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THE MIDDLE EAST
POLITICS AND IDENTITY

Irina Zvyagelskaya (Ed.)

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The book by a team of Middle East scholars representing the Russian expert community is a wide-ranging study exploring the identity factor in the domestic and foreign policy of the Middle East countries. With a focus on such countries as Turkey, Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt, the authors contemplate the activities pursued by non-state actors. The impact of external forces on the political identities across the regional landscape is analyzed through the example of the United States policy of democracy promotion and the EU political approaches. The book may draw the attention of not only dedicated professionals, but also a much broader audience, who are interested in the major trends of political development and international affairs in the Middle East. It can serve as an indispensable tool for the educational purposes, considering a theoretical and practical value of the research efforts.

The Russian version of the book was awarded the Yevgeny V. Tarle Prize by the Russian Academy of Sciences

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*The Red Sea froths, the Persian Gulf foams,
And the Pamirs are buried in snow,
But as far as Siberia, green and remote
Floods of sand from its ocean will flow. [...]*

*Mere centuries may pass before
Our world of old green lands
Is besieged by predatory hordes
From the young Saharan sands.*

Sahara. Nikolay Gumilev. 1918

Foreword

Irina Semenenko

For decades, the Middle East has been a focus of attention for everyone who follows international politics. Hardly a day goes by without news from this region, largely dealing with military clashes, terrorist acts, various forms of social tension and fierce political controversies. At the same time, the Middle East is a region endowed with rich cultural traditions, holding strong appeal for people who wish to get close to the sources of Christianity and to the greatest Christian sanctuaries, to the heritage of Judaism and Islam, and to the cultural roots of modern civilization. It is also significant for everyone who would like to understand how the historical heritage has intertwined with the religious, ethno-cultural and social realities of the present day, to estimate the risks for international development from politicizing the deeply rooted ethno-cultural and religious divisions there.

The Middle East provides typical examples of deeply divided societies. The profound fractures separating the communities, whose members share religious beliefs, customs and historic memories, have remained intact within the states exemplifying diverse traditions of

political culture and various types of political regime. However, different states promote a variety of models to cope with tensions and practice an array of methods to sustain a fragile balance of social peace. The open rift among the regional states underlined by the striking social inequality and disparity in living standards as well as the quality of life has largely defined the configuration of the political expanse across the entire Middle East. Almost all of the current Middle East states and many major powers beyond its boundaries are involved in the confrontation that has been perpetrated on this vast and densely populated territory. Therefore, it is with good reason that the sphere of international relations has been the priority for studies in political science analyzing processes in the region, while post-colonial research has mainly focused on the development agenda.

A popular metaphor for the Middle East is known to describe it as a kaleidoscope of cultures and traditions. Indeed, what other region of the world can boast such a diversity of ethnic groups and ethno-religious communities existing side by side? The borderlines between those groups and communities can be redrawn very swiftly, at the same time retaining their status of impermeable barriers, whereas the long-term effects of such redrawing exercises have proven to be totally unpredictable. In everyday life and in the social fabric, tradition and archaic practices are closely interwoven with the rising demand for the latest technological achievements from the younger generation. Having said this, the possibilities for fully meeting the most vital needs and basic rights of young people such as the right to work are astonishingly limited.

The Middle East region furnishes extensive material for the exploration of social and political change. As the region is characterized by a cultural heterogeneity reflecting centuries-old territorial disputes among states and communities, finding an explanation for the political processes here often presents a methodological challenge to researchers. However, the sources of reasons and motivations that manifest themselves in the political process, in the articulation and promotion of interests may be very different, but they still share one common denominator – *the identity factor*. It is no accident that such an outstanding sociologist as Manuel Castells interprets the category of identity as “a process of construction of meaning on the basis of cultural attribute, or a related set of cultural attributes, that is given priority over other sources of

meaning”¹. In this context, identity is a key analytical concept, and simultaneously an essential category that reflects ideas about social processes and the perception of such processes in the collective consciousness at the level of communities and groups which the identity bearers associate themselves with.

Within the mosaic of culturally heterogeneous communities represented by Middle East polities, the identity factor can serve as a common denominator that helps to define cause-and-effect relationships and to make sense of the development spectrum of “different” communities, which are inorganic to the traditional Western mentality. The reference is to communities where the civilizational landmarks are deeply rooted both in the political discourse and in everyday consciousness. Apparently, a cognitive crisis affecting the socio-humanitarian knowledge is more conspicuously traceable in the area focusing on the elaboration of approaches to study non-Western societies, rather than in research dealing with Western realities. There is an acute need for fresh research approaches, for ideas to upgrade the terms and categories we are used to. The reason is that the “societal transformations are no longer accommodated by the customary framework of institutions, ideas and ideologies, interests and needs of social groups, who are typically in the center of attention in social studies” when “no fundamental possibility for outlining a unidirectional mainstream trend in the social transformations and, least of all, for devising a comprehensive explanatory model” is in evidence”². The identity concept allows to synthesize the value-based, emotional and interest motivated foundations of social activities, to capture and reflect the dynamics of individual perceptions on one’s own place in the world and on the individual self, and to bring together the individual and superindividual layers of the social experience. The latter is particularly important for societies with diverse formal and informal institutions that co-exist in Middle East states.

The task of grasping the motivations and values that underline the interests of participants of the political process in Middle East polities is all the more important as it is impossible to offer an explanatory model for universal application. The analysis of the values motivating policy choices permits us to comprehend not only the internal policy, but also the foreign policy agenda in such a region where “its symbolic scope is most strikingly evidential”³. In the first place, to determine the landmarks of

political identity for citizens and communities, serving as the basis of stability for a certain political regime. Political identity comprises the elements of national, civil, ethnic, confessional, gender identity in various proportions. Consequently, certain issues are given top priority status in the political agenda. Customary notions can acquire a new meaning. Thus, the pan-identity factor as a phenomenon of a hybrid nature, is of special relevance for the Middle East region, implying that hybridity is an inherent characteristic of the institutions undergoing rapid transformations. The pan-identity factor is a kind of “‘third space’ between the universal and emerging civil and national allegiance” and taking it into account can help to discover the profound meaning associated with pan-Turkism, pan-Arabism or neo-Ottomanism and assess the prospects for the development of new political spaces⁴. Their contour lines may not coincide with the configuration of frontiers of the state formations existing today in the Middle East and other world regions, while the claims set forth by the players may be in sharp controversy with their actual capabilities, which is fraught with a new escalation of conflict.

If the coordinate system representing the Middle East policy studies carries the identity category on the axis of ordinates, then the axis of abscissa would have the multidimensional and multicomponent state category. All claims to the universal character of the very model of the nation-state that are predominantly observed in the West-centered research agenda, are completely erased here by the current nation- and state-building experience, whose vectors do not usually coincide (as is also the case in other regions with young statehood, for instance, in the post-Soviet region).

The conceptual framework of social sciences has incorporated the category of a civilization-state inspired by the ideas of “civilianism” as an “antipode of the neo-liberal universalism eliminating cultural distinctions”⁵. Contemplating the special importance that symbolic policies designed to couch civilianism ideas in terms that would be suitable for the popular mentality have for the civilization-states, it is interesting to look at symbolic policies in a broader identity politics context. How is the public realm organized in the Middle East countries, what kind of interaction is in place between the religious and secular sectors there, what is happening with education, what forms have been adopted by memory and language policies? How are foreign policy priorities used within the context of identity policies? What meanings do various communities and their leaders assign to national identity, how do

different constructions of meaning and identity policy instruments coexist within the framework of multiethnic states – ranging from Turkey, Lebanon and Israel to Saudi Arabia?

The answers to these and many more questions can be found in this book authored by a team of researchers from the Center for the Middle East Studies of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), in collaboration with the leading Russian scholars from other research institutions dealing with Middle East issues. The Center for the Middle East Studies is a new structural division within IMEMO, but its staff members have already released several publications that offer a fresh insight into problems of regional development. The works concentrate on an analysis of the influence of the identity factor on foreign policy and on the positioning of the Middle East states within the system of international relations under the prevailing system of “negative positiveness”⁶. The new book sees foreign policy episodes, including the analysis of the external factors affecting Middle East politics, as a certain context to explore the specific features of domestic policy and socio-economic development of key political state actors in the region – Egypt, Turkey, Iran, Israel and Palestine, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, as well as the “nation without a state” – the Kurds.

A methodological question of critical importance, i.e. to what extent the categories and approaches tested and endorsed by Western researchers are applicable to the analysis of the Middle East realities, is efficiently handled by the authors by combining an Orientalist approach with tools pertinent to modern research in the area of international affairs, political institutions and identity formation. It is most rewarding to review the phenomenon of politicizing the ethnicity and religion from such a constructive perspective, as it provides a clue to the dynamics of ethnic and civil conflicts in the region. It is also worthwhile to examine the increasing influence of external factors on political development in the light of their actual impact on global dynamics. With a view to facilitating the ability to analyze and forecast societal transformations it is essential to determine whether the tools of political research commonly used by non-Orientalists are applicable to the realities of the Middle East. It is not always the case that well-established typologies, classifications or theoretical approaches based on analyzing solely certain (Western) social realities produce sound results when they are extrapolated into other political spaces and political times, and therefore it is critical to promote

methodology synthesis and specify the categories that are applied in the analysis. This is a common challenge for all social sciences, and integrating the view “from the East” promoted in works by non-Western scholars focusing on realities of non-Western societies, is of paramount importance for understanding the political diversity of the modern world.

The Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) possesses a wealth of Middle East research traditions. An invaluable contribution to this domain was made by Yevgeny Primakov and Georgy Mirsky. The Institute is now named after Primakov, and a scholarly seminar regularly held by the Center for the Middle East Studies that published this book is named after Mirsky. Yevgeny Primakov concentrated his research efforts on international relations in the region. His assessment of the dynamics underlying the development of the situation in the Middle East, the policies pursued by certain leaders and individual states were fully described in his book “Confidential: The Middle East – On the Stage and Behind the Scenes”. Georgy Mirsky wrote about the states and communities existing in the Middle East, and his works on the role of the Army in the third world countries and on the Arab East are classical writings that allow to grasp the essence of the contemporary vicissitudes of Middle East politics. The ideas and approaches developed by these researchers laid the foundation for forecasting the trends characterizing the development of the Arab world, its political and social dynamics.

The authors of this monograph have concentrated on two areas – the domestic and foreign policy aspects – in one study, while the view they offer on the developments in home and foreign policies through the prism of identity has permitted them to take a new step forward in understanding the development prospects for the region. They have contributed to integrating Oriental studies into the fabric of modern political science. The understanding of identity as a resource of social development is presented today from a fresh and promising angle.

Notes

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Introduction

Irina Zvyagelskaya

Changing formats of international relations, the increasing fragmentation of the actors, the tendency for a weakening of institutions and the emergence of new forms of conflicts have given rise to a significant growth of interest in the identity factor influencing the states' domestic and foreign policies. Contemporary studies are focused on how culture and identity manifest themselves, "how they are constructed, invented and commercialized as a means of achieving political goals"¹. *Identity* is a special measurement of social life, concerning self-perception and self-positioning of individuals, socio-political groups or entire nations, determining the models of their behavior.

Identity as an independent factor affecting the life of society is shaped by interaction with other subjects, cooperation or confrontation experience. As the American politician and researcher Harold Saunders noted, "from the combination of physical circumstances and unfolding experience and growth, individuals and groups come to a sense of who they are – a sense of identity"².

Through identity, subjects build on a certain system of relations, including international ties, and a choice of allies or enemies, in particular. The interpretation of political situation by international actors and the decision-making process are both linked to identity issues. "In selecting different options, a political figure will most likely take those that correspond to the national identity, and reject those that do not... strong national identity may provide political actors with additional resources for mobilizing necessary social support"³, the Russian researcher V.V. Kochetkov writes in one of the few works that studies the influence of identity on international relations. However, this may not only concern national identity – ethnic, religious or tribal identities are used with equal success by elites and counter-elites in foreign policy. A study of the identity phenomenon provides material which makes it possible not only to discover the specific nature of political processes and behavioral models of states and non-state actors, but also to explain, from a

cultural-historical standpoint, the reasons for selecting a certain model.

The book devotes considerable space to historical, religious and confessional sources of modern identity of the Middle East communities and nations. It can be explained by the reality of the East, where the civilizational factor remains especially relevant. Society continues to live in a world filled with mythology, when remote history and religion are not only inseparable from modernity, but are an organic part of it, constructing the self-perception of the nation and individual groups, taking into account former greatness and spiritual destiny.

For contemporary international relations (IR) researchers, an immersion in the traditional cultural milieu of the research object may seem excessively ethnological. This is why the thesis formulated by the Russian scholar T.A. Alexeyeva in the book "The Theory of International Relations as a Political Philosophy and Science" has key importance, both in the general methodological and in the applied sense. She accentuates the need to take into account the achievement of other sciences in analyzing international relations. "Given the need to choose means and methods of theoretical synthesis, theories of international relations must constantly adapt to the discoveries of other social sciences, although it must be admitted that this often takes place with great delay and very selectively. The reason for this is the somewhat snobbish attitude of IR scholars towards other social sciences, and thus a reluctance to take part in the trans-disciplinary exchange"⁴.

This snobbish attitude towards the impact of history on the behavior of elites in the East, or to the influence of traditions and myths on their perceptions of the modern world is fraught with consequences. The authors of the report "Protecting Peace, the World, Freedom of Choice for All Countries: New Ideas for Russian Foreign Policy" propose an important and vital task – to strengthen multifaceted strategic stability. They call primarily to make an appeal to the ruling circles outside the West... "The West may be regarded as an audience, and a partner only in the second or third degree"⁵. It is probably difficult to count on partner relations with the West in the foreseeable future, but at the same time, for multifaceted cooperation with nations that are culturally remote from Russia, one may lack knowledge of their

psychology, models of behavior, tactics and strategy.

The co-existence “here and now” of the historical and modern, myth and reality, religion and secularity, traditional and contemporary institutions in the nations of the Middle East is quite organic. It has been reflected in two long-term trends: the consolidation of secular nationalism, which was manifested most strongly in the period after the Second World War, and the politicization of Islam that became a response to the dissemination of European ideologies⁶. In the Middle East, the coexistence of secular and more traditional identities may be observed in many countries. The spectrum of factors shaping political identity also includes Western influence, directed towards promoting institutions (in recent years also through the regime change policy).

Numerous conflicts in the region have led to the fragmentation of societies and the politicization of identity in the countries affected by them. Belonging to a certain confessional, ethnic or tribal group provides protection, security, support and loyalty of the group. These processes have drawn wide attention of researchers in Russia and abroad. At the same time, as the former director of the Turkish analytical center CETA Ibrahim Kalin⁷ justly noted, modern discussions of identity often deal with a restricted scope, as ethnic, political and social identities are examined separately from the system of values that a person shares⁸.

E. Gellner⁹, B. Anderson¹⁰ and G. Tajfel¹¹ are considered the founders of the identity studies. The topic was also invoked in the works of such authors as C. Calhoun¹², R. Brubaker¹³, V. Saunderson and P. Weinreich¹⁴, and others. Dynamic socio-political changes in the world led to a shift in focus from theory to regional studies, in particular in the works of P.C. Hogan¹⁵.

