press, 2004.

⁶ For a personal eyewitness account of how Iraqi Jews were conned into migrating to Palestine see Naeim Giladi's book *Ben Gurion's Scandals: How the Haganah & the Mossad Eliminated Jews*; Gilit Publishers; July 1995.

themselves as first-class citizens of the newly founded 'Jewish' state in contrast to Sephardic Jews who came from the Arab countries.⁷

The failure to make a distinction between the Jews and Zionists, or between Judaism and Zionism, has, for some time, plagued the works of several prominent Muslim writers, as well as the discourse or literature of a number of key Islamic movements, including Hamas in Palestine (Tamimi, 2006).

For several decades after the creation of Israel in Palestine, the conflict continued to be perceived as one of religious strife between the Jews and the Muslims. The ongoing association of Israel with the Jews and the Jews with Israel only reinforces the conviction of many Muslims that the conflict in the Middle East between the Palestinians (or the Arabs) and the Israelis is indeed a religious one.

⁷ Sephardic Jews suffered decades of discrimination in Israel. They were treated as second-class citizens and had to settle for inferior housing and much lower standards of services in education and health. According to Phyllis Bennis, head of the Middle East Project at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., "within Israel there are four levels of citizenship, the first three being various levels of Jewish participation in Israeli society, which are thoroughly racialized. At the top of the pyramid are the Ashkenazi, the white European Jews. At the level of power, the huge contingent of recent Russian immigrants -- now about 20 per cent of Israeli Jews -- are being assimilated into the European-Ashkenazi sector, though they are retaining a very distinct cultural identity. The next level down, which is now probably the largest component of the Jewish population, is the Mizrahi or Sephardic Jews, who are from the Arab countries. At the bottom of the Jewish pyramid are the Ethiopian Jews, who are black. You can go into the poorest parts of Jewish West Jerusalem and find that it's predominantly Ethiopian. This social and economic stratification took shape throughout the last 50 years as different groups of Jews from different part of the world came, for very different reasons, to Israel. So while the divisions reflected national origins, they play out in a profoundly racialized way. The Yemeni Jews in particular faced extraordinary discrimination. They were transported more or less involuntarily from Yemen to Israel. On arrival, they were held in primitive camps, and many Yemeni babies were stolen from their mothers and given for adoption to Ashkenazi families. In the early 1990s, a high-profile campaign began to try to reunite some of those shattered families. Beneath all these layers of Jews come the Palestinian citizens." Source: "For Jews Only: Racism Inside Israel"; an Interview with Phyllis Bennis by Max Elbaum. http://www.zmag.org/meastwatch/for_jews_only.htm

People who espouse this idea tend to be influenced by conspiracy theories about the global influence of the Jews. To support their claims, they usually quote from the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a fabricated document that purports to represent the ideas of a secret society of Jewish elders for conquering the world.⁸ In doing so, they seek to establish a direct correlation between an ongoing Jewish quest for global domination and the occupation of Palestine. It is also claimed that the Jewish conspiracy against Islam and the Muslims has been going on since the early days of Islam.

Selective reading, or convenient interpretation, of scripture as well as of history, is not uncommon among advocates of the Jewish conspiracy thesis in the Muslim world. In this particular case the Qur'anic chastisement of bad conduct and ill-manners by some of the Israelites in Biblical times, or by some of the Jews during Prophet Muhammad's time are taken out of their historic context and then universalised. It is astonishing that in spite of the fact that conspiracy theory is, in essence, un-Islamic, it was, until the early nineties of the twentieth century, widely espoused by Muslim intellectuals across the Arab world. The permeation of such thinking is a symptom of decline and backwardness, which in turn precipitate a deep sense of desperation and frustration.

Apart from its inability to explain much, conspiracy theory tends to ascribe to humans the powers of the Divine. Thanks to the efforts of thinkers such as the late Abdelwahab Elmessiri, editor of the eight-volume Arabic *Encyclopaedia of the Jews, Judaism and Zionism*, the

⁸ According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, also called Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion, is a fraudulent document that served as a pretext and rationale for anti-Semitism mainly in the early 20th century. The document purported to be a report of a series of 24 (in other versions, 27) meetings held at Basel, Switzerland, in 1897, at the time of the first Zionist congress. There Jews and Freemasons were said to have made plans to disrupt Christian civilization and erect a world state under their joint rule. Liberalism and socialism were to be the means of subverting Christendom; if subversion failed, all the capitals of Europe were to be sabotaged.

problem in Palestine is today seen by an increasing number of Islamists, including leaders and members of Hamas, as nothing but the outcome of a colonial project. The realisation that the conflict with Zionism ought to be explained more in politico-socio-economic terms than in religious ones is what prompted the Hamas leadership to publish a new document to ward off accusations of antisemitism. Regrettably, this document, which was released to the public on the first of May 2017, and despite marked improvements in the Movement's discourse, falls short of repudiating the 1988 Charter that is severely flawed.

Undoubtedly, explaining the conflict in political terms rather than religious ones makes better sense and is more compatible with the Qur'anic paradigm of *tadafu'* (interaction or interplay). Whereas the Qur'anic *tadafu'* paradigm provides motivation and hope, conspiracy theory leads to more frustration and deeper despair. In the first case, the only superior everlasting power in the world is that of God who empowers whom He so wishes and dis-empowers whom He so wishes. In the second case, there is not much one can do because of the assumption that a certain group of extremely powerful individuals, or community, has managed to control the world and seize all its resources; so, whatever one tries will just be in vain.

