

# THE ISLAMISTS CHALLENGE AND ETHNOPOLITICAL SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AFTER THE ARAB SPRING: IMPLICATIONS FOR CENTRAL ASIA

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**Abstract:** This research attempts an analysis of the key issues in contemporary regional security system in the Middle East through the prospects of ethno-political and religious situation in Egypt and Syria, those factors that lead to changes in regional security architecture after the Arab Spring. Today the nature of security challenges confronting Middle East societies has changed significantly. Multiple security challenges characterized by complex interrelationships between internal problems, regional challenges, and global pressures continue to define the way in which regional states respond to and manage the dynamics of regional order in the Middle East. The magnitude of the problem, however, seems to have increased. This paper looks at the transformation of ethno-political situation in the Middle East. What are some of the weaknesses that affect today's situation? What is the solution? What are the implications for security and stability in the Middle East? What are the implications for democracy? What is the future of ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East after the Arab Spring? What needs to be done to enhance legitimate and build stable ethnic equal institutions there? So, this paper will examine the link between democratic governance-building in Middle Eastern states and political participation of ethnic and religious minorities in this process.

Following the Arab Spring the Middle East is witnessing interactions between the various strands of Islamism-Wahhabiya in Saudi Arabia, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and its affiliates in other Arab countries, and the radical strand represented by Al Qaeda and its associated organizations – in an environment of robust competition and even conflict. In this endeavors, the Islamists are in competition not only amongst themselves but also with ethnic and religious minorities and non-religious groups representing liberal-secular elements and seeking to affirm the political status quo.

According to Minorities at Risk (MAR)'s data 54 percent of the politically significant ethnic minorities in the Middle East are also religious minorities. In the rest of the world, ethnic minorities are considerably less often religious ones. Experts argue that religion is more important in Middle Eastern ethnic conflict than elsewhere. This paper examines these issues in some details, it examines contemporary ethno-political situation across Middle East, particularly in Egypt and Syria, and offers prognoses pertaining to domestic and regional scenarios. Finally, it discusses some of the larger challenges the Arab Spring poses for Islamist discourse and its influence to ideological and religious developments in Central Asia.

**Key-Words:** Regional security, Islamists challenge, Middle East ethnic groups and minorities, religious minorities, democratic-governance building, political Islam.

## Introduction

Many of the Middle Eastern and Northern African (MENA) countries have been experiencing political upheaval during the Arab Spring<sup>1</sup>. For the first time in the Maghreb, Islamist political forces have been elected and taken up leadership positions. The Tunisian experience of early 2011 has spurred other governments to rethink their own strategies and confront difficult

questions about the nature of society and politics. Each country has provided different answers. The new government enjoys legitimacy, but that legitimacy has not translated into effective governance in terms of equality for religious and ethno-political minorities. The ruling Ennahda party, an Islamist group, has pursued an Islamization agenda, while the opposition focuses on frustrating the ruling party's ambitions. The result is frequent deadlock and an inability to address deep-seated problems<sup>2</sup>. While Ennahda includes a spectrum of

<sup>1</sup> Al Jazeera (Producer). (2011). The Arab Awakening. Retrieved from <http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/general/2011/04/20114483425914466.html>

<sup>2</sup> "Tunisia: Mass firings a blow to judicial independence," Human Rights Watch, October 29, 2012,

Islamist views, it is increasingly moving toward a more conservative position as Salafi forces challenge its leadership<sup>3</sup>.

Islamist parties now lead coalition governments in Morocco and Tunisia, and Salafi forces have emerged as political actors in Libya and Tunisia. Still, it is too soon to declare that the region has inexorably entered a new Islamist era. Islamists in Algeria have largely abandoned utopian ideas of creating an Islamic state and have no viable alternative agendas to offer. Libya's Islamists have faced setbacks and public backlash, and Morocco and Tunisia's Islamists still face considerable political opposition. Despite electoral victories, all of this suggests that debates over the role of religion in politics are ongoing.