In Russia, the identity phenomenon has been covered in numerous works by I.S. Semenenko¹⁶, and also by the team of authors from the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), who in recent years have released fundamental encyclopedic publications¹⁷. They examine various types of individual and collective identities, and evaluate theoretical-methodological approaches to identity studies. Russian scholars continue to develop the theories advanced by foreign authors, enriching them with their own approaches. We should specifically note the fundamental works

of Academician V.A. Tishkov¹⁸.

The phenomenon of the Middle East conflicts is examined by Academician V.V. Naumkin¹⁹ through the prism of the Deeply Divided Societies theory that was developed by L. Anderson²⁰, R. Kumar²¹, A. McCulloch²² and A. Lijphart²³. Based on examples of Middle East nations, V.V. Naumkin analyzes parameters of classifying the countries in the category of Deeply Divided Societies, taking into account a broad spectrum of ethnic, religious and confessional, tribal, social, patron-client, interregional and other divisions. In a number of countries, multi-level division is observed.

Russian scholars have studied Muslim political identity, nationalism and ethnic identification in the Islamic world, the specific nature of national movements, national psychology and ethno-political processes in the East, the choice of national political models, the evolution of national ideologies nowadays and in the historical retrospective. They include V.Ya. Belokrenitsky²⁴, K.V. Vertyaev, S.M. Ivanov²⁵, G.G. Kosach²⁶, N.G. Kireev²⁷, Ye.S. Melkumyan²⁸, V.V. Orlov²⁹ and S.F. Oreshkova³⁰. The approaches of V.A. Kuznetsov to the problem of religious identity in the Middle East vis-a-vis modernization deserve special attention³¹. The phenomenon of culturally diverse societies also continues to evoke great interest³².

Russian and Western researchers have devoted considerable attention to the influence of outside players, primarily Western, on the formation of political identity. One may single out the works of L.D. Oganisyan³³, T. Carothers³⁴, S. Huntington³⁵ and F. Fukuyama³⁶.

The Middle East scholars have concentrated on analyzing problems of identity in the region. The identity issue has been addressed by a number of scholars of Arab origin. The specific nature of ethno-confessional identity in individual communities and political organizations is highlighted in the works of Yusri Hazran³⁷, Simon Haddad³⁸ and Majid Halawi³⁹. An inclusive study of Lebanese identity can be found in the publications of Kamal Salibi⁴⁰, Shibli Telhami⁴¹ and Adam Saouli⁴². In these works, problems of national-political identity, its formation and invariance are examined primarily in the context of internal and external factors.

The renowned Egyptian journalist and thinker Milad Hanna in his work "Seven Pillars of Egyptian Identity"⁴³ discusses the influence of

time and space upon formation of national identity.

The values shared by the Tunisian youth and self-perceptions of the young people during and after the “Arab spring” are examined in the work of Zukhir Gabsi ⁴⁴.

Ethno-national and confessional topics are inseparably connected with the theory of the ethnos, and also with different approaches to the study of ethnicity and ethnic groups. Fanar Haddad published widely on issues relating to historic and contemporary Iraq and on identity politics in the region, historical memory, and the role of minorities in conflicts⁴⁵.

An important contribution to the study of identity issues has been made by Turkish scholars. Primarily, this topic draws the attention of researchers working at Western institutes and universities. They include K. Karpat⁴⁶, M. Karakash⁴⁷, L. Korkut⁴⁸, who study various aspects of the formation of the Turkish society identity, since the times of the Ottoman Empire to the present day. The connection of identity and the foreign policy of Turkey is examined by U. Uzer⁴⁹. O. Turkdogan⁵⁰ focuses on issues of identity in Turkish society as manifested in ethno-confessional minorities.

Authors who have made a significant contribution to studying the problem of national identity in Iran include A.Kh. Zarrinkuba⁵¹, who examined the Islamic component and its significance in forming the common Iranian national identity, and also S. Alam⁵², who studied the correlation of the ethnic and national in modern Iranian self-identification.

Noticeable contribution to the identity studies have been made by Iranian authors. Among the most interesting publications, we may single out the works of D. Garyag-Zandi⁵³, J. Dehany-Firuzabadai⁵⁴, H. Moulan and M. Mokhammadi⁵⁵. Special attention should be given to works by Daud Garyag-Zandi, Professor at the Shakhid Bekeshti University in Teheran, who analyzed the Iranian self-identification, defining the country's approaches to the most important problems of the international agenda.

Israeli researchers are represented by A. Roshvald⁵⁶ and Ya. Zerubavel⁵⁷, who examined thoroughly and comprehensively a process of Jewish and Israeli national identity formation.

Special mention should be made of works dealing with ethno-political

and ethno-confessional conflicts driven by politicized identities that add a value-based character to them (J. Berton⁵⁸, D. Horovitz⁵⁹).

If problems of forming national or political identity have been studied by scholars for quite some time, the influence of identity on foreign policy and international relations has not been covered so widely. We should mention the collective monograph "Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East" edited by S. Telhami and M. Barnett⁶⁰, where the authors, in the traditions of a constructivist approach, concentrated on a theoretical and applied analysis of the influence of identity on foreign policy and conditions for forming certain identities. The study by the renowned scholar Richard Ned Lebow "National Identities and International Relations" is a most valuable work in the field⁶¹.

There is still a deficit of Russian works which study identity as a factor that has an impact upon political process and international relations in the Middle East, in particular. To a certain degree, this study is an attempt to fill an existing gap.

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Chapter 1

Vitaly Naumkin

Identity, Cultural Symbols and International Relations in the Middle East

Researchers usually explain various phenomena of socio-political life using several methods. One method is applying a theory which has gained recognition for its successful explanation of other phenomena. A second method may only use theory as a metaphor. A third method may use a theory to raise questions, but the answers may be different than for phenomena that have already been explained. A fourth method derives individual elements from an existing theory, and assumes that they will also find a useful application with new material. This is essentially the description that was given by the renowned American researcher Charles Tilly¹. The fourth method is useful because individual elements of several theories may be united to explain a complex socio-political phenomenon, without exhausting all of its complexity, but making it at least more comprehensible. Furthermore, a combination of these elements may be applied for interpreting several different phenomena, which intersect and interlayer in very unusual combinations.

The proposed approach is an attempt at conceptualization according to the fourth method, through the extrapolation of elements of individual theories, in particular the *Theory of Symbolic Choice (TSC)* or *symbolic policy*, and also the *Theory of Social Movement (TSM)*, in studying the topic at hand. These two theories, TSC and TSM, are aligned with each other since symbols play a key role in both of them. This study will discuss the role of identity in the international relations in the Middle East, primarily the phenomenon which is known as *cultural identity* through the prism of these theories.

Although the phenomenon itself is not studied in this chapter, we should at least briefly make several points. Owing to the deep-rooted

historical national traditions in the life of the Middle East peoples, through instruments of ethnicity, religion and historical memory, the influence of cultural factors is quite noticeable. They have an impact on the system of international relations, on the formation and practical realization of foreign policy, on political players' behavior in this region. Their role is even more vivid than in many other parts of the world (although China and India are probably without rivals here²).

Cultural identity is the self-identification of a person formed in the process of socialization within a certain cultural environment, dominated by the values and traditions. But at the same time, it would also be a mistake to ignore the understanding provided by postmodernism, declaring identity to be a relative phenomenon which is a person's choice. In that discourse, all types of collective identity have been cast into doubt, including gender, which we can see today in the example of the Western cultural narrative.

The discussions about this problem in its traditional understanding continue between representatives of different schools, with an important contribution to its theoretical development made by supporters of the civilizational approach, which in the context of this study seems most relevant. For one of the self-identification mechanisms for residents of the Middle East countries is a feeling of belonging to the ancient civilizations of the region, which contrasts markedly with the adherence to a certain system of religious beliefs. For example, many Egyptians self-identify themselves as Egyptians, the heirs of the country of the Pharaohs, rather than as Muslim Arabs or Christians.

As will be shown below, the influence of civilizational factors on the system of relations among different actors is realized through the interaction of three major types of actors. *Firstly*, the subject of identification, which may be an individual or group. *Secondly*, the cultural community of people united by a realization of belonging to one culture or a certain part of it. *Thirdly*, communities which play the role of "aliens" for the first two types, that contrast themselves to such "aliens".

The "Myth-Symbol" Complex and Identity

Let us return to the theoretical approaches mentioned above. The Theory of Symbolic Choice (symbolic policy) (TSC), which has been applied for some time now in studying ethnic conflicts / ethnic wars, but is capable of finding much wider application, was first formulated by Murray Edelman³. It may be briefly described as follows: people make a choice, responding to an emotionally strong symbol that is offered to them. This symbol may also perform a civilizational-identifying function.

This theory provides explanations to such issues as the reasons behind the choice of individuals to unite in solidarity groups, including ethnically based; the sources of the hostility and interethnic wars that divide these groups; differences in attitude towards process of globalization and several others. According to the definition of the renowned social anthropologist Anthony Smith, who has many ideas that are shared by TSC adherents, an ethnic group in general is united by five main markers: the name of the group, the common origin in which it believes, common historical memory, elements of common culture such as language or religion, and attachment to a specific territory⁴. This coincides with the phenomena which are usually classified as markers of cultural identity, and among them ethnicity holds a leading place.

TSC, which developed as a psychological approach, is opposed to the widespread *Theory of Rational Choice* which examines ethnic groups as coalitions formed to fight for rationally defined goals, for example possession of resources and goods, control of territory etc. Rationalists speak of the “dilemma of ethnic security”, changing the concept of the “security dilemma” introduced by system neorealists⁵. Supporters of the psychological approach⁶ have always been the antagonists of rationalists, stating that by “selecting an action”, people do so on an emotional, not on a rational basis⁷. So a decision taken depends in many ways on *how* a certain idea is presented to a person.

It is no coincidence that as part of this theory, the central idea for understanding ethnicity is the idea of the “Myth-Symbol” Complex. According to Edelman, a *myth* is a “belief held in common by a large group of people that gives events and actions a particular meaning”⁸. A *symbol* is understood as an “emotionally charged reference to a myth”. Within this understanding, whether or not the event called a myth actually took place or was imagined is of no importance. In this

context, even the event that went down in history as the Holocaust is also called a myth by some Israeli political scientists in the terminological sense, meaning that its function lies in “charging” a whole nomenclature of mobilizing and identifying symbols. The same may be said about the Armenian genocide of 1915 in the Ottoman Empire, which has just as powerful a mobilizing force through a system of symbols. Stuart Kaufman, one of the authors who worked in the TSC genre and made a tangible contribution to applying it to the study of ethnic conflicts writes that the “myth-symbol” complex is a “web of myths and related symbols”⁹ (this complex is also examined in the work by Anthony Smith¹⁰, and Zdzislaw Mach has also written about the role of symbols¹¹). In other words, people make a political choice not so much by calculation, but rather are guided by emotions, and respond to the symbols offered to them, which include cultural-civilizational symbols.

Incidentally, the society of the Ottoman Empire, which was multi-ethnic and multi-confessional, gave many examples of the role of identification symbols (including dress codes) both in interethnic and interconfessional relations, and in relations between the Empire and foreign powers. One example comes from Hijaz, one of the Arab vilayets of the Ottoman Empire. In May 1895, Bedouins shot at a group of foreign diplomats in Jeddah (the British Vice Consul was killed, the Russian acting Consul was injured), expressing their anger at the quarantine measures against cholera. They believed that foreign doctors “release medicine from ampules and cause intoxication, killing Bedouins and Hajjis”¹². The mythical assumption almost caused a serious conflict, as the Russian Consul A.I. Nelidov, perhaps seeing the incident as an excuse to provoke a major conflict and realize his long-standing dream to divide the Ottoman Empire and seize the Straits, wrote a secret telegram to the acting Foreign Minister N.P. Shishkin. Nelidov proposed to send a military vessel to Jeddah immediately, and “to be prepared for the possible need to protect Christians, and also for foreign intervention, particularly British”¹³. Fortunately, this reckless scheme was not put into action, thanks to the head of the Naval Ministry N.M. Chikhachev, who pointed out all the risks involved, including the fact that the gunboat would not be able to bomb the city and land troops, or “have any moral influence on the Arabs”¹⁴. Could the incident have led to a serious armed conflict?

Such a scenario cannot be completely ruled out.

We may give another historical example from Jeddah. The dragoman of the Russian Consulate Shakirzyan Ishaev, discussing life in the city, described the clothing of all the personages in detail – it had symbolic significance as a sign of national identity. On one journey, his diplomat colleagues were dressed in white summer European suits; the Consul wore a white Russian peaked cap, and his secretary a straw hat, while Ishaev wore a Turkish fez. The problem was that although the interpreter was a foreigner, in Jeddah no one took him to be a non-Muslim, and Turks “did not respect Muslims who wore anything but a fez on their heads”. In Constantinople, when he walked to the Embassy or the Consulate in a hat, the Turks who he passed on the street “pointed at the indecency of his hat”. But he was not able to dress differently, “because of the wishes of our Ambassador Mr. Nelidov, who could not stand the fez”¹⁵. But only now, sitting in the café in a fez, the Russian dragoman noted the “people of other religions and Turkestanis” were paying him close attention, as it seemed to him that they suspected “that he was also an infidel, a person who was forbidden to visit Mecca under the danger of losing his life”. And such cases were known to take place.

Diplomats always had to take into account the symbolism of clothing. When the Consul Shagimardan Ibragimov made his first visit to the local authorities, as he came to open the Russian Imperial Consulate in Jeddah in 1890, despite the excruciating heat, he went to see the governor “on horseback in a formal white woolen coat and peaked cap”. People on the street greeted him, and he later reported to St. Petersburg that they saw in his figure the majesty of the Russian “white Tsar”.

It is also necessary to observe “alien” dress codes today, and although violating traditional norms of behavior and codes no longer threatens the lives of diplomats, this is perceived as an insult. At official meetings in Saudi Arabia, when foreign visitors cross their legs out of habit, and the other person is forced to look at the soles of his shoes, this is regarded as a demonstration of disrespect. In Iran, any foreign woman visiting the country, regardless of her religion, must keep her head covered. And this is not just because of religious prescriptions or because residents of Iran would be shocked to see an uncovered woman’s head, or would feel forbidden sinful desires. We may see in

this a kind of demonstration of sovereignty and/or cultural exceptionalism, which all “aliens” must respect, including the strongest of them.

Today, globalization is weakening the power of cultural codes, and is accompanied by the mutual penetration of civilizations. At the same time, a reverse tendency can also be observed: in an attempt to ensure self-preservation, groups try to protect themselves from alien influences that are threatening their cultural identity. The renowned Lebanese author Amin Maalouf in his book “Disordered World” noted that one of the consequences of globalization was “global communitarianism”. But regrouping people into “global tribes” is accompanied by a rise in religious identities: in the Muslim world an unprecedented wave of “communitarian particularism” was seen, expressed most drastically in the bloody outbreak of the Sunni-Shia conflict in Iraq¹⁶. The “mixing” of people belonging to different cultures that takes place as a result of increasing migration flows does not lead to an erasure of cultural differences, while “cultural diversity” is regarded as one of the essential characteristics of modern society.