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China's Answer to Neoliberal Globalisation: Strengths and Weaknesses of the Belt and Road Initiative

Sadık Ünay

In the first decades of the 21st Century, the international system witnessed a comprehensive transformation from the unipolar post-Cold War regime, to a multipolar geostrategic and geo-economic configuration. This profound transition in inter-state relations and the world economy was characterised by a radical shift from the undisputed dominance of Western-centric political, economic and cultural structures, to a more heterogeneous and competitive environment where emerging powers increasingly asserted their interest formulations, distinctive values and worldviews. In the framework of entrenched global multipolarity, the complex diversification and asymmetric distribution of national power assets across a plethora of issue areas created structural obstacles for the unilateral temptations of global powers. In this context, (particularly with the rapid ascendancy of China in the global pecking order via increased economic, political, and military effectiveness), intellectual and policy-oriented currents emerged which challenged the notions of American hegemony and the “US Empire” (Hopkins, 2007). Meanwhile, the wider redistribution of power elements among the global and emerging powers created relations of complex interdependence, as a result of which reforming global governance mechanisms became a pertinent issue. This was reflected in the formation and sophisticated development of participatory global governance platforms such as the G20, as well as sub-groups of emerging powers challenging various manifestations of the US hegemony, such as the BRICS. In the aftermath of the global financial crisis in 2008, the major contours of the global order gradually moved into the direction of a bipolar competition between the US and China. As Beijing adopted a more assertive foreign policy, international

engagement strategy and economic competition approach, analysts attracted attention to an emerging G-2 structure (Zoellick and Lin, 2009). There was even the premature talk of a new Cold War between the two superpowers.

On the side of the global economy, widely accepted models of liberal free-market capitalism via Washington and post-Washington consensus models were challenged by the rise of strategic state capitalism, or the *Beijing Consensus* from China (Yağcı, 2016). The Chinese mixture of state control and market dynamism proved more efficient and swift-moving than its Western counterpart in producing welfare and socio-economic transformation, at least in the short run. Emerging economic powers led by China and India acquired prominent positions in global markets, thanks to their manufacturing potential, large labour reservoir and rapidly developing technological capacity. They were joined by countries controlling international flows of hydrocarbon energy sources with strong leadership ambitions, such as a resurgent Russia under Vladimir Putin. In the milieu of multipolarity, emerging powers used their economic influence as a diplomatic tool to accelerate the transformation of global governance structures towards a more balanced *status quo*. Thus, international politics became an arena characterised by a changing cast of actors, an expanding playing field, relations of mutual interdependence and contested structures of global governance (Kapp, 2008: 27).

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also known as the One Belt-One Road (OBOR) Project, was initially proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013. Conceived as Beijing's alternative to neoliberal globalisation via a sophisticated network of modern infrastructure projects that reach from the heart of Eurasia to Africa and Western Europe, the BRI instigated a lively debate among the sceptical and optimistic analysts concerning its potential implications. This study aims to present a balanced assessment pertaining to the potentially

transformative impact of the BRI project on the established parameters of integration in Eurasia and prevalent modes of globalisation. The relative strengths and weaknesses of the BRI will be highlighted in an attempt to transcend ideologically motivated approaches that stem from both the Chinese and Western academic and policy circles. The argument will stress that marginal strands of writing in social sciences need to be treated with great caution, as they tend to exaggerate the positive and negative aspects of China's system transforming capacity. Although China has become an economic superpower via great strides in areas including international trade, finance, production and technological know-how, its current growth capacity is still largely dependent on deep-seated relations with Western interests and multinational corporations. Widespread fears of China as a potential source of rupture in established structures of global governance tend to underestimate the notable difference between the military might of the US and China, as well as China's persistent socio-economic problems at home.

In order to highlight the relatively stronger and weaker aspects of the BRI as an alternative vision for global integration, we will present a detailed elaboration on China's main geopolitical ambitions and the debate surrounding its real strategic intentions. The study will also underline the major land and sea corridors as well as the financing structures associated with the BRI and attract attention to prospective advantages that will be created in interconnectivity and logistical integration. Then a technical analysis will be presented on the drawbacks surrounding the plethora of BRI projects, such as lack of transparency and legal-institutional regulation structures; problems of cost estimation and management; and claims of debt traps and neo-colonialism directed to developing countries. Finally, the geopolitical rivalries between China and other major Eurasian powers including Russia, India and Japan, will be explored in order to gauge the realistic prospects of the BRI's sustainability going to the future.

China's Global Ascendancy: Challenges of Objectivity

Historically speaking, China has been no stranger to global geopolitical competition, as the country has played prominent roles at the main platforms of international politics since at least the 1950s. China entered into the exclusive club of nuclear powers in the 1960s, right after the US and the Soviet Union, amid the tense Cold War environment. Since the reign of *Chairman Mao* (Zedong), the founding fathers of the People's Republic of China (PRC) developed strong reflexes of strategic balancing in the bipolar context of Cold War superpower rivalry. The acquisition of permanent membership at the Security Council of the United Nations in 1971 carried China into a real global power position, as a result of which its diplomats and political leadership were involved in all critical issues of global governance. Although the process of opening to the world economy started with a series of ambitious reforms in the 1980s under the pragmatic leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China's relevance for the international system remained largely as a predominantly political factor, as the country's economic might seemed negligible to global observers. The pace of China's re-engagement with the global political economy and its ascendancy as a major economic powerhouse after the mid-1990s surprised the Western public opinion and triggered a radical re-evaluation of the country's systemic relevance. Perceptive changes which triggered varying evaluations on the ascendancy of China as a global actor were deeply influenced by conjunctural ups and downs in the world economy, relative dynamism of the global markets and the extent of crisis dynamics affecting major Western players.

When the world economy was severely hit by the impact of the global financial crisis and industrialised countries fell into the abyss of recession, there emerged an optimistic genre of writings that portrayed China as the new growth engine of the world economy. In fact, the Chinese economy has already become the second-largest economy in

the world in terms of various parameters and is likely to overtake the US in the next decades. The term G-2 was increasingly used in the post-crisis era to indicate a model of bilateral relations between the US and China-based on competitive collaboration, limited inter-dependence and intermittent conflicts (Zoellick and Lin, 2009). Rising interest in the ascendancy of China contributed to debates exploring the political, economic, and social aspects of the Chinese development model, and whether it could replace Western-style capitalism (Zhao, 2010: 425). As Beijing's overall impact on political and economic mechanisms of governance and strategic security networks increased, Western interest into different aspects of Chinese influence began to spread into different issue areas, including global security (Johnston, 2003: 25; Buzan, 2010: 23); international trade (Fordham and Kleinberg, 2011); global finance (Chin and Helleiner, 2008); development (Taylor, 2009); systems of production (Henderson and Nadvi, 2011); environmental issues (Bawa et. al. 2010); models of growth (Turner, 2009); and whether China has emerged or re-emerged as a global player (Keller et.al. 2010).