However, the dimension of ethnic inclusion is usually ignored in common measures of democracy. According to experts, the MENA region has not only been the world's most undemocratic but is also the most ethnically exclusive and discriminatory. Moreover, ethnic exclusion is a strong and significant predictor of ethnic civil war in the region. Hence, even if states in the MENA region make the transition to procedural democracy, they will remain unstable and conflict-prone as long as they are not built upon an ethnically inclusive notion of the demos.

Discrimination is actually more prevalent in the Arab region than it was 65 years ago. Interestingly, the revolutions of the Arab Spring were more successful in those states that are ethnically more homogenous, like Tunisia and Egypt, while those states that are more heterogeneous, for example Syria or Yemen, saw large-scale violence<sup>4</sup>.

An increased support for the Islamic movements, and other oppositional groups, will continue to challenge the regimes in the Mashrek<sup>5</sup>. With the developments at hand, one could very much argue that the Islamists are with their persistent resistance going to gradually be able to destabilize the power base of the repressive political regimes. In combination with the fact that they also have a strong popular support base, as shown when democratic options became available and Hamas won the elections in

the PA in 2006. The growing popular anger will make it increasingly difficult for the regimes to stay in power.

Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in the PA, the Islamic Action Front (Muslim Brotherhood) in Jordan, the Muslim Brotherhood (and many other Islamic organizations) in Egypt, Iraq and Syria, are able to become tomorrow's new regimes in their states. The international community needs to open a dialogue with these organizations, in order to build long-term relations, but also to ensure (persuade) that potential power shifts lead to democratization, in which the Islamists choose democracy instead of *Sharia* rule.

### **Ethnopolitical situation and Regional Security Dynamics in the Middle East**

The Middle East like many other regions of the world is heterogeneous and comprises of numerous ethnic, national, religious and linguistic societies, groups and sects<sup>6</sup>. As Indian professor P.Kumaraswamy argues in this case, "much of the troubles facing this region revolve around the treatment or mistreatment of its minority populations"<sup>7</sup>. The states are not homogenous nation-states but rather multi-ethno/religious or multi-national states. So, this region is characterized by a variety of state-building projects, with each state containing several different ethnic or ethno-religious groups.

Due to direct and indirect Great Power influence in creating 'new' states within the region<sup>8</sup>, these groups extend over one or, in most cases, several, territorial borders. Turkey (Turkish majority dominating the Kurdish minority), Syria (with a dominant religious Alawi-minority) and Iraq (a Sunni-Arab minority that during the Saddam Era dominated the Shia-Arabs and Sunni-Kurds) are some examples of states where different ethno-religious groups strive to strengthen and expand their own interests in relation to the dominant

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<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/10/29/tunisia-mass-firings-blow-judicial-independence>.

<sup>3</sup> Alexis Arieff, "Political Transition in Tunisia," Congressional Research Service, June 18, 2012, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21666.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Cederman, L.-E., Wimmer, A., & Min, B. (2010). Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis. *World Politics*, 62(01), 87. doi: 10.1017/s0043887109990219

<sup>5</sup> Here taken to be the region bounded by (and excluding) Iran and the east, Turkey in the north, the Mediterranean in the West, the Saudi Arabia in the south, and Egypt (which for practical purposes is included in this study). Israel is sometimes regarded as outside the Mashrek region proper, but for its obvious security significance, it is included here.

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<sup>6</sup> The term Middle East is applied in a larger context and denotes all countries ranging from Morocco on the West to Iran in the East. Hence it includes Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the Palestinian Authority, Tunisia, UAE and Yemen.

<sup>7</sup> Kumaraswamy P. R., Problems of Studying Minorities in the Middle East. *Turkish Journal of International Relations*, Vol.2, No. 2, Summer 2003, p.244

<sup>8</sup> After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire the Great Powers did divide the Middle East into new 'nation-states'. The old Ottoman districts of Mosul, Bagdad and Basra became the new state of Iraq. Parts of the maimed former Greater Syria became Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq and the remaining parts the state of Syria. The rest of the Ottoman Empire became what today is Turkey, a part of the old Empire that was liberated by Kemal Ataturk.

ruling elite<sup>9</sup>. In turn, this creates a situation where the security concerns of various states are inextricably linked to each other. The Middle Eastern state elites have rather seen themselves as representative for their own group and not for the 'nation' as a whole. Most states have a 'weak' degree of institutionalization and thereby gain legitimacy only from parts of its population.