Concerning the painful topic for Europe regarding migrants from countries of the East, Maalouf justly notes their dual identity (or rather hybrid, as it has an element of heterogeneity). “An immigrant is first of all an emigrant... He belongs to two different societies, with a different status in each”¹⁷. The author gives the example of a Moroccan worker, who on a building site in the West speaks timidly with local residents, lowering his eyes, but becomes confident and makes expansive gestures when he talks with his own people in his native language.

Identity and Ethnic Violence

Everything we have said about the symbolism of identity has a direct relation to the problem of ethnic violence. According to Donald Horowitz¹⁸, the direct cause of ethnic violence is emotions, in particular the fear of the threat of the group’s disappearance, and Crawford Young¹⁹ in this context focuses attention on the critical role of stereotypes (myths) and symbols in “sustaining identity and driving group mobilization”²⁰. Thus, the paradigm of ethnic conflict, according to the theory of symbolic politics proposed by Horowitz and

Young, looks as follows: *fear* of the destruction of the group (or the destruction of its identity) leads to the emergence of a feeling of hostility, and then to group violence. According to Young, the atmosphere of hostility and threats raises group solidarity, and inspires people to examine events in ethnic terms. As part of this theoretical discourse, the concept of identity occupies a prominent place, and it practically acts as a factor of international politics (it is no coincidence that since the 1990s, this concept has come to be studied not only in ethnology, but – in a special context – in international relations).

Through the “myth–symbol” complex – by inflaming hostility on the basis not only of real, but also constructed historical myths – the weakness of identity and difficulties of carrying out mobilizing policy may be overcome. These myths, in their turn, are built on an interpretation of politics in ethnic terms.

Concerning ethnic conflicts and wars, the issue of the causes for the violence to arise may be illustrated by a quote from Bogdan Denitch: “Civil war is not caused by a universal outbreak of national hatred, but as a result of political decisions at the top, combined with the highly effective use of mass media, primarily television”²¹. If Denitch had written this today, and not a quarter of a century ago, he would have mentioned social networks rather than television. As V. Gagnon also wrote during this period: “Violent conflict along ethnic cleavages is provoked by elites in order to create a domestic political conflict where ethnicity is the only politically relevant identity”²². Here we can see both the constructivist concept of ethnicity as well as the personal approach to conflict. We should note that for some conflicts, this approach looks quite convincing, but not for others.

The essence of the personal approach, based on the primacy of personal subjectivity, may be illustrated as follows: on the one hand, first members of the ethnic group *at the top* construct an individual interest through creating the idea of a threat, then the *elite* mobilizes members of the ethnic group to fight against the status quo; on the other hand, also using the tool of threat, mobilization takes place to preserve or strengthen the status quo. In other words, the leaders of ethnic groups provoke interethnic war, in order to seize/hold on to power. For a construction of identity based on hostility, the intertwining of *politics, ethnicity and religion* is characteristic.

Cultural identity before the transition of conflict to the violent phase is sometimes protected by very exotic methods. We may recall past tales of how Arab Wahhabis communicated with visitors from Europe, whom they saw for the first time. They avoided looking them in the eyes, in order not to violate their own Islamic identity, as they explained.

A telling episode was when Saddam Hussein's regime used the battle of Al-Qadisiyyah as a myth, as the Iraqi authorities called their war with Iran in 1980 – 1988 a “second Al-Qadisiyyah”, or “Saddam's Al-Qadisiyyah”. Again, this battle played the role of myth not in the sense that it did not happen (just like the Armenian genocide happened), but that it was used to formulate symbolic policy (just as genocide is used, while its admission or denial often causes nations to be classified as friends or enemies).

Of course, in politics, it is not just symbols themselves that are important, but also their interpretation, the possibility of applying them to certain situations. Through the interpretation of symbols, control is exercised over institutions. If we look at the names of different groups of rebels, who fought against the government in Syria, we may see that practically all of them used the names of various historical figures, which carried a certain symbolic charge both for their participants and for their sponsors, who also needed to be mobilized. For example, one of the pro-Turkish anti-government organizations created in 2011 was called “Harakat (Movement) Nur ad-Din Zangi” – after Nur ad-Din Zangi (or Zengi), the Turkish Atabek of Aleppo and the Emir of Damascus in the 12th century, renowned as a leader of the Muslim armies that fought against the crusaders, the predecessor of Saladin. No less symbolic are the names of many divisions of Shia volunteers, who come to Syria from a number of Muslim nations to help Assad's government to fight the radicals. For example, “Liwa Fatemiyoun” i.e. “Fatemiyoun Division” (an Ismaili dynasty which ruled the Fatimid Caliphate in the 10th – 12th centuries).

Afghanistan gives equally illustrative examples, where the Taliban ruling the country in 1996 – 2001, decided on a series of radical and deeply symbolic actions in fear that the country would cease to be “truly Islamic”. Statues of Buddha were destroyed for being pagan symbols: children who had been taught by Christians were re-

educated: any Afghan who had converted to Christianity or Judaism was to be executed, etc. Many foreign experts on Afghanistan noted that these actions by the Taliban went against traditional Afghan tolerance of other religions, and the truly profound faith of the Afghans. As Olivier Roy notes, this faith was not weakened even by 20 years of war, so “the new feeling of fragility was linked with something else than a weakening of religious practice”²⁴. Here the connection between religion and culture was at stake: the object of the Taliban’s attack was traditional Afghan culture: “from music to rooster fights”. Thus, this culture faced an attack from “religious fundamentalism and globalization simultaneously”²⁵. So the restrictive policy of Afghan fundamentalists was directed against symbols of pagan elements of traditional culture, even if they were previously incorporated into Islam and connected with it, and also against symbols of Western culture. The actual fundamentalism of the Taliban created these myths (again, we should bear in mind that in this context it does not matter whether the events that formed these myths really took place), which gave rise to new symbols, inspiring them to act.

Another example that provides a vivid illustration of the possibilities for TSC tools is the realities of present-day Lebanon. On the whole, the Lebanese inter-community political life in the past did not have a serious conflict of interests between Shias and Christians, but it often divided Sunnis and Christians, Sunnis and Druze, Druze and Christians. However, the greatest problems were created by the arrival of refugees into the country, “alien” Arabs. Their first wave was Palestinians, who came there after the Arab-Israeli wars. In the 1970s, Yasser Arafat’s de facto creation of a Palestinian mini-state in the north of Lebanon mobilized the population against refugees. It was not the refugees themselves who were so dangerous, as the threat of “Sunnization” of the fragile construction based on confessional quotas of the Lebanese state, as the absolute majority of Palestinians are Sunnis. This is why after decades, Lebanese authorities still cannot allow themselves to provide civil rights even to Palestinian refugees, who have been living in the country for a long time, and who are estimated to number over 600,000.

Later, the Shia-Christian opposition (primarily Maronite) began appealing to the pro-Western bloc of the billionaire Rafiq Hariri (who was later succeeded by his son Saad Hariri), which was primarily

Sunni and also closely connected with Saudi Arabia. As paradoxical as it may sound, a certain section of Christian Maronites, moved by fear of the growing weakness of their position in a demographic and political-economic invasion by Sunnis, joined in a union with Shias, although they were traditionally regarded as an anti-Western force, and Maronites have always focused on a close union with the West. In the run-up to the Parliamentary elections of 2009, the leaders of the Shia-Maronite opposition criticized the USA, Saudi Arabia and Egypt for supporting the ruling bloc, who was accused of following foreign interests. The leaders of Hariri's bloc, in their turn, accused the opposition of following the interests of Iran and Syria (this quarrel continues to this day). Certain opposition figures have also claimed that the intensification of Salafis in north Lebanon can be explained by the back-stage actions of the USA, which is implementing its "Sunni project". The expulsion of Salafis into Syria by Lebanese Alawis (by some estimates, there were around 50,000 of them there) supposedly served the goal of making the Sunnis and the Shias quarrel, of destabilizing the situation in the country and provoking Syria to take risky actions which could involve it in a conflict with foreign forces or cause their intervention. On their side, the Sunnis came forward with accusations that attempts were made to destabilize Hezbollah, and shortly before the June 2009 elections, Egypt announced that a network of agents of this party had been discovered, who were charged with trying to create party cells in the country. This was seen as evidence of the undermining role of Iran, which provided weapons to the HAMAS movement through Egyptian territory

Lebanese President General Michel Aoun stated in a conversation with the author of this chapter that the strategic causes of the wars and crises in Lebanon were the lack of a solution to the Palestinian problem and the flow of refugees caused by it. The first crisis that posed a danger to the Lebanese state took place as a result of the Arab-Israeli war in 1947 – 1949, when Palestinian refugees fled into the country, and the second crisis in 1975, which was followed by a 15-year civil war – also connected with the lack of a solution to the Palestinian problem²⁶.

When the Syrian crisis erupted in the second decade of the 21st century, Lebanon was swept by a new, second wave of refugees – Syrians, whose numbers exceeded the Palestinians by around two

times. As President Aoun said in the conversation, “the number of migrants and refugees is more than half the Lebanese population”²⁷. The President believed that with these numbers in mind the Syrian refugees must return home immediately, without waiting for a political solution to the Syrian crisis.

In the conflicts which may be examined within the coordinates of the “myth-symbol” complex, we may observe the features of a common process for the region and for the Middle Eastern diaspora in the West. It may be called “motivational shift, or aberration”: when one stronger motivator replaces another, without changing the value symbolism. Here is a characteristic example: Tariq Ramadan, one of the most popular moderate leaders of European Muslims, professor and grandson of the founder of the “Muslim Brothers” movement, an Egyptian by birth, said in a speech that the pact of civil solidarity passed in France, which discusses the rights of couples who are not legally married (known as the homosexual pact, as there is no mention of the partners’ gender), is closer to the Muslim concept of marriage than the Western concept of official marriage. Here the strict rejection of homosexuality characteristic for Islam is set aside for the sake of something more important: the informal legitimation of polygamous marriages, officially prohibited in the West but permitted by Islam, which however are becoming less frequent among Muslims living in the West. (Elements of de facto legitimization of polygamy, strictly speaking, exist in many countries, including Russia, where the father of a child with all related obligations may be declared to be a man not only unmarried to the child’s mother, but who has another family).

It is telling that Islamic traditional symbolism, based on the “myth” (in the terminological sense, as defined in this chapter) that everything Islamic is better than the non-Islamic, may not necessarily serve to uphold certain outdated customs and traditions, as modernists would have it, but to “fit” Islamic ethics and morality into modern life. It is in this context that we may examine “Islamobusiness” which is widespread everywhere, including Russia, such as the retail of halal groceries, houses and festivals of Islamic fashion, publication of Islamic printed materials (which also include not particularly “Islamic” books and magazines) etc.

Theory of Social Movement

TSM was developed based on a study of Western social movements, but successful attempts have already been made to apply it to the study of Islamic activism, which is closely connected with religious identity²⁸. Islamic activism²⁹ is always interpreted as dissatisfaction and protest with a religious façade which conceals different interests and goals.

Researchers who try to explain Islamic activism using TSM can clearly be classified as adherents of *constructivism* – a wider movement or school which has its own conspicuous niche in both political studies and sociology, and international relations. Constructivists regard the phenomena of socio-political and international affairs studied by these disciplines not as objective reality, but as a *product of social construction*. Their main focus, along with other concepts, is *identity*, interpreted as a catalogue of certain cultural features or peculiarities, which in this sense opposes the present theoretical discourse to the rationalist approach.

One of the key concepts in TSM is the concept of “frames”. As Wiktorowicz states, “frames represent interpretive schemata that offer a language and cognitive tools for making sense of experiences and events in the ‘world out there’”³⁰. The term “framing” is used to describe the process of constructing meanings. In order to inspire potential individual participants to collective actions, the frames must “resonate”, to bring about an according reaction, as we will show below. So the concept of resonance is another important term for TSM. The idea of “resonating frames” is used to explain the process of mobilizing participants of movements. In connection with this idea, we may also propose the concept of *emotional vibration*, characteristic for reactions to civilizational interventions and cultural dissonances (including in the sphere of dress codes). Again, we may cite Wiktorowicz, who defines three “framing” tasks for social movements³¹. *Firstly*, movements construct frames in order to provide a diagnosis of the state of the problem which requires rethinking. *Secondly*, movements propose solutions of a problem, including specific tactics and a strategy designed to eliminate injustice. *Thirdly*, movements reveal the nature of the motivation for supporting collective action.

In attempting to apply the conceptual apparatus of TSM (and also another closely-connected theory – Resource Mobilization, TRM) in studying Islamic activism, followers of this method take the stance that these movements are deeply involved in “manufacturing meanings”, and thus in the “framing” process. Islamic movements are entrenched in the battle for meanings and values, similar to many “new social movements” that are not motivated by class, economic and narrow political interests, as old movements were. The engines of these new movements, according to E. Laraña, are such phenomena as “identity, culture and post-materialism”³². A significant component of most diagnostic frames of Islamic movements is placing responsibility for all social ills, including growing unemployment, economic stagnation, inequality, lack of housing etc. on the spread of Western values and lifestyles. Western cultural codes are rejected, and even the Western style of clothing is sometimes seen as a deviation from Islam (we may recall certain periods from the history of the Soviet Union, when wearing jeans or Beatles-style haircuts was regarded as tantamount to betrayal). Some frames offer a more radical diagnosis: the cultural imperialism of the West is a strategy to weaken and dominate the Islamic world.

A striking example is the values created by such a traditional ritual as the mourning procession of the Shias, which can involve large groups of people and thus mobilize them to certain actions. At the initial stage of the anti-Shah rebellion in early 1978, when the first mass demonstrations were brutally suppressed by the authorities, funerals became an effective tool for this mobilization.

A very convincing sign of the effectiveness of using the method and conceptual apparatus of TSM is the Islamist violence in Algeria, which deserves to be examined in greater detail in this chapter than other examples. In 1997, the ultra-radical Armed Islamic Group (GIA), which in 1992 split off from the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), organized a series of brutal mass murders of the civilian population in cities and towns to the south of the capital. Mohammed Hafez, a well-known researcher of these events, also calls “mass murders” the episodes, when Islamists killed at least 15 people in one action³³. Although the orgy of killings continued from November 1996 to July 2001, when 76 episodes were recorded, most of them took place in 1997 (42 episodes). But the most mysterious aspect of this bloody

violence which took the lives of many thousands of peaceful civilians was that it was primarily against the population of the strongholds of the Islamists themselves (the capital Algiers and cities of the Southwest such as Médéa, Blida and Ain Defla). Many of the victims of the violence in these areas voted for the FIS in the 1991 elections, and later helped armed Islamist groups, who were fighting against the ruling regime. At the 1991 elections, the FIS received the majority of votes. This was because of its successful socio-political activity – demonstrations, rallies, mobilization of supporters and victory at local elections in 1990. After the elections, the Army took power into its hands, to stop the Islamists claiming final victory and forming a government, and carried out repressions against them, after which the Islamists began an armed struggle against the authorities. Many observers at the time also criticized the Algerian military command, and the Western governments that silently approved the military coup.

The total lack of logic in exterminating their own supporters even gave a number of politicians and researchers cause to accuse the Algerian security forces of carrying out the killings. There is no direct proof of this charge, although such authoritative Algerian figures as the former Prime Minister Abdelhamid Brahimi made such claims. Nevertheless, as Olivier Roy correctly points out, the mutual radicalization of the Army and the GIA led to the marginalization of the FIS, which gradually lost its position in the country³⁴.