In the meantime, negative ideological dispositions and suspicions against China which have deep historical roots resurfaced in the writings of American realists. Questioning the real intentions of the Chinese administration, this repertoire of writings claimed that Beijing was silently constructing its own global hegemony, and the ongoing trends were detrimental for the sustained global supremacy of the US. Reinvigorating the antagonistic language of the Cold War geopolitics, this literature depicted China as the existential enemy of the US and influenced US foreign policy priorities in the 2000s. *How We Would Fight China* by Robert Kaplan (2005) and *China's Unpeaceful Rise* by John Mearsheimer (2006), were among the leading examples of this genre along with studies by Mandelbaum (2010), Gertz (2002), Bernstein and Munro (1997), and Narlikar (2000).

There were also more balanced analyses that sought to alleviate concerns about the suspected intentions of China by stressing its conformity with

international norms, economic interdependence with Western powers and mutual understanding with multinational corporations. Suzuki's (2009) examination on China's charm offensive in foreign policy; Kennedy's critique of the Beijing consensus (2010); Lo's account on China's role in Eastphalian politics (2010); and Zhang's (1991) earlier exploration of China's place in international society are representative examples. We could also add the works of Piovani and Li (2011) on rising socio-economic inequalities in China; Breslin's (2011) critical examination of China's global role; and Bremmer's (2011) discussion underplaying the military threat of China towards the US.

Historical Backdrop and Scope of the BRI

China's re-engagement with the global political economy has gone through several critical thresholds. Following the gradual liberalisation and transition to an export-oriented growth model in the 1980s and the 1990s, the country's entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001 was one of these critical thresholds. Membership of the G-20 and assumption of a proactive role in the aftermath of the global financial crisis via a spirit of multilateral, collective economic governance was another. In this context, Beijing's pursuit of a more assertive role in global politics and the world economy after the global financial crisis constituted the main motivation for the proposal of the BRI as the new lynchpin of its foreign and economic policy. This grand project was first announced by President Xi Jinping's critical diplomatic visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia, representing prospective openings to Central and Southeast Asia. Implying a critique of the Western-centric globalisation process which exclusively worked for the benefit of industrialised countries and large multinational corporations, Beijing offered a vision of multifaceted connectivity across Eurasia and Africa that was supposed to promote participatory, inclusive and interdependent development.

The Chinese vision of rejuvenating the historical ‘Silk Road’ via massive infrastructure projects aimed at interconnected transport, communications, energy, and trade networks was by no means unprecedented. Many leaders and political regimes over the course of history have entertained similar ideas of Eurasian integration along the routes of the Silk Road, but they often did not possess sufficient financial muscle and political leverage to convince different actors to collectively pursue such grand projects. To illustrate, Generals from the Soviet Red Army voiced the idea to rejuvenate the Silk Road to unite the Eurasian landmass through trade and logistics networks after the 1950s. But the fierce geopolitical rivalry between the Soviet Union and China to assume the leadership of the socialist bloc during the Cold War meant that the widespread international consensus required for such a comprehensive project was impossible to reach. Loaded with strong historical references, “rebuilding the long-lost geo-economic bond in Eurasia” became a common theme among the regional actors and international organisations alike. Since the end of the Cold War, several countries including the US, Russia, Iran, South Korea, Japan and Turkey as well as international organisations like the UN, have raised their peculiar proposals for the rejuvenation of the Silk Road in line with their respective visions. Therefore, there is no historical or philosophical reason to suggest that the idea to reconstruct Eurasian integration via the Silk Road had to be an exclusively Chinese initiative. The relative success or failure of the BRI as a collection of mega-projects is bound to be determined by the sustainability of the material and financial resources that will be put into its service for implementation.

The originality of the BRI stems from the fact that China has the financial muscle to advance the simultaneous construction of a port in Djibouti, a Gateway Port in Melaka and electrification of the Tehran-Meshed railroad in Iran within the scope of this all-encompassing project. Covering around half of the world’s total population and a quarter of the global GDP, the BRI -if successful- will represent the

biggest single infrastructure, transportation and communications project ever realised throughout human history (Guardian, 2017). The successful completion of the BRI undoubtedly will provide the Chinese administration enormous leverage over a great number of governments hosting the projects and turn China into a global power with concrete channels of influence across continents. As far as its geographical scope is concerned, the BRI involves two main geographical routes: the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) which represents a rather long land route starting in the western part of China, passing through Central Asia and the Middle East to reach the European Union. The BRI indicates five main fields of connectivity, three of which are related to land routes indicated with the term *Belt*. These land routes include China-Europe Route through Central Asia and Russia; China-Middle East Route through Central Asia; and China-Southeast Route through the Indian Ocean. Second, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) denotes a long maritime route that connects Southeast Asia, the Persian Gulf, and the Horn of Africa to end up in the European Union. The term *Road* is used for the main maritime routes in the MSR and indicates the China-Europe Route through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean; as well as the China-South Pacific Ocean Route through the South China Sea (Ardunio and Gong, 2018: 3).

In line with China's ambitious connectivity goals, the BRI covers six main economic corridors (EC) on the Eurasian axis and towards South Asia: New Eurasia Land Bridge Economic Corridor; China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor; China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor; China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor; China-Pakistan Economic Corridor; Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor. The wide geographical and maritime scope of the BRI covering East and Central Asia, the Middle East and parts of Africa is impressive and unprecedented. In order to provide the financial basis for the BRI, the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund were established under close Chinese coordination.