A broad distinction can be made between politically *included* groups and *excluded* groups<sup>10</sup>. Simply put, the distinction rests upon group leaders' access to executive power of the state's government. Ethnic discrimination, which is as a subset of the more general category of political exclusion, is defined as the active and targeted discrimination of members of specific ethnic group with the intent of excluding them from political power based on their ethnic identity<sup>11</sup>.

The region is home to numerous groups that are distinct from the majority because of their religious beliefs, ethnic roots, cultural identities and territorial nationalisms (*See Table 1*). Writing at the end of World War II, Albert Hourani defined minorities in the Arab world as those communities that differ from the Sunni Arab majority in their religious affiliation and/or in their ethno-cultural identity<sup>12</sup>. Hourani used this broad definition to identify minorities in Egypt, Mandate of Palestine, Transjordan, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq.

If one applies this definition to the entire region, it is possible to identify the following religious minorities in the Middle East:

- Groups that are ethnically and culturally Arab but are not Sunni Muslims: various Christian denominations including Copts, Greek Catholic, Maronites, Latins and Protestants, heterodox Islamic sects such as Shias, Alawis, Druz.

Similarly ethno-cultural minorities would be:

- Non-Arabs Sunni Muslim groups such as Kurds, Circassians and Turkmans
- Non-Arab and non-Muslim groups such as Jews, Armenians, Assyrians, Christian tribes and animists in southern Sudan

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<sup>9</sup> Still, the power relations among the various ethno-religious groups within each of the above mentioned states is far more complicated than what is described here. First, there are more ethno-religious groups involved in each state. Second, it creates an even more complex relational web between the states in the Middle East.

<sup>10</sup> This can be formal (by law) or informal (systematic practice). Indirect discrimination (disadvantages in the economic or educational sphere) is not included in this definition.

<sup>11</sup> Cederman, L.-E., Wimmer, A., & Min, B. (2010). Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis. *World Politics*, 62(01), pp.100-101

<sup>12</sup> Albert H.Hourani, *Minorities in the Arab World*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), p.1.

This non-Arab-and-non-Sunni formulation is dated and insufficient to portray and explain certain unique situations such as Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain or Jordan. Therefore, it is possible to classify the contemporary Middle Eastern minorities into five broad categories, namely, religious minorities, ethno-national minorities, heterodox Islamic minorities, political minorities and majoritarian minorities.

- Religious minorities: Jews, Christian dominations such as Copts, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Maronites, Latins and Protestants<sup>13</sup>, Israeli Arabs.

- Ethnic-national minorities: Kurds, Druze, Armenians, Circassians, Assyrians, animists of southern Sudan, Berbers, Turkmans, Israeli Arabs

- Heterodox Islamic minorities: Alawis, Druze, Ahmadies, Ismailis, Bahais

- Political minorities: Shia's in Saudi Arabia, Sunnis in Iran.

- Majoritarian minorities: Shias in Iraq and Bahrain, Sunnis in Syria and Palestinians in Jordan

While the first four categories are obvious, the last one needs a brief explanation. Even though demographically these groups are in a majority, they are marginalized politically and do not wield power commensurate to their numerical strength. In Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan and Syria, the identified groups from the absolute majority or constitute the largest group yet they suffer from all the negative consequences of a minority. In other words, the largest ethnic or religious groups are treated and marginalized as minorities.

Apart from the ethnically more homogeneous populations of Tunisia, Egypt or Libya, most states in the region are divided by ethnic cleavages. In contrast to the worldwide trend of forming ethnically more inclusive governments, many regimes in the Middle East and Northern Africa continue to rely on the dominance of specific ethnic groups at the exclusion of others that in some cases even constitutes the majority of the population.