Mohammed Hafez noted that murders of civilian populations by rebels took place in many countries of the Islamic world, and also outside it, but the Algerian case required a special explanation. The author finds this explanation by using the TSM method. He believes that the people who carried out the mass murders were not moved by motivational imperatives (rational calculations, ideological orientation, relative deprivation). They were rather driven to such incommensurate and unprecedentedly brutal actions *by three circumstances involving repressions*: “(1) state repression creates a political environment of bifurcation and brutality; (2) insurgents create exclusive organizations to shield themselves from repression; and (3) rebels promote antisystem frames to motivate violent collective action to overthrow agents of repression.”³⁵.

Here, as we see, Hafez turns to the concept of *antisystem frames*: rebels, experiencing the sensation of victimization in a situation of

brutality and injustice created by the regime, justify horrific acts of terror committed by “*exclusivist organizations*”. In its discourse, the FIS was an “inclusive organization”. Its replacement by the exclusive Armed Islamic Group (GIA), rejecting even moderate supporters of the Islamic project and acting on the basis of “anti-system frames” (with the aim of destroying the entire system through merciless total war), was provoked by the military coup and repressions. Mario Diani, explaining the nature of “antisystem frames”, said that they describe the institutional system and the state elite as fundamentally corrupt, and deny the “legitimacy of the routine functioning of the political process”³⁶.

Another specific conceptual category that Hafez employs is the “*encapsulation spiral*” (which was first mentioned by Donatella Della Porta³⁷), created by exclusive organizations and leading to the gradual forcing of rebels out of society and their isolation in the underground. Hafez justly notes that the GIA members made no distinction between Algerians who were not in their group. Anyone who helped in any way to preserve the regime described as “godless”, “tyrannical”, “unlawful”, even taking a passive position, was regarded as an “apostate”, “unbeliever” or “tyrant”, and could expect death³⁸. At the same time, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) did not use the military coup as an argument in favor of its actions, which were seen as a battle in the name of the lofty goal of ridding the Islamic world of infidel rulers, i.e. it had a wider ideological motivation. But it was the exclusivism and blind brutality of the GIA which eventually caused supporters of its Islamist project to leave it, and led to its defeat.

The explanation proposed by Hafez provides broad parallels. It is suitable not only for exclusivist terrorist Islamic organizations, but also for many other radical movements (ethno-national, rebellious, leftist and others) operating in various countries around the world. In some of them, there has also been a competition of official and non-official “frames” - along with system “framing”, anti-system “framing” also exists. Acts of terrorism perpetrated by rebels provoke authorities to repressions (and a section of the law-enforcement machine often acts according to the rules of the same “anti-system” game, in the grip of traditional values such as blood revenge), and they create conditions for reciprocally escalating brutality (the “bifurcation” phenomenon), finding justification in protection from

brutality. An according interpretation is spread in the media, and thus resource mobilization takes place. In other words, “anti-system frames” are used for motivating collective actions to destroy agents of repressions. Without going into details, we may note that the nature of repressions – *reactive, selective or preemptive* – also have relevance in this context. Sometimes, officials, following the simplest methods, resort to political exclusivism, indiscriminately banning organizations and literature. These unrestrained prohibitions bring no benefit, but may well act as a tool of counter-mobilization.

Salafi-Jihadist Islamism and Ethnicity

The Algerian GIA was by its level of brutality, like Al Qaeda, a forerunner of the Daesh/ISIS organization³⁹, which exceeded all other Salafi-Jihadist terrorist groups in this field. Unlike Al Qaeda, from which it grew, Daesh intended to become not just a terrorist group with a global agenda, but an organization which would capture a territory where it would begin the practical realization of its project of state building, with the prospect of expansion. It was no accident that it changed its name – from the “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant” in 2013 (in that year its fighters took the city of Raqqa which became its capital), and later, soon after it captured the Iraqi city of Mosul in 2014, which became its second capital, to the “Islamic State”. Controlling the captured territory, the Daesh tried to function as a fully-fledged state with all its attributes, with its own symbols, using extremely brutal methods of treating the population living on this territory, not to mention the videos they made, which were widely shown, of the brutal methods for exterminating their enemies – from public beheadings and burning people alive to drowning them slowly in cages and throwing them off the roofs of tall buildings. These elaborate inhuman methods of dealing with people, as in the case with the Algerian extremists, eventually drove away many ideological proponents of the Islamic State project from the Daesh. Its distorted model was defeated thanks to successful military operations by local armies, with the assistance of partisans and foreign states supporting the forces, including the Russian Aerospace Forces, who played the main role in liberating Syria from the terrorists.

The religious mobilization which was carried out in Iraq by the leaders of Daesh several years after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime may be described with certain tools of the Theory of Social Movement (TSM). In the brutal actions of ISIS, we may see all of the characteristics Hafez named for the GIA, including "anti-system frames". Moreover, some of them – the founders of the Daesh – set the practical task of building an exclusivist state, which initially they carried out successfully, in part. Others, former officers of the Iraqi Army and security forces of the former regime, who had lost their jobs, Baathist functionaries and state officials – followed no less radical goals. They had to *firstly* survive, and here they had no choice but to join the Islamist radicals, and *secondly*, to take revenge. They still identified themselves with the former state, and, as Sunnis, could not accept a new one, in which fundamental Shia parties received leading positions. The Salafi-Jihadist framing in this situation proved to be in wide demand. (Incidentally, Russian ethnologists, sociologists have in recent years begun to use the English word "frame", although the Russian equivalent "ramka" may also be used⁴⁰.)

Understanding the deep sacred significance of the Arab-Muslim state of the era of the Prophet Muhammad and the righteous Caliphs of the 7th century for all Muslims, the leaders of the Salafi-Jihadist movement created a "myth" on its basis (as noted before, in the terminological sense of this word, within the context of the theories examined in the chapter – see above), giving rise to existing symbols which have a powerful attractive force, playing an important role in winning over followers. Initially, the Internet publication of the terrorists, "Dabiq", was given a symbolic name. The Salafi-Jihadist leaders inspired future adepts with a prophecy of misanthropic ideology which grossly distorted the humanist essence of Islam, according to which the last battle of the armies of Muslims and the "horde of unbelievers" would take place in this city, on the territory of the modern Syrian province of Aleppo.

The name of this city was Dabiq, and especially after it was captured by the terrorists, it became identified as the place of Judgement Day and the ensuing full victory over the Western Kafirs. Therefore, capturing this city from ISIS, which had no real military and strategic importance, had great symbolic significance in the battle with the terrorists from Daesh. The ISIS constantly appealed to Islamic

symbols, distorting the essence of Islamic religion, in attempts to bring Muslims living in different regions of the world over to their side. As Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan note: “Al-Baghdadi declared himself to be the descendent of Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet, which according to many Islamic scholars is the essential condition for gaining the legal right to rule Muslims. These origin legends used by the ISIS were an important argument for its Jihadist followers, for whom this genealogy means a lot”⁴¹.

One of the models of the Islamic state, in which political imperatives play a leading role despite the high level of Islamization, is the Islamic Republic of Iran. Despite the widespread belief among non-specialists, arising from the frames of *velayat-e faqih* (the principle of the institution of power, based on the leading spiritual and political role of the most authoritative Shia religious scholar), the Iranian revolution did not bring a group of “great Ayatollahs” to power in the country, who were considered in the Shia community of the country to be *marja’ al-taqlid*, i.e. “an object of emulation” (Arabic). Furthermore, many of them did not take part in the events (such as Tabataba’y-Qomi, Golpayegani or Khu’y), while Shariat-Madari was even repressed. The creators of the revolution, who devised the institutional structures, were ayatollahs of the middle level, who were not considered *marja’ al-taqlid* (such as Jannati or Beheshti), clerics who were lower than the ayatollahs in the religious hierarchy, with the rank of *Hojjat ol-Islam* (Rafsanjani, Khamenei and others), and also the laity (Moussavi, Habibi and others).

As Olivier Roy justly noted, “In the Iranian Islamic revolution the status and role of religion are obviously defined by political institutions, not religious ones. Politics rules over religion. The revolution was from its inception explicitly based on the conjunction of two legitimacies, religious and political, through the concept of *velayat-e faqih*, ‘rule of the jurist’”⁴². Indeed, under the 1980 Constitution, the *faqih* could be chosen from *marja’ al-taqlid* by two methods: through the direct expression of the will of the people (both *marja’ al-taqlid* and *rahbar* – “guide”), or through an Assembly of Experts (*majlis-e khobregan*, comprising clerics elected by the people) as one outstanding figure or a group of three to five *faqih*. However, the constitutional reforms of 1989, following the death of Imam Khomeini, led to gradual secularization of the most critical posts, the

post of Prime Minister was liquidated, all the powers vested in the head of executive authority went to the President, and the role of *faqih*, as Anoushiravan Ehteshami rightly noted, became more political than religious in function⁴³. Similarly, Roy also states that now the qualifications for the *faqih* shifted from religious to political, although the leader still had to be a cleric.

We may see evidence of the priority of political motives over religious ones in the Iranian system of state power in the fact that the author of this chapter (alongside many other people) annually receives congratulations from official representatives of Iran in Russia not only on New Year, but even on Christmas. For neo-fundamentalists, such recognition of a Christian holiday is unthinkable, even in countries with a Christian minority. The Islamic preacher from Los Angeles Jamal ad-Din Zarabozo says that Muslims who participate in the holidays of the disbelievers are committing *kufr* (sacrilege)⁴⁴.

For all the growing importance of politics, and also the continuing process of globalization in the Arab world, in recent decades the process of re-Islamization has been continuing, which may also be interpreted through the concepts of “frame” and “framing”. Examining the evolution of Egyptian students’ attitudes to secular education, Kerry Wickham⁴⁵ uses the term “*transvaluation of values*”. If in an ordinary social environment, secular university education was both a status symbol and a means for a career in service, in Islamist subculture its symbolic significance drops, and the value of religious education grows drastically. For young people from this environment, receiving religious knowledge through self-education and group lessons at mosques becomes more important. This manifestation of re-Islamization has different explanations: one is the principle of rational choice, and another is “*motivational framing*”⁴⁶.

Religious and ethnic principles are often mixed together in the ethnicization of confessional adherence and the confessionalization of ethnic adherence, which may be seen in many examples. Once more, we may cite Roy, who rightly notes that the term “Muslim” is often used in the West in the “neo-ethnic sense”, not relating to religious practice or faith. In the term “neo-ethnic”, “neo” means that the culture of origin is no longer of importance, while “ethnic” means that “*people no longer see religion as a faith, but rather as a selection of inherited cultural models, which are not connected with the spiritual*

life of a person”⁴⁷. We should note that neo-ethnic means the construction of ethnic groups which previously did not exist, such as “persons of Caucasian origin” in Russia. (In the USA, “Caucasians” means people of the white race – a term which is considered impolite because of its political incorrectness). Incidentally, the powerful protest movement of African Americans, Black Lives Matter, which arose as a response to police brutality when an officer killed the African American George Floyd during arrest, were fully acting in the spirit of symbolic protest when they began destroying statues of historical figures. They considered them symbols of slavery, colonization, oppression and discrimination. The examples are well-known – from Christopher Columbus to the founding fathers of the USA.

The “war of statues”, which took place not only in the USA, but also in several European nations, has already gone down in history. Floyd’s killing was the trigger for a long maturing explosion of protest by the colored population, which moved to a violent phase. The American authorities, frightened by the mass disturbances and pillaging, responded with other swiftly constructed symbolic acts, for example heads of state knelt at Floyds’ funeral. The use of the words “race” and “racism” which had long been taboo were rehabilitated, the study of racism swiftly became a fashionable topic in academia, launching a kind of scholarly renaissance of racial approaches.

The wave also reached the Middle East. One of the British groups of racism opponents demanded the demolition of the Egyptian pyramids, since they were built by slaves. Egyptian archeologists had to explain that they were not built by slaves after all.

The symbolism of ethnonyms has great power. At one international conference in the USA, a Turkish participant, who subsequently held a very high-ranking state position, persuaded the audience that it was incorrect to use the ethnonyms “Uzbeks”, “Tatars”, “Nogais” and “Karachais” etc., explaining that in the Turkish mentality they were all “Uzbek Turks”, “Tatar Turks”, “Nogai Turks”, “Karachai Turks” etc. The cultural symbolism of this idea was clear, as were its political connotations (since then, of course, the situation has changed, and even Turkish Kurds are no longer called “highland Turks”).

No less symbolic was the deep-seated belief in the Turkish elites (and not only the elites), also essentially a mythological one, that all Turkic languages were dialects of Turkish. Sometimes exceptions were made for Uzbek and Tatar. This symbol is a tool of cultural (but not political) Pan-Turkism, the justification of the civilizational significance of Turkey as a unifying center of the cultures for all Turkic peoples. We may recall that for the Peoples' Front of Azerbaijan, at the first stages of its activity, the interpretation of the Azerbaijani language as Turkish was a symbolic framing of the rejection of Russia and the Russian-Soviet past, and a tool of political reorientation. However, as real tasks of creating and strengthening Azerbaijani statehood came to the agenda (where the country's interests did not necessarily coincide with the interests of Ankara), rejection of its own linguistic identity came into conflict with the task of building the nation-state.

Naturally, it is not only and not so much the concepts that are symbolic, as the language used by their authors. Paradoxically enough, neo-fundamentalists and Islamists borrow the habit of labelling each other in their disputes, which is common in Western Europe but completely uncharacteristic for the Islamic tradition. This is especially noticeable in materials of English websites (far from all of them are translated, as English is now used by a large number of Islamic intellectuals living in the West), where the term "Qutbism" is often used in polemics (referring to the ideas of one of the fathers of modern politically oriented Islam, the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb), and "Bannaism" (referring to the ideas of the founder of the "Muslim Brotherhood" movement Hassan al-Banna).

But the ideas of Islam politicization supporters are rejected by the neo-fundamentalists. One of the leading Wahhabi scholars of Saudi Arabia, Shaykh Muhammad bin al-Uthaymeen, called on believers not to read books by Qutb, but old classic tafaseer (interpretations of the Koran), while Qutb's books, as he wrote, "cause great calamities, but we hope that Allah will forgive him"⁴⁸. Contrary to popular belief, Wahhabi neo-fundamentalist theologians are not inclined to give a broad interpretation of the concept of jihad, as militant Salafi Jihadists do. We may agree with David George, who states that "in practice the classic jihad as the foundation of mutual relations between Muslim and non-Muslim states has long since ceased to exist."⁴⁹ We may

recall that when the last Caliph in history, the Ottoman Sultan, declared jihad against three Christian powers in 1914 – Great Britain, France and Russia, he fought in a union with two other Christian powers – Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

* * *

No theory is capable of completely explaining the full complexity of the mutual connection, mutual dependence and role of such phenomena as identity, ethnicity, religion and conflict in the system of international relations in the Middle East today. However, examining these phenomena through the prism of symbolic politics, which forms the basis of a number of modern theories – symbolic choice and social movement – helps to discover and shed light on connections of cause and effect, which have yet to receive adequate explanation, and also to show the engines that drive complex mechanisms of contemporary political life.