The AIIB could be perceived as China's direct answer to the World Bank, as its project-lending mechanisms and conditionality procedures are similar, and half of its \$100 billion founding capital was provided by Beijing (Weiss, 2017). The AIIB focused on supporting projects of infrastructure, energy production and transport, environmental protection, rail and sea transportation, telecommunications, sanitation, and logistics. Despite the clear opposition of the US administration, the AIIB was formed by the active participation of 57 founding members including several EU countries and the UK. The Silk Road Fund is comparatively a more domestic financing mechanism that was established by Chinese financial institutions including the Chinese Investment Corporation, China Development Bank and Chinese Export-Import Bank. There is no doubt that project financing through both the AIIB and the Silk Road Fund will contribute to the emergence of channels of financial dependency to China among relevant developing countries. Large-scale infrastructure projects, giant energy facilities, refineries and pipelines, new ports, railway lines, motorways and telecommunications networks were among the economic dimensions of the BRI financed through these institutions.

Optimistic and Skeptical Approaches Towards The BRI

Depending on their respective worldviews and geopolitical affiliations various analysts tend to offer optimistic and sceptical evaluations concerning the basic motivations, concrete implications and future prospects of the BRI. Liberal and pro-Chinese analyses of political economy tend to argue that the BRI is a comprehensive infrastructure and cooperation programme dedicated to increasing international trade in Eurasia and Africa, which aims to support the global integration of developing countries. Despite the harsh geographic conditions and insecure regions in its domain, the BRI is expected to sustain peace and stability in a large geographic area via economic interdependence. Ensuring stability and security in mainland Asia is expected to contribute to the wider sense of security and stability in the global

system. According to this line of analysis, comprehensive reforms in recent decades turned China into a relatively open and market-driven economy that does not violate major international trade and investment rules. The BRI project could contribute to the alleviation of income and growth disparities within China and across the Eurasian mainland by stimulating the manufacturing sectors and market integration.

However, even the optimists stress the need to establish a robust institutional and legal structure to regulate the bidding processes for the BRI projects in order to form a fair and competitive investment environment for the Chinese and non-Chinese companies. The risks of the Chinese administration pursuing protectionist policies to favour Chinese companies against their foreign competitors are mentioned, especially in the cases of large strategic investment projects. The Chinese administration generally tried to calm the anxieties surrounding the implementation of the BRI by underlying the concrete benefits of the proposed projects for the host countries and indicating win-win relationships. Moreover, various studies stressed the vast reservoir of investment opportunities that will be opened up in the Chinese markets for the entrepreneurial communities of the developing countries with the progress of the BRI. Proponents of the BRI tend to argue that some of the developing countries have badly missed the opportunities created by economic globalisation due to their lack of physical and digital interconnectedness. Prospects of increased interconnectivity to be provided by the plethora of BRI projects are expected to enable these countries to catch up with the industrialised world and speed up their socio-economic development.

But within the large reservoir of writings on the BRI, optimistic analyses seem to remain as a subtle minority especially in the Anglo-Saxon academic community. Geopolitical and realist approaches to the BRI tend to portray the initiative in line with the global ambitions of the *Middle Kingdom* that we summarised in the earlier parts of the study. Accordingly, the BRI is perceived as a global initiative designed to

further China's national interests by allowing cheap and swift delivery of the Chinese manufacturers into the Western markets and ensuring control over strategic raw materials and passageways in developing countries along the routes. (Yu, 2017: 3) Recently, there emerged even stronger accusations in the social science literature claiming that the BRI constitutes the latest and most visible manifestation of Beijing's neo-imperialist inclinations. The inference was that most of the developing countries on the land and sea routes of the BRI will be invaded by the plentiful and cheap Chinese exports and project financing. Consequently, local manufacturing capacity will collapse in these countries and state finances would be overwhelmed to repay the gigantic credits received to sponsor massive and largely unnecessary infrastructure projects. Sceptical analyses stress substantial differences in terms of the socio-economic levels of the developing countries along the routes of the BRI, as well as long-term political problems, border disputes, great-power meddling, transnational terror and illicit trafficking to cite burning issues of concern.

For the sceptics, China's claims based on the construction of efficient and sustainable channels of transport, logistics, energy, trade and telecommunications among numerous countries characterised by various political regimes, foreign policies, international alliances, ethnocultural formations and economic standards are not realistic. Several sub-groups of countries might enjoy the physical and financial benefits that are brought up by specific projects in the context of the BRI, but they would be tempted to resist the neo-colonial ambitions of China by forming alliances with alternative regional powers. Approaches of major powers such as Russia, India and Japan to the expansion of the BRI along the Eurasian axis reflect such geopolitical reflexes of *reluctant participation*. As expected, realist political scientists claim that China is constructing the infrastructural foundation of its economic domination and imperialism through the BRI under the pretext of cooperation, peace, and development. It is indicated that China has a massive stock

of capital through which it could pull resource-poor countries into deliberate debt traps and seize their strategic assets. Similarly, various strategic studies attracted attention to China's hostile attitude in the South China Sea where manmade islands were equipped with heavy military assets and sovereignty claims were raised in internationally disputed areas breaching the widely accepted rights of other countries.

Sceptical analysts stress that China is trying to impose its hegemony on the Indian Ocean and the whole of Eurasia by bypassing major powers such as Russia and India via the BRI projects. They add that by launching the BRI and forming a wide network of energy, logistics and infrastructure links Beijing is forming a bloc of nations closely aligned with its transformative strategies. Moreover, it is pointed out that the BRI will enable direct Chinese access to Eurasia by bypassing the strategic control mechanisms of Russia through the new economic corridors. For example, having full control over the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor would give Beijing the luxury of transporting international energy sources directly from the Indian Ocean and reduce its dependency on Russian oil and natural gas (Stronski, 2018). Similarly, new energy and logistics routes through the Central Asian Republics such as Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan will constitute new channels of connectivity with these countries without constant Russian approval. Thus, the collection of projects within the BRI could enable China to isolate Eurasia from the geostrategic, economic, and military influence of its 'uneasy partner' Russia; thereby paving for its regional dominance.