As mentioned above, ethnic exclusion has been shown to be a significant and strong predictor of ethnic conflict onset on the global level. Countries where larger shares of the population were politically excluded because of their ethnic identity have been more prone to experience violent ethnic conflict. Having so far resisted all pressures for a political opening, Iran has experienced

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<sup>13</sup> Muhammad Hamidullah, "Relations of Muslims with non-Muslims", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol.7, No.1, January 1986, p.9.; Husein Gazi Yurdaydin, "Non-Muslims in Muslim societies: the historical view", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol.3., 1981, pp.183-8.; Sayed Khatab, "Citizenship rights of Non-Muslims in the Islamic state in the Hakimiyya espoused by Sayyed Kutb", *Islam and Christian Muslim Relations*, vol.13, no.2, 2002, p.163.

ethnic civil war repeatedly. Countries such as Syria and Yemen, which have been affected by ethnic strife in the past, may experience political change in the near future.

According to experts<sup>14</sup>, Kurds in Iran are almost sure to experience conflict with a predicted risk of 99.9%. They are followed by Palestinians in Israel with a predicted risk of 41%. However, there are warning signs for groups that are currently not rebelling but could be soon: the Sunni in Syria (22.8%), the Arabs (13.5%) and Baloch (22.2%) in Iran, and the Palestinians in Jordan (21%). While the Iranian minorities are not on everybody's radar at the moment, Syria's and Jordan's delicate situations have been discussed in the recent month. Other ethnic groups with no prior conflict but a relatively high predicted risk are the Shia in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Both countries currently witnessing nascent unrest rooted in ethnic grievances.

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<sup>14</sup> Bormann Nils-Christian, Manuel Vogt, Lars-Erik Cederman, "The Arab Spring and the Forgotten Demos", Working Paper No.53, prepared for presentation at the NCCR Democracy conference "Transformation of the Arab World - Where is it heading to?" on 27/28 Oct 2011, p.16.

**Table 1. Minorities in the Middle East**

Countries	Ethnic Majority	Ethnic Minority	Religious Majority	Religious Minority
Algeria	Arabs	Berbers, others	Sunni Muslims	Christian, Jews
Bahrain	Arabs	South Asians, Persian, other	Shia Muslims	Sunni Muslim
Egypt	Arabs	Greeks, Italian, Armenian, Nubian	Sunni Muslim	Copts, other Christians
Iran	Persian	Azeri's, Gilaki & Mazandarani, Kurds, Arabs, Balouchis, Turkmen, Lurs, others	Shia Muslim	Sunni Muslim, Jews, Christian, Zoroastrian, Bahai, others
Iraq	Arabs	Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians and others Arabs, Druze and others	Shia Muslim	Sunni Muslim, Christian, Yazidi, others
Israel	Jews	Circassia's, Armenians, other	Jews	Muslim, Christian, Druze and others
Jordan	Arabs	Arabs, South Asian, Persians and others	Sunni Muslim	Greek Orthodox and other
Kuwait	Kuwaiti	Armenians, other	Sunni Muslim	Christians, Shia Muslim
Lebanon	Arabs	Berbers, Greek, Maltese, Italians, Turks	Shia Muslims	Christian, Parsis, Sunni Muslim, Hindus and others
Libya	Arabs	Berbers, European	Sunni Muslim	Druze, Alawi, Maronites Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Armenians (orthodox and catholic) others
Morocco	Arabs	Africans, Persians, South Asians	Sunni Muslim	Christians, Jews, others
Oman	Arabs	Africans, Persians, South Asians	Ibadi Muslim	Sunni Muslim, Shia Muslim, Hindus
Palestine	-	-	Sunni Muslim	-
Qatar	Arabs	-	Sunni Muslim	Christians Shia Muslim, others
Saudi Arabia	Arabs	South Asian, Persian, Afro-Arabs, others	Sunni Muslim	Shia Muslim, Christians
Syria	Arabs	Kurds, Armenian, others	Sunni Muslim	Alawi, Druze, Shia Muslim, Christians (Greek orthodox, Gregorian, Armenian, Catholic, Syrian
Tunisia	Arabs	Berbers, European	Sunni Muslim	Alevis (Shia Muslim)