Notes

1 Tilly Ch. Foreword // *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004. P. ix.

2 For more detail see: Naumkin V. V. *Non-Western Model: Does the Civilization State Exist* // *Polis. Political Studies*, 2020, No. 4, P. 78–93.

3 Edelman M. *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence*. N.Y.: Academic Press, 1971.

4 Smith A. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986. P. 20–28.

5 Jervis R. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

6 Janis Irving L., Mann L. *Decision Making: A Psychological Analysis of Conflict, Choice and Commitment*. N.Y.: Free Press, 1977.

7 For example: Kaufman S. J. *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*. Ithaca and L.: Cornell University Press, 2001. P. 27.

8 Edelman M. *Op. cit.* P. 14.

9 Kaufman S. J. *Op. cit.* P. 16.

- 10 Smith A. Op. cit.
- 11 Mach Zdzislaw. Symbols, Conflict and Identity: Essays in Political Anthropology. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1993.
- 12 Report of the Consulate's Secretary, dd. 5 June, 1895 // Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire (AVPRI), Section Politarchive, Op. 482, Dossier 771, Sheet 52.
- 13 Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire (AVPRI), Section Politarchive, Op. 482, Dossier 772, Sheet 4.
- 14 Ibid. Sheet 13.
- 15 Ishaev Sh. Mecca, the Sacred City for Muslims. A Story Told by the Pilgrim // Central Asia Vestnik. Tashkent, December 1896, P. 67–68.
- 16 Maalouf A. Disordered World. L.: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009. P. 210.
- 17 Ibid. P. 205.
- 18 Horowitz D. Ethnic Groups in Conflict. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
- 19 Young C. The Politics of Cultural Pluralism. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976; Young C. The Dialectics of Cultural Pluralism // The Rising Tide of Cultural Pluralism / Ed. by Crawford Young. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993.
- 20 Kaufman S. J. Op. cit. P. 29.
- 21 Denitch B. Ethnic Nationalism: The Tragic Death of Yugoslavia. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.
- 22 Gagnon V. P. Jr. Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia // International Security. 1994–1995. T. 19. No. 3. P. 132.
- 23 The battle in 636 between the Arab-Muslim Army and the Persian Army of the Sassanid nation, in which the Arab victory played a decisive role in their conquest of Iran.
- 24 Roy O. Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummahh. L.: Hurst & Company, 2002.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 President Michel Aoun: General and Politician. Conversation of Academician Vitaly Naumkin with His Excellency President of the Republic of Lebanon General Michel Aoun. Moscow: Institute of Oriental Studies under the Russian Academy of Sciences (IVRAN), 2019. P. 65.

27 Ibid. P. 56.

28 For example, in the works of Quintan Wiktorowicz, and also a number of other authorities, for example: Hafez M. *From Marginalization to Massacres: A Political Process Explanation of GIA Violence in Algeria* // *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004. P. 37–60; Wickham Carrie Rosefsky. *Interests, Ideas, and Islamic Outreach in Egypt* // *Islamic Activism*. P. 231–249; Wiktorowicz Q. *Introduction* // *Islamic Activism*. P. 1–33.

29 The terms “Islamism” and “Islamic activism” are used here to describe such Islamic schools and movements which are oriented towards solving political tasks, and the basis of their concepts and acts is a close connection between religion and politics. In this sense, Islam opposes fundamentalism, or neo-fundamentalism, as a movement that separates religion from politics and does not set political goals, despite the similarity in theological postulates of neo-fundamentalists and Islamists.

30 Wiktorowicz Q. *Op. cit.* P. 15.

31 Ibid. P. 16.

32 Laraña E., Johnston H., Gusfield J. R. (eds). *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994.

33 Hafez M. *Op. cit.*

34 Roy O. *Op. cit.* P.74.

35 Hafez M. *Op. cit.* P. 38.

36 Diani M. *Linking Mobilization Frames and Political Opportunities: Insights from Regional Populism in Italy* // *American Sociological Review*. 1996. December. No. 61. P. 1053–1069.

37 Della Porta, Donatella. *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

38 Hafez M. *Op. cit.* P. 48.

39 These organizations are legally banned in Russia.

40 See for example: Tulchinsky G. L. *Holistic Regulatory Factors of Sociogenesis and Prospects for the Development of Russian Society* // *Naslediye (Heritage)*, 2012, No. 2. P. 88–100, which deals, in particular, with “the frame structure of the mode of life» of a community (p. 39). Also see the article: Lisenkova A. A. *Peculiarities of Forging Russian Cultural Identity* // *Tsennosti i Smysly (Values and*

Meanings), 2018, No. 2 (54), in which the author mentions «the frame of Russian identity».

41 Weiss Michael, Hassan Hassan. «ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror. Moscow: Alpina Non-Fiction, 2016, P. 223.

42 Roy O. Op. cit. P. 85.

43 Ehteshami Anoushiravan. Islamic Governance in Post-Khomeini Iran // Islamic Fundamentalism / Ed. by Abdel Salam Sidahmed and Anoushiravan Ehteshami. Oxford: Westview Press, 1996. P. 145–146.

44 Zarabozo Jamal ad-Din. Fetwa on ‘Celebration or Participating in Holidays of the Disbelievers’ // Al-Jumuah Magazine. 2002. T. 9. No. 2. URL:<http://www.islaam.com/Article.aspx?id=112>.

45 Wickham C. R. Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt. N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2002.

46 Ibid. P. 239–245.

47 Roy O. Op. cit. P. 124.

48 Al-Uthaymeen, Muhammad bin. URL:
<http://www.islaam.com/Scholars.aspx>.

49 George David. Pax Islamica: An Alternative New World Order // Islamic Fundamentalism. P. 71–90.

Section I. NATION- STATE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

Modern states in the Middle East have been formed under the powerful influence of Western nationalism. But this has not been their only source of national identity; historical myths and religious traditions have played no lesser a part. The conflict-generating potential of identity issues can be attributed to the fact that at the time of the formation of modern Arab states the process of national genesis was incomplete and even the idea of a nation itself had not fully taken root.

Chapter 2

Vasily Kuznetsov

The Challenge of Building a National Identity in the Arab World

The problem of building a national identity in Arab countries is probably one of the most complex in all their recent history. It is connected in one way or another with a huge number of civil and international conflicts which have shaken the Middle Eastern region over the last few decades.

The potential for identity issues to generate conflicts largely arose from the fact that in the modern Arab states the process of nation-building was incomplete and the very idea of nation was weak. This was partly because of the initial discrepancy between the European concept of “nation” (whether in the primordial, constructivist or other sense) and the Arab-Muslim concept of *ummah*, and partly because the modernization project in the majority of countries of the region began after they gained independence. As a result, in the period of independent development in Arab countries, a complex system of identities was formed, including at least three main clusters: Islamic, Arab and anti-colonial. The last one was connected with different versions of country-based nationalism, often based on the pre-Islamic past. There may also have been several other additional factors, including tribal tradition, concepts of local and regional unities, and also several types of non-Arab ethno-confessionalism.

In practice, Arab, Islamic and all other identities might mean completely different things. Islam may be understood as the value foundation of the entire socio-political system (Saudi Arabia), or simply as a component of the cultural-historical heritage of society (Baathist Syria, Bourguiba’s Tunisia etc.). In the same way, belonging to the Arab world may be defined as the main civilization marker (Nasserists or Baathists), or as one marker among many similar (Mediterranean, African, Islamic etc.) The tasks of forming country identity may involve constructing a national history since Carthage, as

in Tunisia, or equating the country's history with the history of the ruling dynasty, as in Bahrein.

Islamic Identity: from the Middle Ages to the Present

We may say that the most ancient and, in a certain sense, the most visible of all components that form national identities in the Arab world is the Islamic element. The Islamic tradition set the frames for various approaches to self-identification and became a basis for a number of identity concepts. Today, we should take into account that this tradition itself, and the models of statehood connected with it, may be understood in different ways.

This may mean real statehood, which existed in the region in the pre-colonial period and is usually analyzed in historical and political studies. This "real" statehood in the Arab-Muslim world, on the one hand, arose from the religious summons of the Prophet Muhammad, and, on the other, from the Arab-Muslim conquests of the 7th-8th centuries, the need to take control of the conquered territories and organize a ruling system. This ambivalent origin also influenced the structure of the Arab-Muslim state, the sources of its legitimacy, and its political identity. It was an Islamic state for Muslims, the main institutions of this state were established by the Prophet and the Rashidun Caliphs. The power of the Caliphs had religious justification, and the non-Muslim population, which was considered "protected" (*zimmi*), in theory had their own jurisdiction and was subject to special taxes (although in practice this general principle may have been realized differently at different times¹).

It was an ethnocratic state. Under the Umayyads it was Arab, under the Abbasids it was Arab-Persian and Arab-Turkic, etc. Ethnocracy arose from specific composition of the political elite, when power was firstly exercised over the tribes of the Arab conquerors, and then over elite military forces organized on an ethnic principle². The rulers of the caliphate actively used historical mythology to justify their right to the throne, relying on tribal³ and ethnic groups etc.

Besides the combination of religious-ideological and ethno-tribal elements, real Arab-Muslim statehood adopted the ruling practices of conquered and neighboring peoples (primarily Byzantium and Iran), reinterpreting them, and gradually adding complexity to the political

system.

Finally, this real statehood was distinguished primarily by non-religious nature of institutions and methods of rule: the political power was only symbolically connected with its religious sources. From around the 10th century (from the times of the Buyids), the Abbasid Caliph retained the exclusive function of legitimizing the power of real rulers – first the Buyid *umara' al-umara'*, and then the Seljuk Sultans.

All of these common features of Arab-Muslim statehood of the classical and post-classical periods are well-known to researchers. However, if we look at the history of the region from the Islamic standpoint, this interpretation should have a somewhat different emphasis. Real mechanisms of rule, which developed in the region over centuries, should only be examined as the uncompleted projection of the ideal model of Islamic statehood. This model was a creation of a number of Muslim intellectuals in the Middle Ages and then it became the main reference for all ideologists of Islamic fundamentalism. The impossibility of the full realization of this model does not mean that it is useless. On the contrary, its unattainable perfection makes it a powerful source of values and meanings for political life.

This concept, which was developed in the works of Muslim scholars, was not primarily directed towards describing existing political reality, and did not proceed from this reality. For the intellectuals who created it, it was not about teaching rulers to rule better, and not to explain the phenomenon of power, but to describe what a righteous Islamic state should be like. It is no accident that the key work on Islamic statehood, “*Al-ahkam al-sultaniyah*” (“The laws of Islamic Governance”) by al-Mawardi was only written in the 11th century, when the Abbasid Caliphate disintegrated.

It seems that today we may identify several main elements of the concept of Islamic statehood which have had the greatest influence not only on all Islamist projects, but also on the ideas of the nation and state in the region, and on the nature of political identities in the Arab world.

First of all, we should discuss the concept of *ummah*. Ummah in its medieval and classical religious sense is not a nation. The Palestinian-

Egyptian thinker Tamim al-Barghouti notes that the physical existence of individuals is called an ummah if these individuals form a community, and if this membership in this community leads to their doing something differently than everyone else⁴. Thus, unlike the nation in its primordial sense, ummah is not a natural phenomenon. However, it is also not an imaginary community, a society which emerges as the result of socio-economic development – unlike the constructivist understanding of the nation. The proposed spiritual or ideological kinship of the ummah cannot be determined by the territory, by its size (the Prophet Ibrahim initially comprised an ummah by himself) or by its political organization. If national feeling requires the acquisition of statehood, then an ummah needs a political framework solely for practical purposes, but the lack of a state does not lead to its degradation or disappearance.

Additionally, ummah is a community which follows its *imam*, whose functions fundamentally differ from the functions of the head of a nation state. “The imamate exists as a substitute (*li-hilafat*) for prophecy to preserve religion and control the world (*ad-dunia*)” al-Mawardi wrote in the 11th century⁵.

An imam is not a sovereign, a legislator or executor, or a judge. He is rather a coordinator who makes sure that people follow interpretations of sacred texts acknowledged by the theologists and legal experts. He is also an administrator, a teacher and model for Muslims who follow him on the path of faith and thus form the ummah. This is why the absence of an imam leads to the weakening and incompleteness of the ummah.

In the political sphere, al-Mawardi lists the ten main duties of the imam, and this list complies with the entire Sunni tradition. Most of these rules, although they also require political actions, have a religious justification or purpose. But there are two purely administrative duties – to secure borders and sensibly determine the revenues and expenditures of the treasury; and one is purely religious: to protect faith⁶. In the Sunni tradition, the imam cannot be elected, but can only receive power by the direct order of his predecessor or by decision of religious experts, and can also seize the leadership by force.

Despite the existing ties between ummah and imam in the religious

tradition, in the Middle Ages one could already observe the gradual blurring of the first of these two concepts, and a diversification of meanings of the second. In principle, in both cases the question was the same: how does one determine an ummah and an imam in practice?

In the case of imam, this question could be rephrased as follows: who can be an imam, or, in other words, who has the right to the imamate? This approach inevitably led to the problem of the foundations of power, and naturally shifted this question to a religious context. The result was that Sunnism, Shiism and Kharijism acquired a theological element in addition to their original political element. Main differences between these three branches could be directly projected into the sphere of social relations, becoming a central element of political identities and the basis of ethno-confessional groups. There are many examples of this – Imamites in Iran, Ibadis in Oman, Zaidis in Northern Yemen, Druze and Alawi in the Levant etc.

The idea of ummah is somewhat different. Initially, the dualism of actual Arab-Muslim statehood – its connection both with religious teachings and with the ethno-tribal structure of society, influenced the semantics of the ummah. Even the definition proposed by al-Barghouti allows us to understand ummah not only as a religious community, but also as an ethnic commonality. The Koranic text, as the Russian scholar V.V. Naumkin⁷ and the Lebanese researcher N. Nassar⁸ showed, also leaves rather broad space for interpretations. As a result, in 10th-century sources an ethnic meaning is also found along with a religious meaning⁹. In the absence of a modern idea of ethnos, the ethnic element primarily means a group that is not just defined by a common language or culture, but primarily by a common identity, which is embodied in faith and a common ancestry.

The concepts of ummah and imam are naturally connected with the political concept of *dawla* – a state or formation which politically organizes the ummah. In the classical period of the history of Islam, *dawla* primarily meant a dynasty, but never a territory. *Dawla* is a formation which was initially temporary and rather flexible, it was not territorial or characterized by sovereignty, as it belonged to Allah, and was delegated by Allah to the imam (directly in the Shia tradition, and through the ummah in the Sunni tradition), and from the imam to rulers of a lower rank. As a result, *dawla* is a multi-level polity, and

can be organized according to a network principle. For example, the Abbasid Caliphate was a *dawla*, but the kingdoms of the Tulunids, Tahirids etc., that were part of it, were also *dawlas*. However, Bulgaria, which had practically no real ties with it, was regarded by Baghdad as part of this state, as the Abbasid Caliph was the source of its legitimacy.

The symbolic act that strengthened the unity of *dawla* was the *bay'ah* – an oath of fidelity sworn by social groups and individuals to the imam. The *bay'ah* provides the connection between the ummah and the imam, and the imam's real sovereignty.