Accordingly, the expansion of China's military influence across different continents along the routes is cited as a crucial indication of the project's neo-colonial ambitions. It is emphasised that China's trade content is gradually shifting towards arm's production, national defence and military sectors as the country eyes to replace Russia as the dominant arm's exporter of Central Asia. However, providing safety and security of the land and sea routes along the BRI will be the foremost challenge

for Beijing, as some of the key projects are located in the most conflict-prone regions of the world. Bearing in mind the importance of marine security China started to build naval bases in strategic passageways and energy flashpoints, but sceptics argue that even for a global giant providing safety and security along the sophisticated routes of the BRI will prove a *mission impossible* in the long term. In the following part, we will present detailed evaluations concerning some of the points raised by the sceptics to underline the major challenges for the sustainability of the BRI. These include problems of cost estimation/management and debt traps, legal and institutional regulation problems, geopolitical rivalries, and negative public perceptions on growing Chinese influence.

Main Challenges for the Sustainability of the BRI

Problems of Cost Management and Debt Diplomacy

Economic question-marks surrounding the massive collections of mega-projects associated with the BRI predominantly centre around issues of cost management and efficiency. Regarding cost management, as the bulk of the project financing for the BRI is supplied directly or indirectly by Chinese sources, the overall health of the Chinese economy and its growth prospects emerge as fundamental determinants of the BRI's financial sustainability. As the world economy succumbed to a stagnation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, large question marks started to surround the financial muscles of the Chinese administration to support a myriad of projects in an environment of a global slowdown. Furthermore, there are serious issues of objectivity and transparency when it comes to calculating the total cost of the projects involved in the BRI portfolio. Since the list of the projects is not definitive, cost estimates might change according to ups and downs in the world economy and involved countries. Furthermore, the public authorities are generally reluctant to disclose clear figures concerning cost structures and credit arrangements, therefore most of the cost calculations are only preliminary. Both the Chinese administration and

governments in participating countries have so far proved extremely reluctant to share data and detailed cost estimations on the BRI-related projects. Therefore, realistic impact analyses including potential investments, trade promotion effects and impacts on regional and global economies are impossible to produce. In the light of the above-mentioned caveats, it is not surprising that the total investment costs of the BRI have been estimated in extremely different ways by different sources. There are numerous estimations placing the total cost structure and capital needs of the BRI-related projects in a considerably wide spectrum between US\$ 1 trillion and US\$ 8 trillion (Ho, 2018; Hillman, 2018).

Another major issue in addition to serious cost estimation and management problems concerns a traditional factor seen in previous colonial expansion strategies, namely the accumulation of bad loans. The history of European colonialism is replete with rather dramatic examples whereby colonial powers pulled targeted countries into deliberate debt traps in order to galvanise their control over the corrupt political regimes. This economic tactic aimed at eroding potential sources of resistance to colonial expansion is claimed to be used by the Chinese administration in the context of the BRI projects. Accordingly, Western circles frequently accuse China of establishing a sophisticated financial architecture through the AIIB, China Development Bank, Export-Import Bank and other commercial banks, to sponsor development projects in a way that prevents transparency and effective monitoring of the debt arrangements (Stratfor, 2018). China's enormous financial reserves are channelled into developing countries for projects with insufficient income generation potential for credit repayment.

The case of the Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka transferred to Chinese control in 2017 is frequently given as the typical example of a neo-colonialist debt trap. Following the strategically important Gwadar Port in Pakistan and the Chittagong Port in Bangladesh, the Hambantota

Port had entered into the radar of the Chinese BRI strategy. The loss of the Hambantota Port built by China Merchant Port Holdings to direct Chinese control for 99 years was a heavy price paid for the failure of the government to pay the accumulated loans which reached US\$ 50 billion and was widely seen as a sign of eroding national sovereignty. Worsening economic troubles of the country instigated the added transfer of special rights for a 15000 acres-wide investment zone, which was also given to the Chinese in the Beragama region. These acquisitions gave Beijing a strategic foothold along a crucial commercial and military waterway located just a few hundred miles away from the shores of strategic rival India. Similar cases of China's ambitious plans the use international loan schemes to acquire power and influence in the world system by playing hardball could be given from various African countries.

The crescendo around claims that the BRI is nothing more than Chinese debt diplomacy to secure strategic assets reached a crescendo in many African countries struggling to counter 'debt for asset' swaps for the control of strategic points. Zambia lost control of its main Kenneth Kaunda International Airport to China over debt repayment difficulties, while the Chinese-funded railway network in Ethiopia struggled to produce enough income for debt repayments and a US \$12 billion-worth restructuring scheme was announced in 2018. In Kenya, a high level of debt exposure has come to the public agenda with the opening of the rail link connecting Nairobi to the Central Rift Valley, which constitutes part of a major network that aims to link Mombasa Port with Uganda, Burundi, Congo, Rwanda and South Sudan. While the Kenyan government accepted over US\$ 5billion worth of investment loans from China and the Kenyan Port Authority imposed high costs for compulsory rail transport services domestically, financial difficulties continued to grow. It is very likely that Kenya might be the next victim of Beijing's debt diplomacy and the control of valuable Mombasa Port will be passed into the Chinese companies (Wheeler, 2020).

In all these examples, there are serious debates surrounding the high-cost structure of the projects and accusations of deliberate debt traps formed against the host nations. In other words, Chinese companies are accused of deliberately misguiding the public authorities on the cost structures and expected income levels of these expensive projects, so that repayment crises turn into asset hunting parties. It was estimated that China's three biggest state-owned banks (Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, Bank of China, and China Construction Bank, as well as China Development Bank and Eximbank), have extended over US\$ 400 billion in loans to BRI projects. The rate of actual or potential bad loans within this massive foreign debt reservoir pertaining to the BRI projects remains completely unknown which creates additional fragilities.