Turkey	Turkis	Kurds	Sunni Muslim	Christians, Jews Shia Muslim, others
UAE	South Asian, Arabs	Arabs, Persians, Emiri, others	Sunni Muslim	Shia Zaydi Muslim,
Yemen	Arabs	Afro-Arabs	Sunni Muslim	Shia Ismaili Muslim, others
Sudan	Nilotics	Arabs	Sunni Muslim	Indigenous beliefs, Christians (Coptic, Greek Orthodox, catholic, protestant)

Source: Compiled from *Middle East Military Balance 2001 – 2002*, (Tel-Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 2002)

Several writers on the Arab Middle East have underlined the fact that the only nation-state in the contemporary Arab Middle East is Egypt<sup>15</sup>. Egypt has a homogeneous population that identifies itself first and foremost as Egyptian. The only sizeable "minority," the Copts who number around 6 million members, consider themselves as the descendants of the original population of Egypt from pharaonic times. Their allegiance is to Egypt as both government and country. In other countries of the Levant, namely Syria and Iraq, families from minority communities rule their respective societies.

Michael Meeker, a prominent anthropologist, speculates that the cultural uniformity which we now find in the arid zone does not reflect the traditions of a people bent on violence. "On the contrary, it reflects...a moral response to the threat of political turmoil. The process of Islamization itself can be viewed in part as a moral reaction to the problems that arose from the circumstances of Near Eastern pastoral nomadism....All over the arid zone, popular traditions can be described in terms of three cultural themes: 1) agonistic rhetoric of political association..., 2) humanistic religious values which center on conceptions of exemplary personal behavior, and 3) social norms of personal integrity and familial propriety which often take the form of concepts of honor..."<sup>16</sup>.

Under Ottoman rule, individuals living in the empire did not identify as Ottomans, Turks, Persians, or Arabs, but rather, as Muslims, Christians, Jews, and Druze. The Ottoman administration was controlled in its majority by Sunni Muslims and converts from other religions. In the Ottoman empire, Islamic tolerance of Christians and Jews was defined by the millet (nations) system. "Under the system

<sup>15</sup> For a thorough analysis of Egyptian and Arab politics in general see the work of the Lebanese-American scholar, Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>16</sup> Michael Meeker, *Literature and Violence in North Arabia* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1979), .19.

local communities of a particular sect were autonomous in the conduct of their spiritual affairs and civil affairs relating closely to religion and community, such as church administration, marriage, inheritance, property, and education"<sup>17</sup>.

Ethnic groups thus identified with their religious leaders more so than with any abstract notion of the state. The millet system estranged Arab Christians from political life and deepened suspicions between them and Muslims. Christians were treated as foreigners and suspected of being agents of foreign powers; their loyalty was often in doubt<sup>18</sup>. After the fall of the Ottoman empire and in reaction to their plight, Middle Eastern Christians were at the forefront of the new movement for Arab nationalism, the secular movement in the Arab world, and some among them founded socialist parties, such as the Baath (renaissance) Party now in power in Syria and Iraq.

Egypt, considered to be the oldest nation state in the region, has no history of sectarian internal clashes, although a large minority of Coptic Christians exists<sup>19</sup>. However, these Copts have not shown any sign of mobilizing politically against the regime<sup>20</sup>. It is unlikely that we will see a sectarian political development in Egypt. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is constituted of a majority population that is Palestinian, and a minority of Hashemite Bedouin tribes who has the

<sup>17</sup> Michael C. Hudson, *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 58.

<sup>18</sup> Halim Barakat, *The Arab World: Society, Culture, and State* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1993), p.77.