Medieval concepts of ummah, imamate, imam, *dawla* and *bay'ah*, although they faded into the background in the 19th and early 20th century, when Ottoman and Arab intellectuals began to borrow European concepts of the nation and nationalism, did not vanish entirely. On the contrary, they continued to exist and became the source of a whole set of Islamist ideologies. In some of these ideologies (as in the “Muslim Brotherhood”), this primarily involved the synthesis of nationalism and the Islamic theory of statehood. This practically led to a “nationalization” of Islamic identity. With this approach, the Islamic world could be regarded as a combination of Islamic nations or as an originally united Islamic ummah that was artificially divided into different states. Other movements (such as ISIS) attempted to directly implement medieval Islamic political concepts. The fact that this attempt gave rise to wide discussions even among Jihadist theologians¹⁰ demonstrated not only that the activity of ISIS was unacceptable from the Islamic standpoint, but also that medieval political theology remains relevant.

However, an Islamic political identity is by no means a characteristic of Islamists alone. It is an important element of the cultural-political identity for all societies of the Islamic world. For a long time, this has been vividly illustrated by the coordinated reactions of Muslims worldwide to certain challenges – for example the mass protests in response to the scandalous cartoons of the Prophet in the 2000s. By 2020, there was an intense political struggle within the Islamic world between the three main blocs: the pro-Iranian bloc, the conservative pro-Saudi bloc, and the pro-Turkish bloc linked with the “Muslim Brotherhood”. When Ankara decided to return the status of mosque to Hagia Sophia, the reaction of these three blocs was far from

unanimous. The Egyptian ulama condemned this move, and in Saudi Arabia a number of public figures expressed discontent. This, however, does not show a decline of Islamic identity, but rather its ability to adapt. While the Islamic world has been split, it still remains Islamic, and the alliances existing in it are based not only on political interests, but also on religious views.

The Concept of Arab Commonality

The second cluster of identities is connected with the idea of an Arab commonality, which developed in the region from the second half of the 19th century. The swift absorption of Western social and political theories, in a situation of colonial expansion and attempts at modernization, led to the rethinking of key Islamic political concepts: ummah turned into nation, and *dawla* into modern state. The problem with this approach once more came down to how to redefine ummah without imam and imamate. Different options were suggested by competing ideological projects of pan-Arabism: regionalism (the idea of the unity of “Great Syria”, “the Fertile Crescent”, the Nile Valley, the Maghreb etc.), and country nationalism (especially in Tunisia). More marginal positions were held by ideas of non-Arab ethnic nationalism (Amazigh, Kurdish etc.), inter-state regionalism (Tripolitania and Cyrenaica in Libya etc.), and also pan-regionalism (Mediterranean unity – Lebanon, Tunisia, or African identity – Morocco, Egypt, Sudan).

Perhaps the most influential of all these projects was the pan-Arab project. First emerging in the Ottoman Empire and undergoing a long path of development, it was ultimately embodied in three versions of Arab nationalism – Nasserism, Baathism (with its Syrian and Iraqi versions) and in the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM), represented today by just two small parties – the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and also by some political organizations of South Yemen.

The theoretical foundations of Arab nationalism and the common Arab identity are somewhat more limited than the theoretical foundations of Islamic unity. They come from three sources – European nationalism, socialism and the Islamic intellectual tradition. That leads to the emergence of ideas of “Arabness” (*al-‘uruba*) and

Arab unity (*al-wahda al-'arabiya*), based on common language and history, which are to be embodied in a united Arab state.

“Arabness” has been understood differently in different countries and at different times, just as the geographic boundaries of the Arab world have been understood differently (for example, for thinkers of the first half of the 20th century it was not obvious that Maghreb or even Egypt belonged to it). Simultaneously, at the stage of the anti-colonial struggle and in the first decades of independent existence, the realization of this project commenced. The emergence of the Palestinian problem, the establishment of the Arab League and the Arab nationalists coming to power in the 1950s-60s in a number of countries in the region set the framework for this ideology for many years. Although the defeat of the Arab countries in the war of June 1967 did irreparable damage to the idea of Arab unity, this idea itself, like the common Arab identity, did not go away.

We may even say that this idea, which first appeared in a small group of intellectuals and was later transformed into a political ideology, is now an integral element of national identity in the countries of the Arab world. Important factors for its existence seem to be the development of education in Arabic, common Arab media, and the Arabic-speaking segment of the Internet. A vivid confirmation of this was seen in 2011. Although the protest movements of this time not only encompassed Arab nations, and not only the Middle East (we may recall the protests in Russia, and the “Occupy Wall Street” movement in the USA), in the Arab world they were distinguished by special features which allow us to talk of the phenomenon of the “Arab spring”, or the “Arab awakening”. Arab unity, which was previously embodied in ideologies, in the 21st century is realized primarily in language, the system of communications and the consciousness of the common cultural heritage, and from there it is transferred into the sphere of politics. Further events in countries of the region showed not only their increasing political differences, but also the preservation of common Arab identity at grassroots level. In 2019, the protest movements in Algeria and Sudan, Iraq and Lebanon made it possible to speak of a second wave of the “Arab awakening”.

There are at least two forms of political instrumentalization of the idea of Arab unity. The “old” Arab nationalism genetically connected with parties and movements, which defined the face of the region in the

1950s-60s, showed its endurance. The Baath party not only remains one of the central elements of the Syrian political system, it also does not reject any elements of its own ideology – in particular, it refuses to consider renaming the Syrian Arab Republic into the Syrian Republic, despite the obvious benefits which this symbolic gesture would have. Outside Syria, Baathist parties, even if they occupy peripheral positions on the political stage, are represented in practically all the countries of the region – from Tunisia to Yemen. And in South Yemen, the Baathists and especially the Nasserites continue to be important actors. Thus, the political ideology which is pursued by the Syrian leadership, and, accordingly, the identity on which this ideology rests, remain important elements of the regional mosaic.

One may also observe the return of traditional elements of Arab nationalism in the political discourse of leaders even in countries where pan-Arab ideas have never been popular. The success of Kais Saied, who unexpectedly won the presidential elections in Tunisia in 2019, was also connected with the fact that he mentioned the Palestinian problem in his speeches, addressing the nation in literary Arabic. Many years ago Bourguiba was able to oust the founder of the Tunisian national movement Abdelaziz Thaalbi in the opposite way – unlike Thaalbi, Bourguiba only spoke to the public in dialect¹¹.

Today we may also see the emergence of new Arab nationalism, which is primarily supported by certain monarchies of the Persian Gulf – the UAE above all, and, to a lesser degree, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In the geopolitical sense, this new Arab nationalism rests on the need to unite against a common enemy – Iran, which today in the pan-Arab discourse has taken the place previously held by Israel. The real quintessence of this idea is the Arab Coalition, which operates in Yemen against the Houthis and whose very name implies that its members regard the Houthis not as an Arab force, but as protégés of Iran. Another symbol of this idea could be the “Arab NATO”, which leaders of the Gulf have been discussing for several years.

Despite all the obvious limitations of the idea of Arab unity, and the contradictions even among its supporters (it is enough to look at the Saudi-Emirate relations in Yemen), it is today just as politically productive as the idea of Islamic unity, which is connected with the continuing co-existence of these two elements of identity in societies

of the Arab world. However, if the Islamic political idea remains productive rather as a concept than as an element of practical life, Arab nationalism is envisaged today rather as a social and political phenomenon, but does not receive a new theoretical reassessment.

National Identity and the Creation of Modern States

The third cluster of national identities is connected with the experience of anti-colonial struggle, in which most of the modern nations of the region were formed. Despite the popularity of pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism in the first half of the 20th century, the national liberation movements in the Middle East and North Africa mainly developed at country level (which does not mean that there were no close connections between them). In Algeria, Tunisia, partially in Libya, in Syria and Lebanon, in South Yemen and in a number of other countries, the formation of the first modern political and civil institutions (armies, political parties, trade unions etc.), and the very idea of national unity was implemented through the experience of common resistance. In some cases, country identity was based on the historical memory of former independence (Tunisia, Egypt), and in some cases was connected with the political institutions, which also functioned in the colonial period (the Moroccan *Makhzen*, the Senussi networks in Cyrenaica etc.). Even in these countries, the colonial period forced the national elites to rethink and “nationalize” their own historical experience.

The following national development of states of the region was accompanied in a number of cases by special emphasis on their historical legacy. There are many examples of this – the idea of Phoenician identity in Lebanon, the Carthaginian roots of national culture in Tunisia, the Sumerian sources of Iraqi statehood etc. Despite the ironic comments they nevertheless had a certain effect and helped to form the idea of a civil nation in the region. Other important elements of its construction were the ideologies of irredentism and subregional integrationalism, which were shared by many political elites in the region in the second half of the 20th century. The idea of “Great Morocco” from Senegal to Gibraltar, supported by the Istiqlal party, the concept of “Great Syria” and the “Fertile Crescent”¹², the unity of the Nile Valley¹³ etc.

Although all these concepts rarely became a reality, they still influenced the development of regional relations, and were often used by elites not only to pursue foreign policy interests, but also to consolidate their own societies. The concept of national exclusiveness in these constructions was complexly intertwined with ideas about the subregional unity of various parts of the Middle Eastern region, which led to an ambiguous result. On the one hand, national identities within states were strengthened. On the other hand, subregional identity was strengthened as well. Additionally, deep mistrust was formed among the countries of the region, because each of them was forced to oppose the real or imaginary expansionist plans of its neighbors. This mistrust objectively led to a weakening of regional unity at institutional level, constantly giving rise to conflicts between states.

The monarchies of the Persian Gulf represented a special case of the formation of national civil identities since they mainly became independent later than other states in the Middle East. The preservation of tribalist social structure and high revenues meant that for a long time they did not have to make special efforts to form civil identity¹⁴. But the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in 1990-1991 and the Qatar crisis led to national consolidation in these two countries¹⁵, and in Saudi Arabia the building of a nation state is currently viewed as one of the priority tasks by the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman¹⁶.

National identities have been put to the test by the armed conflicts in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen, and also the civil conflict in Iraq that has been going on since 2003. With the exception of Yemen, where voices of supporters for dividing the country are heard ever more loudly today, Arab countries have shown quite a high level of national consolidation. In Syria, the Kurds do not seek full independence from Damascus, but rather seek wide autonomy while preserving common Syrian statehood. In Iraq, despite even the referendum on independence of Iraqi Kurdistan, national unity has been preserved. In Libya, the idea of dividing the country into Tripolitania and Cyrenaica has not led to any real political actions so far.

All of this does not mean that national identity in countries of the region cannot be reviewed. Coexisting with super-national ideas of Islamic and Arabic unity, national identity is also forced to defend itself in the face of identities of a lower level – regional or local, tribal,

and also ethno-national in regions, where the majority of the population are non-Arabs.

Regional, local and tribal identities in a certain sense are more archaic than national or super-national. However, in many cases, they cannot be regarded merely as the rudimentary remnants of the pre-state period. In some countries, maintenance of these identities was essential for the political systems, which existed mainly to preserve the balance between traditional communities. These are the cases of Libya and the Gulf states. The socio-economic modernization and urbanization in these countries should have led to the break-down of the tribal structure of societies, the strengthening of internal migration flows, and, accordingly, the weakening of tribes and regional groups. However, this weakening required a reconsideration of the basic foundations of statehood, which forced national elites to ensure the preservation of traditional groups.

An especially vivid example here is Libya, where Gaddafi gave increasingly greater attention in his political discourse to tribalism as the basis of the political system. With the collapse of institutions of state in the 2010s and the archaization of social relations, tribes and regional groups once more became necessary. At the same time, this may not have meant the return to the old tribal system (this was hindered objectively by the modernization that had taken place), but only the reconstruction of certain elements of traditional loyalty groups. The result was quite a unique situation, in which Islamic, Arab and national identities exist along with regional (Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, Fezzan), local (Tripoli, Zintan, Misurata etc.), tribal (Warfalla, Ferjani etc.) and ethnic identities (Toubou, Tuareg, Imazighen). The complex combination of identities could not be arranged into a straightforward hierarchical system. Intersecting with one another, interacting in a complex way and operating with various political systems, they led to splits among loyalty groups at practically all levels; currently there is not a single tribe in the country which has preserved its unity. The Libyan example shows the general situation with the problem of identities in the Arab world.

Ethno-national identities are in a somewhat different situation than regional and tribal unities. The most significant examples are probably the Kurdish and Amazigh movements. While the first movement directly affects Syria, Iraq and Turkey, the second affects Morocco,

Algeria and partially Libya. The level of political institutionalization and specific demands of these movements in different cases is different, but they are still united by the resistance to the idea of Arab-Muslim unity, and the wide use of the socio-economic agenda in their struggle. Clearly, though the process of ethno-national consolidation is not complete neither in Kurdish, nor in Amazigh societies, the Amazigh and Kurdish movements will remain important factors of the political life of the Levant and the Maghreb in the foreseeable future.

Even a brief survey of the main components of national identity in the Arab world shows that not only these components themselves, but also the political ideologies relating to them have interacted in a complex way over the last 150 years, competing with or complementing each other. All of these ideological constructions, however original they may be, were created as a symbiosis of local tradition and European socio-political thought. It is understandable that transferring European ideologies to the Middle Eastern soil required their adaptation to the complexity of the local societies. For example, left-wing Arab politicians usually rejected the idea of the class struggle; they practically never completely destroyed the private sector. Finally, the atheist discourse of the left proved to be completely unacceptable under local conditions. Despite the controversial nature of these hybrid ideologies, none of them challenged the belonging of a country to the Arab or Islamic world, which on an institutional level was shown by the membership of nations in the Arab League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (subsequently renamed the Organization of Islamic Cooperation).

One of the consequences of this inner complexity of national identities is evidently the deficit of legitimacy of states. The existence of each of them was never unquestioned – hence the endless discussions about unification, or partition of certain countries – one may find over ten projects for a federation or confederation. The vast majority of these projects remained on paper. The exception is the brief experience of the United Arab Republic, the painful unification of North and South Yemen, and successful but rather specific project of the UAE. While

projects for unification were connected with the search for national identity, the reasons why they failed were determined by the specific nature of the political and socio-economic reality of the region.

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Chapter 3

Ibragim Ibragimov

From the Descendants of the Pharaohs to the Egyptians

The search for national identity in Egypt has been carried out with a wide range of approaches. The examination of early ideas and theories makes it possible to a certain extent to outline the basic patterns of Egyptian foreign policy. It allows not only to explain the behavior of certain state figures and the reaction of society in the era of the nation-state establishment, but also to make certain conclusions concerning modern processes. The use of the nationalist narrative in socio-political discourse is critically important. Narratives on the history and the concept of national unity have been used to create or strengthen legitimacy and stability of regimes, even if these regimes lost both of these things over time. Nationalism thus becomes a tool of preserving power rather than an abstract formula of ideology¹.

The Sources of Egyptian National Identity

In the first half of the 20th century, Egypt, which positioned itself as one of the leading nations of the Arab world and one of the first (along with North Yemen) to gain formal independence from colonialism, started modernization earlier than others, while preserving traditional institutions and social benchmarks. This period of Egyptian history may be described as the time of searching for and formulating national ideology and policy². At the time when the colonial system was falling apart, Egypt fought to gain complete independence from Great Britain and tried to rethink its place in the world, aspiring to become the undisputed regional leader, and lead the Arab and general Asian (Eastern) national movement³.