Institutional and Political Fragilities

The second bunch of problems that might constitute serious caveats for the sustainability of the BRI as a transnational endeavour concern institutional and political fragilities. The fact that the BRI proceeds under non-transparent coordination of Chinese authorities and there are no institutional frameworks or binding legal obligations, increases the probability of technical and financial disagreements. Since Beijing prefers to govern BRI projects via bilateral deals with participating countries, the conditions involved in every deal are peculiar to the individual country. There is no supranational institutional authority akin to the WTO within the BRI structure. As a result, there are no standard predetermined rules and regulations for investments and conflict resolution processes. Establishing such an institutional legal authority requires "setting out acceptable standards of behaviour, defining responsibilities and obligations, and holding countries and multinational firms to account for their trustworthy adherence to international norms" (Morris, 2018: 54). But in the majority of projects, international arbitration mechanisms that are expected to solve trade disputes between the parties are located in China, which leaves weaker developing country governments in Asia and Africa susceptible to accepting financial conditions imposed on them.

Although Beijing tries to explain the lack of binding legal stipulations or framework conditions with its non-interference approach in foreign policy, Chinese domination seems to surface on a project-by-project basis. The only potential legal channel that might be feasible for countries participating in the BRI, is to apply to the Dispute Settlement Mechanisms of the WTO in the case of a disagreement with Chinese companies. But the fact that most of the BRI projects are constructed via direct project financing by Beijing, heavily indebted countries find it very difficult to take their cases to the WTO platforms. Therefore, even if grave problems emerge concerning cost structures, income estimates, repayment periods and potential economic benefits heavy financial obligations keep national policymakers away from raising their issues in international platforms (UNCTAD, 2014: 14). It could safely be argued that the lack of a robust legal framework and institutional structure around the BRI is likely to produce serious problems of trustworthiness and sustainability going into the future. Along with problems of investment financing, legal and regulatory institutionalisation might potentially cause divergences of national interest among the BRI countries. In the absence of a binding legal supranational authority, enforcement of objective regulations will not be possible and Chinese actors with superior information, monopoly access to markets, financial resources and political power could easily take unfair advantages. In the absence of increased transparency, accountability, and legal-institutional frameworks for the BRI projects, serious socio-political reactions in host countries might challenge the sustainability of the initiative in the long run.

The political context of the BRI is directly related to bilateral relations between major powers in Eurasia, which are prone to endemic conflicts and geopolitical rivalries. It is a generally accepted proposition that the resolution of strategic conflicts on the Eurasian super-continental area which is the main territorial basis of the BRI is extremely hard to achieve in contrast to the European Union, which established an

institutional and normative framework that ended the legacy of the World Wars (Emerson, 2014: 44). The conflictual environment between Eurasian states is generally taken for granted and many global powers including the US have long tried to keep these conflicts alive in order to prepare a precept for their outside interventions (Mahapatra, 2013). Long-standing bilateral conflicts and sovereignty disputes among the participant states such as India and Pakistan; India and China; China and Russia; China and Southeast Asian countries (Vietnam, Laos, Thailand) give substance to sceptic's arguments for the sustainability of the BRI. As major regional powers and other developing countries begin to realise the long-term costs and geopolitical implications of Beijing's investment promises, the security atmosphere surrounding the BRI started to change. Despite the positive language of regional and global integration used by the Chinese authorities, the negative public perceptions pertaining to the wider implications of the BRI had a major impact on its expansion. Public perceptions and media representations of the BRI in South and Southeast Asia also have been quite negative according to important reports (Herrero and Jianwei, 2019).

Regional Competition and Geopolitical Reactions to BRI

As China is apparently both the main financial sponsor and the largest potential winner among the participants of the BRI, other regional players in Eurasia have developed second thoughts regarding active participation. In this section, the study underlines the reflexes of the Asian powers with substantial political and economic clout, which include Russia, India and Japan, against the progress of the BRI via promoting alternative regional arrangements or diverting the BRI goals.

India: Grudging Acceptance

Among the major Asian powers, India constitutes the most obvious actor that enthusiastically plays a counterbalancing role against China's expansionary regional vision through the BRI. Perceiving the creation of regional integration networks under Chinese control as an existential threat to its regional effectiveness, the Modi administration used every

opportunity to raise its opposition. Despite the huge potential of the wide range of mega infrastructure projects and investment opportunities, India adopted a cold stance towards the BRI and boycotted the BRI Summits in 2017 and 2019. These reactions resulted from historical territorial conflicts and India's geopolitical rivalry with China which fed into fears of Beijing's increasing strategic clout on Pakistan. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor could provide advantages to India in terms of infrastructure and integration with the global markets and India accepted several loans and investment assistance from the AIIB. But the China-Pakistan Corridor was protested anyhow due to the lack of transparency in deals between the Chinese firms and local governments under the BRI and breach of Indian sovereignty rights on Kashmir. This cold stance was also kept despite the fact that megaprojects of coal-powered electricity production among the BRI investments mostly focused on India, compared to other Asian countries. The Chinese administration tried to keep both Pakistan and India on board the BRI in order to pursue a holistic regional strategy, while Delhi grudgingly cooperated with Beijing on energy, logistics and infrastructure projects fearing the dangers of isolation (Kulkarni, 2018).

As part of his nationalist political discourse, Narendra Modi tried to elevate the vision of an India-centred regional system in the heart of Asia, rather than being a passive part of the BRI. But as India kept struggling with acute poverty and income disparities at home, its leadership never enjoyed the use of massive financial resources at par with China's investment budget. The halfway solution found to counter increasing Chinese regional influence was accepting the investments financed by the AIIB as they seemed congruent with national interests, but not supporting the BRI in its totality. The Modi administration was perfectly aware that if India failed to be a part of a hyper-connected Asia under the aegis of China, it could lose a great deal in terms of its long-term great power ambitions and get isolated in international platforms (Independent, 2017).

The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) was the alternative, though comparatively smaller, a project proposed by India before the gigantic interconnectivity vision of the BRI. The deal for the corridor was first signed in 2000 by Russia, Iran, and India to form a logistical corridor between Central Asia and the Baltic region thereby covering the North-South axis. However, this ambitious project largely remained on paper as there was no clear sponsor to finance the major investments; the private sector was reluctant to undertake any risks; the routes were determined according to political alignments, and there was no market rationale for the required infrastructure. Therefore, Delhi was stuck to observe the concrete manifestations of the BRI and develop pragmatic responses against growing Chinese influence.