<sup>19</sup> Saad Eddin Ibrahim, et al *The Copts of Egypt*, (London: Minority Rights Group International, 1996), p.12

<sup>20</sup> For a detailed discussion of the controversy see, Ami Ayalon, "Egypt's Coptic Pandora's box", in Ofra Bengio and Gabriel Ben-Dor, (ed.), *Minorities and the State in the Arab World*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999), pp.63-7. See also, Karim al-Gawhary, "Copts in the "Egyptian fabric", *Middle East Report*, vol.26, no.3. July-September 1996, p.21.

political power<sup>21</sup>. Jordan has faced internal difficulties in the end of the 1960s, since then, no real threats from the Palestinian majority can be identified vis-à-vis the Jordan ruling elite. In Syria, only the Moslem Brotherhood have seriously challenged the ruling Alawi minority in 1982 when a revolt occurred but was suppressed with brute power by the Syrian forces. No direct sectarian mobilization has taken place since then in the country. Hence, it seems unlikely that the Syrian society will face sectarian politics in near future. However, it cannot be ruled out that if the regime would fall, that such of developments might occur. Further, Islamic insurgency groups can establish themselves in these countries and thereby risk to further escalation of the Iraq war situation.

Another approach used in explaining ethnic violence is the religious approach. Those who use this approach argue that religion, and in regards to the Middle East, Islam, is inherently violent and encourages or legitimates violence. This argument can easily be dismissed, because if it is true that Islam is inherently violent, then why is there no violence in the majority of Islamic states and communities?

Similarly, explanations for non-violent ethnic conflicts are also not completely satisfactory. In a recent study, Ian Lustick gives a summary of theories and explanations of how the state can keep ethnic differences under control and prevent them from exploding into violent struggle<sup>22</sup>.

### **Islamists Challenge in the Middle East countries after the Arab Spring: The Case of Egypt and Syria**

The most prominent result of the “Arab Spring” was the rise to power of Islamists, whether as governments or significant non-state actors, and the fall of Secularists. These Islamist groups are often extremist variations of the Pan-Islamism promoted by Saudi Arabia and the U.S. during the Cold War. Inconsistent responses have undermined the credibility of the West, as well as the stability of the Middle East. After a period of initial hesitation, the U.S., the U.K., and France endorsed the “Arab Spring” in Tunisia and Egypt. Later, in Libya these three powers cited the “Arab Spring” and “humanitarian concerns” as reasons for using NATO air power to topple Khaddafi, an ally of these very governments in their war against Islamic Extremism. Then Washington, London and Paris reversed themselves and supported the suppression of “Arab Springs” in Algeria, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia. As result, in the war

between Islamists and Secularists, both sides view the West with suspicion.

Historically the ‘Middle East’<sup>23</sup> has long been viewed as a region that ‘best fits the realist view of international politics’<sup>24</sup>. Although there has begun to emerge, in the aftermath of the 11 September attacks against New York and Washington, DC, some awareness of the need to adopt a fresh approach to security in the Middle East,<sup>25</sup> it remains a commonplace to argue that, whereas critical approaches to security<sup>26</sup> may have some relevance within the Western European context, in other parts of the world – such as the ‘Middle East’ – traditional approaches retain their validity<sup>27</sup>. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the stalling in the Arab–Israeli peacemaking amid escalating violence between Israelis and Palestinians, the US-led war on Iraq and the seeming lack of enthusiasm for addressing the problem of regional insecurity, especially when viewed

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<sup>23</sup> While admitting that the “Middle East” is a problematic concept, it will still be employed here, for – following Karen, Wigen and Martin Lewis – it is assumed that problems of language are inescapable in a project involving the deconstruction of existing representations of world politics. As Wigen and Lewis put it, “in order to continue talking about the world, we must have the cake of metageography while deconstructing it too”. See Karen E. Wigen and Martin W. Lewis, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p.17.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History*, 3rd edn (New York: Longman, 2000), p.163.

<sup>25</sup> Jonathan Freedland, ‘We Can’t do it by Bombing’, *Guardian Unlimited*, 19 October 2001, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4280542,00.html> (31 October 2001).

<sup>26</sup> Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991); Ken Booth, “Security and Emancipation”, *Review of International Studies*, 17, 1991, pp. 313- 26; J. Ann Tickner, “Re-visioning Security”, in Ken Booth and Steve Smith (eds), *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases* (London: UCL Press, 1998).