By the late 19th century, the Orabi Pasha uprising against the opportunistic policy of Khedive Tewfik Pasha⁴ was accompanied by a considerable national surge and was the first case when inhabitants of

the Nile Valley proclaimed themselves to be a separate community. Furthermore, the uprising was accompanied by the slogan “Egypt for the Egyptians!”, which could show that a new Egyptian identity had begun to form. However, conceptual ideas of the Egyptian nation were only formed in the first quarter of the 20th century, when the battle for independence took on an institutionalized character.

The events which followed the First World War of 1914-1918 provided a powerful stimulus for the development of the Egyptian national idea. Arab identity was strongly influenced by Islamic concepts and practice, which was predetermined by the historical and cultural development of the Arab world. The ideologists of nationalism gave a great deal of attention to Islam as an important element of Arab national identity and a powerful ideological weapon in the battle for liberation. They emphasized its Arab origin, repeating that the Koran, revealed in the Arabic language through an Arab Prophet, was part of the Arab cultural heritage⁵.

Islam plays an important role in state and social organization of Arab countries. Therefore, the ideas of nationalism are closely linked with ideas of the Muslim ummah. However, Islam was subjected to serious ordeals in the colonial period of its history, and subsequently for a little while it gave up its leading role to ideas of nationalism. Egypt regarded itself as a separate society and did not identify itself with the rest of the Arab world, but as a cultural and intellectual center absorbed and adapted various concepts of the period, including the idea of Arab unity⁶. However, in the 1920s - 1930s political struggle, the ideology of pan-Arabism was not yet well established in Egypt. At the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 after World War I, Arab delegates representing various regions of the Mashriq approached the Egyptian delegation with a proposal to unite efforts in the common struggle for independence. The Egyptians were quick to tell them: “Our problem is an Egyptian problem, not an Arab problem.”⁷

In the interwar period (1919 - 1939), ideas of Arab unity did not have wide distribution in the country, as nationalist-minded Egyptians stated the special place of Egypt in the Arab world and saw no reason in unification and joining a pan-Arab movement. Ideas of pan-Arabism flourished in Egypt in the 1950s, when the concept of Arab unity became dominant in the policy of the country’s new leadership, which ensured Egypt’s leading role in the Arab world.

An analysis of the self-identification of Egyptians over the last 100 years shows that in this period it experienced serious changes three times. The emphasis on Egyptian nationalism in the first half of the 20th century was replaced by the formation and development of ideas of pan-Arab unity after the revolution of 1952. The defeat in the Six Day War gave rise to a period of bitter disappointment in ideas of Arab nationalism, which had not led the Arab world to unity and prosperity. In the 1970s, the idea of unification, on the basis of secular ideologies, lost relevance, and a reorientation towards religion began. The religious factor started to occupy an increasingly prominent place in the political discourse of Egypt, as in the 1970s the Muslim Brotherhood, an organization banned in the 1950s, began to gain political weight. Additionally, the analysis of the Egyptian national movement from the moment of its inception could lead to the conclusion that the religious motive always existed in one form or another.

“Pharaonism” and Tamsir

Historically, Egypt absorbed many self-identifications which occur in the minds of modern Egyptians. They include Pharaonic, Greco-Roman, Coptic (Christian), Islamic, Arab, Mediterranean and African layers of Egyptian identity. According to the Egyptian historian and journalist M. Hanna, in the course of the historical process they were layered on top of one another, thus gradually forming the unique Egyptian character⁸.

In the Ottoman Empire, Egypt always had relative independence and autonomy. For a long time, it had its own political institutions, and, in the entire 19th century, the country advanced along the path of modernization and reform. Moreover, by the end of the 19th century, the economy and the domestic market began developing⁹. Accordingly, the high achievements of culture were seen by Egyptians as being unique to them, and the spirit of local nationalism was strong.

Independence primarily meant forming and spreading ideas among the population about their new status and calling. As a consequence, almost all the Egyptian journalism of the last quarter of the 19th – early 20th century covers the problem of Egyptian independence in one

way or another.

A national idea forms as a reflection of the consolidation of society. It may develop under the influence of external circumstances: threats to security, a feeling of unrealized potential, backwardness etc. Some of the most important factors in the formation of the Egyptian national self-awareness were opposition to Great Britain and, at the same time, adoption of certain standards of behavior and actions from foreigners. The Egyptian intelligentsia and public figures often encountered manifestations of British patriotism (a feeling of ownership, love of one's home, care for traditions, cherishing the family etc.), which were an organic part of British culture.

In most cases, a nation is formed under the influence of both external and internal factors, but these factors play different roles. In Egypt, the presence of the external threat was a determining factor.

For the first time, ideas of modern Egyptian nationalism were voiced by members of the first major party, Al-Hizb al-Watani, led by Mustafa Kamil. Kamil's nationalism included elements of Islam and partially coincided with Ottomanism. The emphasis on Islam sought to show that the khedive's family was morally corrupt. Yet, it was also used as a way to oppose Britain, as formally Egypt remained part of the British Empire.

However, there were also figures who portrayed Egyptian nationalism as being exclusively secular. One of the most prominent intellectuals of the time was Ahmed Lutfi el-Sayed, author of the concept of liberal nationalism and a strong critic of the theory of pan-Arabism, who insisted that the Egyptians were a unique people. He claimed that it was territorial unity and national character, not language and religion, that formed the nation. The concept of liberal nationalism meant that the nation acted as a bearer of sovereignty, and the foundations of statehood were constitutionalism, parliamentarianism, separation of powers, strengthening the economy, pursuing national policy, and also civil and political freedoms. All of these transformations were supposed to take place with Europe's assistance. For el-Sayed, the ideal was a free, Westernized Egypt, following the path of progress and bourgeois democracy. This concept was the ideological platform of the Egyptian nationalists, the leaders of the Egyptian revolution of 1919, the liberal landowner and bourgeois politicians, and the

founders of the Wafd party. The position of the moderate-liberal wing of Wafd was to achieve the independence of Egypt by peaceful, lawful methods and form a constitutional government¹¹. The less moderate wing of Wafd led by Saad Zaghloul, however, favored full national sovereignty, including the withdrawal of British troops from Egypt¹².

In search of theoretical justification of the ideals of Egyptian nationalism, Egyptian historians and journalists tried to interpret Egyptian history separately from the history of other Muslim peoples, finding non-Arab and non-Islamic sources in it and portraying the culture as unique and independent. Two trends emerged among Egyptian intellectuals, “Pharaonism” and “Tamsir”¹³. The latter involved the Egyptianization of culture.

The ideas of the theorists of “Pharaonism” swept Egypt in the early 1920s, when excavations of Tutankhamun’s tomb were carried out. It gave new convincing evidence of the greatness of Ancient Egyptian culture, while the country’s newly-gained independence strengthened the citizens’ national spirit¹⁴.

One of the most prominent followers of “Pharaonism” was Muhammad Haikal, who claimed that the rebirth of Egypt on the basis of the glory and greatness of Ancient Egypt should take place in a similar way as it did in Europe during the Renaissance, when Ancient Greek culture was revived¹⁵.

The concept of “Pharaonism” was described very vividly by the renowned Egyptian writer Tawfiq al-Hakim. Egyptians, in his opinion, were the descendants of ancient people, who inhabited the Nile valley, and true Egyptians with a pure genealogy were *fellahin*, who “lived in their villages far from towns and centers with a lively political and cultural life”¹⁶. Al-Hakim claimed that Egypt had a unique culture which consisted of a “Pharaonic *core*”, which was influenced by the culture of Mediterranean peoples, the change of religions and other factors. A similar viewpoint was held by the party Young Egypt, whose members said that “Egyptians are a people of Egypt, who inherited the spirit of all civilizations that flourished in it”¹⁷. And although society favored a union of all Arab countries, the main concerns remained “glory of the nation and liberation of the Nile valley”¹⁸.

In the second half of the 20th century, interest in “Pharaonism” was

shown at state level during the rule of president Anwar Sadat. This was connected primarily with the defeat in the war of 1967 and the crisis of Egyptian nationalistic thought. The state encouraged criticism of the ideas and concepts of the Nasser period. Additionally, in the 1970s literature and journalism, an orientation towards ancient Egyptian motifs was cultivated, where Anwar Sadat could be called the “black Pharaoh of Egypt”¹⁹. On the whole, the journalism and literature of that period were devoted to a self-analysis of the country, and the future of Egypt depended on a profound and critical understanding of its long centuries of history.

The foreign policy of Sadat, especially the peace treaty with Israel, led to a breakdown in relations between Egypt and the majority of Arab and Muslim countries. The theory of Egyptian uniqueness, it seems, gave justification for such actions, but in the eyes of most Egyptians these ideological shifts looked quite unconvincing.

“Pharaonism” was determined by ideas that there was an Egyptian nation, and to a certain extent it remained cut off from reality. Ideas that were more applicable and understandable for society were the attitude towards the Egyptians as an independent and special nation, without emphasis on its ancient roots or Arab affiliation²⁰. A reflection of nationalist moods in culture, which also left its trace in the country’s life, was the movement for the Egyptianization of the language (“*tamsir al-lugha*”). This idea was first promoted by el-Sayed in 1913 in the article “On Egyptianization in literature”, stating that the use of dialect in literary works was acceptable and even desirable²¹.

Pan-Orientalism, Pan-Arabism and Easternism

In the interwar period, the pan-Oriental concept, which in Western scientific literature is known as Easternism²², became especially popular. By the end of the First World War, Easternism was not a new idea for Egypt. Arab modernist thinkers had long reached the conclusion that the world was divided into two diametrically opposed poles: the East (Asia and Africa) and the West (Europe and the American colonies). Although in the 1920s, the ideas of Easternism were given more attention, they were just as vague as they had been before the war. By “East” and “Eastern”, some authors meant the

Islamic world, while others meant the East of the Arab world (the *Mashriq*). A more precise definition was provided by ‘Abd ar-Raziq, for whom “East” became an alternative to “West”, i.e. Europe and America, and “East” was understood to be the entire colonial space²³. Incidentally, Egyptians did not always include themselves in the “East”. Salama Musa, an Egyptian journalist, one of the founders of the Egyptian socialist party, claimed that from the standpoint of historical destiny and even the linguistic roots, Egypt was part of Western civilization²⁴. Taha Hussein also proposed to classify Egypt as part of the Mediterranean cultural-civilizational space²⁵. The similarity of culture and existence of a certain abstract Eastern ethnos, or the need for collective defense against the expansion of the West usually served as the bases of claims to Eastern unity.

In the late 1920s, Muhammad Hussein Haikal proposed a developed concept. For him East and West were diametrically different civilizations. While the East (from the Eastern Mediterranean to China) was a civilization of spirituality and the cradle of world religions, the West was a civilization of science and industry²⁶. This difference is manifested at a moral level, as for the East religious creative values are always more important, but the West is marked by destructive skepticism. Accordingly, in future, the victory and triumph will go to the East, as the West itself now realizes that its fall is inevitable – we may just recall “The Decline of the West” by Oswald Spengler, the German philosopher and historian, one of the founders of modern philosophical culture.

In principle, in the 1920s, belief was widespread in Egypt in the existence of certain ties between the peoples of the East, along with the desire to work on strengthening these ties and bonds.

The idea of pan-Orientalism as a precise formulation arose around 1920, when at the height of the battle for independence, a group of representatives of the intelligentsia proposed the possibility of a political union with all the colonial countries of Asia. Founded in 1925, the Society of Eastern Unity was designed as a counterbalance for the outdated ideas of pan-Islamism, in which the interests of the community were subordinated to the interests of the nation²⁷ and Islamist reform²⁸. Initially, it even included members of the Royal family and such prominent religious figures as Rashid Rida, but as the cultural contradictions with the West made way for political processes

which did not meet the interests of conservative circles, the rupture became obvious. Rida even had the idea of a federation of Muslim nations – a Caliphate, which he called to restore²⁹, but Rida's narrow communal guidelines were too restrictive for the ideas of nationalists. By that time, Islam even in modernized form was of no interest for them: they had a greater need for the organizational potential of secular society and rationalism³⁰. Ultimately, Islam's role in the work of the Society was considerably restricted by secularly-minded activists such as 'Abd ar-Raziq.

In 1927, the organization received a structural framework: seven committees for seven regions were formed (Eastern Arab, Turkish, Iranian, Indian, Far Eastern, Maghreb and African), and a year later the Society began to publish its own journal. Gradually, ideas of pan-Orientalism did grow to become a real counterbalance to the pan-Islamic concept, built not on a political but on a religious principle³¹. In 1930, the administrative council of the organization was elected, including supporters of secularism and modernists. The first half of the year was marked by disputes between al-Azhar (alongside Rashid Rida), who aspired to a leading role in the ideology of Egypt, and the leadership of the Society. The vagueness of the idea and the failure of attempts to realize it in practice meant that the concept faded away and was replaced by the more realizable (or more realistic) theories of Arab or Muslim unity.

However, at the initial stage, the rejection of the politicization of Easternist concepts, based on ideas of Asian-African solidarity, led to a rethink of the concept of pan-Arabism, which had not just a political, but also a cultural and linguistic basis. In the 1930s, when local nationalism predominated in Egypt, it was Easternism that made Egyptians remember who they were and turn to their neighbors. And it was Easternism which, by laying the foundations of Asian-African post-war solidarity (1940s - 1950s), determined the development of external relations and Egyptian thought and behavior on the world stage for subsequent decades. In particular, Egypt was at the source of the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement and took part in creating the Organization of African Unity and other associations of former colonial and dependent countries.

As is widely known, pan-Arabism arose in the early 20th century, when the majority of Arab nations were part of the Ottoman Empire.

The basis of this concept is the idea that Arabs represent a whole people with their own history, language and culture³². The goal of the supporters of this concept was to unite all Arabs to create a common Arab national state. The ideologists of pan-Arabism mainly came from the Levantine region. The fervent political development of Egypt in the 1920s also activated ideas of Arab nationalism there. Initially, Egyptian nationalists felt suspicious of pan-Arabism, its theories and ideas, believing that Arab nationalism only weakened the battle that Arab nations were waging for their liberation and progress. In their opinion, pan-Arabism was an impossible dream³³.

However, despite this, in the second half of the 1920s, the growing interest in different forms of Arab unity and cooperation between different branches of the ruling class of Egypt reflected new tendencies of political and a socio-economic nature. The first serious response by Egypt to the call from the Arab world was formulated at the highest level by Wafd party leadership during the Syrian uprising of 1925, which was closely watched in Egypt and drew great sympathy from many Egyptians³⁴. For example, Muhammed Hussein Haikal, renowned in the 1920s as a supporter of Egyptian nationalism, urged in 1927 to strengthen economic and cultural ties with countries of the Arab world, particularly noting the export of labor migrants to these countries³⁵. On their part, Egyptians may have provided this demand, given that the number of unemployed university graduates increased during the interwar period. Thus, many young educated Egyptians were able to find work as teachers in secondary and higher schools in various regions of the Middle East³⁶.