Japan: Competitive Collaboration

Japan was another crucial Eurasian actor that was seriously disturbed by the potential regional implications of the BRI. Recent strategies adopted by the Japanese administration are directed towards the twin goals of supporting American regional initiatives while trying to undermine the unitary structure of the BRI by offering alternatives and diversions. In terms of its prevailing national interests, the Japanese economy is similar to the Chinese economy with advantages of high value-added, export-oriented production. But as a mature industrialised economy, Japan has to face the added disadvantages of falling dynamism and pace of growth, as well as an ageing society. As a regional power known for its strong colonial ambitions, Japan has historical reservations about the rapidly increasing regional influence of China and competing claims for economic-technological leadership. But so far the Abe administration adopted quite a pragmatic approach of wait-and-see concerning the plethora of BRI projects trying to maximise economic benefits and minimise geopolitical costs. Japanese companies have been actively involved in the construction of cross-continental trade routes in the context of the BRI via modern freight-train lines and suspension bridges from the outset (Nikkei Asian Review, 2018). Prime Minister Abe also announced that the Japanese government would spend US\$ 200 billion

over a five-year period for international infrastructure projects covered by the BRI, indicating a desire to be an active part of the initiative.

Like India, Japan is perfectly aware that a fully functional BRI network across Eurasia and Africa would favour the long-term interests and global leadership aspirations of China. Thus, rather than totally ignoring or rejecting the BRI vision in its totality, the Japanese government waited to see the final composition of concrete projects and then decided to take advantage of its companies' competitive edge. Leaving the hard work of gaining international acceptance and approval for the grand vision of BRI to Beijing, Japan showed that with its internationally competitive technology and highly efficient companies, it could utilise the built infrastructure to further its own national objectives. Multifaceted competition between Japan and China did not only focus on the completion of investments via leading firms but also the provision of different financing alternatives to host countries. For instance, providing investment finance for the Chabahar Port in Iran, which is a crucial part of the Indian INSTC and an alternative to Gwadar Port in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was a strategic action taken by the Japanese government. Moreover, the provision of generous low-cost investment credits to India and Myanmar, including a US \$12 billion credit to Delhi for the bullet-train project were similarly crucial initiatives (Jennings, 2018). The Abe administration skillfully utilised strategic rivalry between India and China, as well as the Modi government's reluctance to cooperate with Beijing to increase its strategic clout around the Indian Ocean. With its massive foreign exchange reserves and export-oriented manufacturing capacity, Japan represents the most serious regional rival that could undermine the geopolitical objectives of the BRI via countervailing investment and financing actions. The Trump administration's trade wars agenda against China and the gradual withdrawal of the US from the Asia-Pacific basin also forced Japan to take a more proactive role in order to accomplish strategic balancing against China (Basu, 2018).

Russia: Uneasy Partnership

Another major Eurasian actor pursuing strategic balancing policies against China's BRI vision is Russia. But Russia's multi-pronged strategic balancing strategies which became increasingly sophisticated since the Cold War are dynamic and aim to balance more than one global rival at once. In order to counterweigh the global dominance of the US and establish a multipolar governance environment, Moscow has been supporting the initiatives of its biggest trade partner, China, in all major diplomatic and economic platforms in recent years. Since the reorientation of Russian energy exports towards China instead of the European markets, bilateral relations between Putin's Russia and Xi Jinping's China started to develop at a faster pace. Both leaders enjoyed the idea of merging their powers against American dominance and demanding the reform of the global governance architecture towards a more equitable structure. However, the vision of BRI promised China various alternatives to Russia in terms of trading connections and provision of energy security. The Eurasian Economic Corridor for trade and Pakistan Economic Corridor for the transport of energy in the BRI implied that through diversification of sources and transit routes, China could be more independent from the energy geopolitics of Russia.

Meanwhile, Russia started to expand the capacity of the Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean Pipeline (ESPO), through which crude oil is carried to China and planned to extend the BRI via new routes from the Northern Sea Route which aims to carry goods through the Arctic Sea (Yang, 2017). Russia's principal aim is to render economic corridors other than those involving Russia less efficient, or redundant to keep its strategic importance on the Eurasian axis. China, in contrast, prefers to construct several alternative routes that pass through Central Asia and reach Middle Eastern energy producers in order to ensure the safety of energy procurement. While Vladimir Putin seems to be supporting the BRI vision in principle, Russia privately discouraged the Central Asian Republics from deeper economic dependence on China warning risks

for political sovereignty. In this context, like India's INSTC, Russia has previously initiated the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) initiative in order to position itself at the centre of the Eurasian geo-economic system. Similar to Japan, Russia maintained its discursive support for the BRI in view of its substantial infrastructure and logistical advantages but seemed determined to control its influence over the Central Asian Republics in the long term. Putin frequently called for the integration of the Eurasian Economic Union and BRI to create an inclusive regional vision at the BRI Summits. While these calls might appear as cooperative gestures, they essentially reflect competition for regional leadership and give veiled messages to Beijing that unilateral initiatives for regional dominance will not be allowed (International Crisis Group, 2017). Although Sino-Russia relations witness a historically strong momentum for cooperation, both powers are keen to keep their geopolitical flexibility. Russia tries to compensate for the increasing effectiveness of China in Eurasia by integrating middle powers into regional forums under its leadership and instigating strategic openings towards the Middle East. Both Russia and China see regional integration as a way of protecting their geopolitical hinterlands against various interventions of the US and its allies (Fels, 2018: 247).