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Mohammed Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict and the International System* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1995), pp.8-12. The “two worlds” approach also supports this view. See James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, “A Tale of Two Worlds: Core and Periphery in the Post-Cold War Era”, *International Organization*, 46 (2), 1992, pp.467-91. For a critique, see Pinar Bilgin and Adam David Morton, “Historicising Representations of “Failed States”: Beyond the Cold War Annexation of the Social Sciences?”, *Third World Quarterly*, 23 (1), 2002, pp. 55 -80.

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<sup>21</sup> Raphael Israeli, “Is Jordan Palestine?”, in Efraim Karsh and P.R.Kumaraswamy, (ed.), *Israel, the Hashemites and the Palestinians: The Fateful Triangle*, (London: Frank Cass, 2003), pp.49-66.

<sup>22</sup> Lustick, I.S. (1979). Stability in Deeply Divided Societies: Consociationalism versus Control. *World Politics*, 31 (3), 325-344.

against the backdrop of increasing regionalization of security relations in other parts of the world<sup>28</sup>, do indeed suggest that the 'Middle East' is a place where traditional conceptions and practices of security are still having a field day.

Since the seminal events of 11 September 2001, the Middle East has become designated as the "first front" in the global war on terrorism. This should come as no surprise, as the Middle East has the world's largest Muslim population. Moreover, the crisis of governance that accompanied the fall of authoritarian regimes in Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Sudan, etc. During the "Arab Spring", and the emergence of political Islam in that countries as strong political powers seemed to open up the possibility of the Middle East becoming a sanctuary for Al-Qaeda terrorists fleeing the US-led military actions in Afghanistan in late 2001.

Rebellion in the Middle East and Gulf Region has expressed itself in two forms: terrorism, which can be defined as the use of violence, usually against select urban or human targets, as a means to further ethno-nationalist or religious objectives; and insurgency (a term used interchangeably with guerilla warfare), which is essentially planned and organized violence aimed at establishing bases that are secure from the control of the central government and which would enable the establishment of what amounts to a counter-government. In many cases, however, the line is blurred as insurgent groups have also used, sometimes through splinter or associated groups, terrorist tactics to further their aims.

It has been argued that "new" terrorism is in a fact a product of the global interlinked economy that has emerged from globalization, and which has provided the conditions for its emergence<sup>29</sup>. Furthermore, Al-Qaeda is the prototype of the "new" terrorist organization. Compared to the older terrorist groups, Al-Qaeda is a truly multinational enterprise, transcending national, language, and ethnic barriers with its global reach. It has a network of dedicated local supporters through its local alliances worldwide. Al-Qaeda is dangerous because of its declared interests in obtaining weapons of mass destruction, as well as its apocalyptic, religious vision. It is, in short, a formidable threat to the international system.

As Rohan Gunaratna noted in his seminal book, *Inside Al-Qaeda*, "The global fight against Al-Qaeda will be the defining conflict of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century". According to him, "Osama bin Laden has built an organization that functions both operationally and ideologically at local, national, regional, and global levels", and "defeating Al-Qaeda and its associate groups

will be the single biggest challenge in the foreseeable future<sup>30</sup>".

The most prominent result of the "Arab Spring" was the rise to power of Islamists, whether as governments or significant non-state actors, and the fall of Secularists. These Islamist groups are often extremist variations of the Pan-Islamism promoted by Saudi Arabia and the U.S. during the Cold War. Inconsistent responses have undermined the credibility of the West, as well as the stability of the Middle East. In North Africa, these groups pose a threat to the economic stability of Europe in particular. More than 85 percent of Libya's crude oil exports go to Europe. Italy, France, and Spain are heavily dependent on Libyan oil, which in 2010 accounted for 22 percent, 16 percent, and 13 percent respectively of their total crude oil consumption<sup>31</sup>.

An additional threat is found in Egypt. Cairo has lost effective control of the Sinai Peninsula. Islamists, many linked to al-Qaeda, have established bases there from which to attack Israel. But these bases also put Islamists in a position to threaten the operations of the Suez Canal. Most of the oil shipped through the Suez Canal goes to Europe.