Conclusion

This study attempted to portray a balanced account of China's BRI in a world of multipolarity and tough global competition. It was suggested that in the current global environment, establishing mechanisms of control over international channels of energy, logistics and trade is extremely important for competing global powers. That the global political economy is increasingly moving into a G-2 structure, whereby multifaceted competition between China and the US is beginning to determine the major contours of policy preferences by other major actors, was stressed. Accordingly, the study summarised the main tenets of the BRI, which was proposed by China as a grand project of interconnectivity on the Eurasian continental axis through land and

sea routes. Having depicted its scope and financing mechanisms, the optimistic and sceptical approaches towards the BRI were detailed in an attempt to substantiate their respective arguments. The main crux of this study stressed the idea that ideological prejudices and biased analyses in Western academia against the global ascendancy of China since the 2000s have been reproduced in the context of the BRI debates in recent years.

However, while conducting a technical evaluation concerning the administration of BRI projects, the study underlines that there are serious problems of cost management, financial prudence, legal-institutional frameworks and debt traps for host countries. Therefore, despite various economic benefits triggered by the BRI projects for host countries, accusations against the Chinese administration claiming that BRI constitutes part of a neo-colonial vision are not baseless. Last but not least, we highlighted the respective approaches of major Eurasian actors including India, Japan, and Russia towards the BRI. The fact that all these major actors have serious reservations pertaining to the growing influence of China on a regional and global basis, but still continue to collaborate with Beijing in order to keep some form of control over the BRI, is highlighted. The main conclusion of the study is that the sustainability of the BRI project in the long-term will be determined by the health of the Chinese economy; improvements in transparency and management structures of the projects; and the countervailing actions of other global and regional actors.

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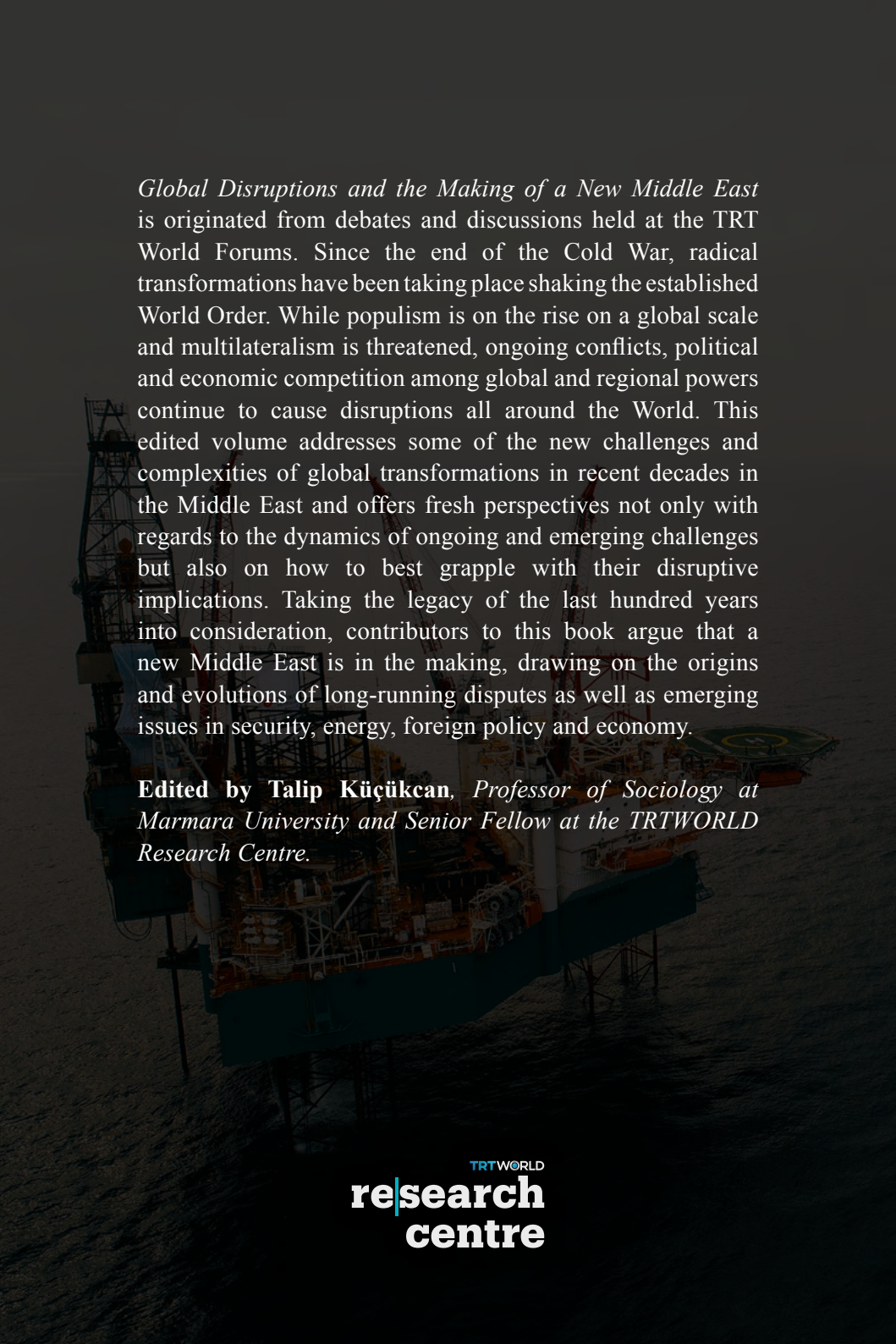
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Global Disruptions and the Making of a New Middle East is originated from debates and discussions held at the TRT World Forums. Since the end of the Cold War, radical transformations have been taking place shaking the established World Order. While populism is on the rise on a global scale and multilateralism is threatened, ongoing conflicts, political and economic competition among global and regional powers continue to cause disruptions all around the World. This edited volume addresses some of the new challenges and complexities of global transformations in recent decades in the Middle East and offers fresh perspectives not only with regards to the dynamics of ongoing and emerging challenges but also on how to best grapple with their disruptive implications. Taking the legacy of the last hundred years into consideration, contributors to this book argue that a new Middle East is in the making, drawing on the origins and evolutions of long-running disputes as well as emerging issues in security, energy, foreign policy and economy.

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