Thus, Egypt can be considered the homeland of radical Islamism – Hasan al-Banna, Seyid Khutb, Farag & ors were born and flourished namely in the Land of the Pharaohs. Egyptian know-how in countering terrorism is rightfully seen as one of the best practices in the Middle East. Former President H.Mubarak managed to work out the most effective in the Arab world model of fighting radicals through an all-out war waged in all directions. But the only thing he could do was "to mothball" the threat of Islamism. After all, terrorism in Egypt has become a spent force, at least in the short run. Now Pan-Arab nationalism has lost its popularity, in contrast to the local state nationalism. However, now Islamism has come to the fore in the "Arab Spring" countries, which is a historically justified phenomenon. And nationalism is now bound to be dyed in the colors of Islam.

A greater threat is the insurgency in Syria, which can ignite a Sunni-Shia conflict that could consume the region. Already, the Syrian Civil War is drawing in Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, and Turkey. In Syria, the "Arab Spring" is a backdrop for a war within Islamism over the proper interpretation of Islam. It is a proxy war for dominance between two Islamist governments - Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shia Iran. Syria is an ally of Iran, so Saudi Arabia arms Syrian rebels.

Three paradoxes have resulted. One, a recipient of arms, and now the most effective rebel force, involves Jabhat al-Nusra, an affiliate of al-Qaeda, which views not

<sup>28</sup> David A.Lake and Patrick M.Morgan (eds), *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Press, 1997).

<sup>29</sup> See Bruce Hoffman, "The Confluence of International and Domestic Trends in Terrorism", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol.9, No. 2, 1997.

<sup>30</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda* (London: Hurst, 2002), p.221.

<sup>31</sup> Joseph E.Fallon, *The Arab Spring: Expectations and Reality. Middle East: Political Dynamics and Russia's interests*. Russian International Affairs Council, Oct.01, 2013.



just the Assad regime, but Saudi Arabia and the U.S. as enemies<sup>32</sup>. Secondly, this Islamist group opposes “Western Imperialism”, but is imposing the colonial Sykes-Picot borders on Syria, “Balkanizing” the country into sectarian enclaves. Thirdly, the U.S., the U.K, and France claim that their support for Syrian rebels is support for democracy and equality, but the dominant rebel force that their arms have helped, Jabhat al-Nusra, is attacking Christians, Druze, Alawites, Ismailis, and Shia Muslims who disagree with it as it seeks to impose a sectarian regime upon Syria.

### Conclusion

The extremist Islamism will clearly be unable to ensure the normal development of society, to carry out modernization, attract foreign investments etc. From this point of view the moderate Islamism has many more chances. It will have to incorporate Arab nationalism in its local, national version; it will be difficult because Islamism is in principle hostile to nationalism, it recognizes only one nation -- a Muslim one. Apparently, a certain symbiosis will have to be achieved, so that, alongside with very pious masses, the rapidly growing new medium strata of the population could receive their share in the changing society. If the Islamists continue to represent only the most disadvantaged, impoverished people, ignoring the interests of educated and dynamic middle class, it will all come to nothing.

The ideology of the middle class is not so much Islamism as nationalism and, as already mentioned, not pan-Arab, “unifying”, but local. However, while “pan-Arabism” is a thing of the past there remains such a powerful force as Arab solidarity which in times of serious international conflicts becomes a part of Islamic solidarity. There is even such a term as “Muslim nationalism”, which seems strange at first sight. But at second it doesn't. Once it is accepted that there is a Muslim nation, there should exist its ideological expression.

In any case, it seems that nationalism has not disappeared (which is out of the question) but has significantly altered by acquiring an Islamic shade. So, in the foreseeable future the dominant ideology in the post-“Arab Spring” countries will likely to be a combination of Islamism in its rather moderate form with local, state nationalism.

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<sup>32</sup> Leonid Issaev, Antiterrorist struggle in Egypt: fifty years of futile confrontation? /Middle East: Political Dynamics and Russia's interests. Russian International Affairs Council, Feb.13, 2012