Additionally, in the interwar period Egypt maintained the export of cultural production which had begun before the First World War. This helped Egyptian literature and culture in general (in which many Arabs of Egyptian origin naturally took part) to focus on an audience that went beyond the boundaries of Egypt.

Furthermore, the Arab world began to be regarded as a potential market for products of Egyptian industry and a field for other forms of economic activity. The famous Banque Misr opened its branches in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine by the late 1920s³⁷. In the 1930s, the concern Misr actively worked in other countries of the Mashriq, especially in Saudi Arabia. In the 1920s-1930s, the concern carried out transport and logistic activity and founded the airline Misr

Airwork that operated a route between Cairo, Khartoum, Damascus and Baghdad³⁸.

In 1936, the prominent ideologist of pan-Arabism Sati al-Husri wrote that in recent years, Egypt had been a transmitter of pan-Arab ideas, but political unity of the Arabs was impossible until all the Arab countries consolidated their efforts. Al-Husri believed that the main factor defining the nation was language³⁹. The general secretary of the Wafd party Makram Ebeid also echoed this belief, announcing that “Egypt is an Arab country, and the Egyptians are Arabs”⁴⁰.

The period after the Second World War – 1950s - 1960s – was an era of intense searching for new models of political and socio-economic development and serious shifts in the system of international relations at the regional level. After the revolution of 1952, Egypt became the leader of the Arab world. One of the most successful concepts realized in this period in the context of Arab nationalism was “Nasserism”. Egyptian nationalists led by the leader of the revolution Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970) became the driving force behind Arab resistance to imperialism. Under Nasser, the Arab national idea became especially popular and subsequently became a form of establishing Egyptian political and cultural hegemony. Along with nationalist ideas, concepts of Arab socialism began to take root, which under Nasser became a significant element of the Arab national idea. Nasser believed that the idea of developing Arab nationalism and Arab socialism was that the ultimate union of all Arab peoples was impossible under capitalism, but would become possible under socialism, which was an important integrating element for Egypt to achieve a dominant role in the region⁴¹.

To make the meaning of nationalist ideas more comprehensible to the majority of the Muslim population of the country, concepts of Arab nationalism and socialism were realized by appealing to Qur’anic traditions⁴². Gamal Abdel Nasser frequently used quotations from the Qur’an in his appeals to the Egyptian people. In ideological concepts, an attempt was made to combine socialism and nationalism with Islamic ideas.

After the Arabs’ defeat in the war with Israel in June 1967, the death of President Nasser (1970) and the signing of a separate peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in 1979, the influence of Arab nationalism

began to weaken gradually. The experience of the entire 20th century showed the weakness of ideas about Arab unity and the inability of leaders of the Arab world to implement them in practice. As nation-states formed, each developing, according to its own logic, their political, economic and social institutions, became increasingly different⁴³.

In the second half of the 20th century, in the era of national liberation, gaining independence and confirming nationalism, the interests of the state, and not the entire Arab region, came to the forefront of sociopolitical life. Accordingly, it became evident that hopes for uniting nations into an Islamic or Arabic state were unrealistic. By the 1990s, the ideology of pan-Arabism has lost its attractiveness.

Religious Identity

Despite the fact that practically all socio-political forces of the country appealed to religion as a unifying spiritual component, joining different groups of the population, for many of these forces, the approach to Islam varied depending on the goals and tasks which their leaders set themselves.

Before 1952, the most popular ideas were the ones of Islamic unity. For the first time at the modern stage, this idea became part of the Arab renaissance that was widespread in the 1870s, also known as the movement of Islamic modernism (reformism). This phenomenon – *Nahda* – was caused by events taking place in the Arab region, primarily in Egypt and Syria: the Arab nations embarking on a capitalist path of development, the intervention of European countries and the establishment of colonies. *Nahda* was a new stage in the development of Arab social, political and religious thought that gave rise to a whole constellation of different movements.

Jamal ad-Dina al-Afghani was one of the prominent figures of this era, and his name is linked with the inception and development of the ideology of pan-Islamism, one of the important creations of *Nahda*. His works not only developed plans for disseminating this ideology, but also proposed practical steps for its realization. The problems of the relations between Islam and nationalism, religion and science, interpreted from reformist positions, occupied a key place in the theoretical analysis of this concept⁴⁴. Al-Afghani opposed national

solidarity to religious solidarity and interpreted *asabiyyah* as unity in the name of implementing the ideals of the faith⁴⁵. Thus, Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani saw the guarantee of the future success in religious unity and close adherence to the precepts of the Qur`an.

Founded in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood Association actively used both nationalist and Islamic ideas that were inseparable from each other (at least in the Brotherhood's discourse). The Association proclaimed its short-term goal to be the battle against foreign dominance and Westernism, and the ultimate goal to be the unity of all peoples of the world under Islam⁴⁶. Additionally, the Brotherhood's criticism of Western democracy should be interpreted as a reflection of general protest against European colonial influence, and not a total rejection of democracy.

One of the reasons for the success of the Muslim Brotherhood is their multi-faceted strategy. The Association traditionally works on two levels, political and social-educational. The social role was dominant at the initial stage of the organization.

They conducted extensive social work among the population. Unlike secular parties, the Muslim Brotherhood does not restrict itself to political activity and holds quite extensive social work among the population, giving great attention to charity and education, and also to religious upbringing and reform of social morals on the base of Muslim values in counterbalance to Western ones. The Muslim Brotherhood strove to unite the Egyptian people in a situation when in the face of colonialism, they were divided by a multitude of opinions, ideologies, parties and movements foreign to Islam. To achieve this goal, three steps were envisaged. The first step to the revival of Islam was nationalism in each country of the region. The second envisaged Arab unity, as Islam was born in the Arab world, and this unity was considered necessary to revive the glory of Islam. The third implied the formation (or revival) of a Caliphate, a symbol of Muslim unity⁴⁷. The religious nature of this organization directly affected its main tasks: to oppose the Westernization of Egyptian society and to build mosques and religious schools to prevent the moral degradation of youth. However, from the 1930s, the activity of the organization gradually became markedly political. Additionally, the Muslim Brotherhood were among the first groups, along with the Watanists, to use acts of terror to achieve their goals in Egypt and throughout the

entire Middle East.

The politicization of the religious factor in Egypt developed from the first half of the 20th century. After the 1952 revolution, Islamic organizations aspired to fill the vacuum that they believed had formed after the overthrow of the semi-independent monarchic system. The new modernist regime, however, was entirely secular.

Nasser's successor Anwar Sadat reduced the importance of ideas of Arab unity and once more gave special significance to Egyptian nationalism on the basis of clearly defined Egyptian individuality in the Arab world. Furthermore, in the period of Sadat's presidency, the influence of the religious factor in the socio-political sphere increased noticeably. Islamic ideas began swiftly to occupy the empty niche and compete with secular nationalism. The process of secularization in Egypt that had started in the time of Nasser generally led to a half-hearted modernization of the country, and Islam continued to be an integral part of the Egyptian mentality and to hold a secure place in everyday life.

Over the previous 30 years, the ruling regime had enabled creeping Islamization of many spheres of social life, including the policy of "Islamization from above". Its goal was to strengthen the legitimacy of state organs of power in the eyes of the faithful and to seize the initiative from the Islamists (Sadat included a second article in the constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, stating that Sharia was the main source of legislation).

The Egyptian authorities, trying to exclude radical Islamists from the political process and at the same time take moderate members of the Islamic movement under control, began to conduct the policy of "Islamization from above" from the 1970s. This policy aimed to strengthen the legitimacy of public authorities in the eyes of the faithful and seize the initiative from the Islamists. As a consequence, the sphere of state influence on religious institutions significantly expanded. They were frequently used as a means of justifying state policy (al-Azhar, the Ministry of Awqaf). The authorities built relations with the most influential Islamic movement of Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood. The signing of the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt in 1979 divided the movement into moderates and radicals. The latter included several militarized terrorist groups that

carried out a number of high profile terrorist acts, the most notorious of which was the murder of the President of Egypt Anwar Sadat in October 1981. Soon, the new Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak was able to deal with the terrorist threat and partially liquidated and expelled radical elements from the country.

After the Muslim Brotherhood was banned in 1954, it did not take part in the political life of the country until the presidential elections of 1987. Its representation in parliament has since been very low in every election. Over the years of political struggle, until the beginning of the “Arab spring”, the Muslim Brotherhood evolved from an underground organization with rather radical ideology and dubious ties into a major opposition group with moderate leanings. The more the organization became involved in the political process, the more actively it has been forced to adjust to the rules of the game dictated by the regime and the law⁴⁸.

With the crisis of Arab nationalism ideas, the collapse of the international socialist system, and also the purposeful marginalization of the multi-party culture by the ruling regime, Islamism became the only outlet for the unrealized aspirations of diverse social forces. At the same time, with the worsening social situation in the country, the rise in unemployment, poverty and corruption, political Islam transformed into the voice of disenfranchised groups, a way not to lose dignity and preserve social status⁴⁹.

The upheavals that Egyptian society experienced in 2011 - 2013 pushed competing forces to use the transitional stage to build a future Egypt in accordance with their world view. Political turbulence led to a lack of clear and coordinated ideological approaches to forming national identity. Supporters of religious ideas strove to institutionally consolidate the Islamization of Egypt. They managed to pass a constitution in 2012 which established that Egypt “is part of the Arab and Islamic nation”⁵⁰.

Disputes on identity intensified after Mursi’s regime was overthrown, and A.F. el-Sisi became the President of Egypt. In this period, the country experienced a crisis of power that was just as profound as in 1952. Many Egyptians began comparing Nasser and the current President el-Sisi, and the image of Nasser was widely used in the first years of el-Sisi’s presidency. The President himself announced that he

adhered to a certain modernized form of “Nasserism”, which had a markedly secular nature, and the optimal form of rule was seen as a presidential republic with a strong leader.

The new leader tried to form a new national identity, which would match its political needs, while weakening rival identities, especially Islamic that he saw as a threat. At the present stage, “new Egyptian identity” is opposed to Islamic identity, and the concept of “them” implies radical and hostile elements, represented by the Muslim Brotherhood. During Nasser’s rule, the “others” were seen as the West, colonial forces and Zionism⁵¹.

In the process of searching for a “genuine” Egyptian identity not spoiled by Western influences, the critically minded section of Egyptian civil society tried to achieve a political consensus, in which civil and political freedoms could be lawfully sacrificed in the name of national unity and security.

Upon coming to power, the regime of el-Sisi began a campaign to develop a new model of self-identity, where attention was focused on the contrast with the previous Islamists regime. This discourse was designed to legitimize the new authorities, to present el-Sisi as the defender of the country, to prove the correctness of removing Islamists elements from power and to justify repressions against them. Competing with ideological enemies, a key role in forming new Egyptian identity was given to the loyal religious elite, represented by the minister for Awqaf affairs and the presidential advisor on religious issues, which together with religious institutions began to work on a new strategy⁵². It emphasized the continuity of the co-existence of religions, which existed from the first days of the spread of Islam in Egypt. This succession was represented by al-Azhar, who held a moderate position which could compete in the global ideological battle against radical tendencies in Islam.

Nevertheless, the new identity that the present regime proposes consists of a mosaic of the historical legacy (Pharaonic, Coptic, Islamic and Greco-Roman) and a territorial component (Arab, Mediterranean and African)⁵³. This wide range of identification elements makes it possible to unite all groups of the Egyptian population. The specific nature of organizing the new identity concept lies in the fact that its Arab and Islamic components are not put to the

fore. The regime of el-Sisi does not ignore traditional national models of identification, but has rethought and applied them in an instrumental way for stable internal development, with a view to overcoming external threats and challenges.

The combination of all elements of Egyptian identity are outlined in the Egyptian Constitution of 2014, which makes reference to the rich historical and cultural heritage that the state must protect and support⁵⁴.

This identification model characterizes Egypt as a country that is tolerant and prepared for cooperation on a basis of equality, which may play an important role in maintaining peace and stability in the region. The broad national consensus is formed around the idea of the need for the priority of internal affairs over foreign affairs⁵⁵. Critics note the internal contradictions in building a new narrative: on the one hand, openness to the world and religious tolerance, on the other, the lack of dialogue with society, the persecution of dissidence and an increase in repressions⁵⁶.

The experience of Egypt in the search for its identity became an important part of the formation of modern Egyptian statehood. Indeed, over the last 100 years, changes have taken place in the balance of forces between competing views of the Egyptian identity. The battle for independence in the first half of the 20th century unleashed new political, social and psychological processes, which have conditioned the development of Egypt and the entire East in subsequent years. Finally, it is Egypt that has more grounds than other Arab nations to lay claim to the right to consider itself a nation-state, for all the relativeness of this concept in the East.

Self-identification has existed in Egypt in several parallel forms, based on such fundamental ideas as Egyptian nationalism (“Pharaonism”), Arab unity, pan-Islamism and pan-Orientalism. It was Egypt that became the center of the development of nationalism in the interwar period, where emphasis was placed on the country’s own independence and its own forces, on using the resources, achievements and potential of the nation itself. Furthermore, the national liberation movement and the creation of a new regime did not

mean a rejection of “historical imperialism”, which implied not only aspiring to leadership in the region, but also territorial acquisitions, primarily Sudan and Hijaz. These and many other factors helped to preserve a wide variety of national ideas about possible paths for the country’s development.

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Chapter 4

Nikolay Surkov

Saudi Arabia: Ethno-Religious Nationalism

In Saudi Arabia, for many decades religious and tribal traditions served as the pillars of national identity. The Saudis follow one of the most conservative versions of Sunni Islam and consider their country to be the “most Islamic” in the world¹.

Islamic Identity

Islamic identity is an integral part of the modern Saudi national identity, which has given researchers grounds to consider the Kingdom to be a showpiece of religious nationalism². In other words, to be a Saudi, it is not enough to be born in the Kingdom, one must also be a Muslim, as well as a Sunni and Wahhabi (follower of the ultra-conservative preacher Muhammed Abd al-Wahhab). If one analyzes Saudi nationalism using Brubaker’s approach³, one may speak of ethno-religious nationalism. This is connected with the history of the emergence of the nation, based on the union between the Al Saud family and the Wahhabi clergy, which provided the legitimacy for conquering the Arabian Peninsula.

Since the 1980s, the Saudi leadership has gradually increased the religious component of national identity. This is manifested in the active use of the title of “Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques” by the Saudi monarch (meaning the holy cities of Mecca and Medina). The essence of modern Saudi national identity was defined by King Salman, who announced, following his predecessor: “We and our people are the protectors of the sacred sites of Islam”.

Gadi Hitman has described Saudi nationalism as Wahhabi, and emphasized that for a long time only persons who followed the Wahhabi version of Hanbali Islam could aspire to take part in political life and influence political decision-making⁴. The remaining residents

of the Kingdom, although they had Saudi passports, were in a subordinate position. This not only concerned the Shias who live in the Eastern province on the border with Iraq, but also natives of Hijaz who belong to more moderate Muslim madhhabs – Maliki and Shafi'i. Members of these groups were not allowed to serve in the security apparatus of the Kingdom, and were also not admitted to high-ranking positions in civilian state structures. However, it should be noted that over the last decade, in attempts to liberalize the country, the situation has begun to change not only for the Hijazi, but even for the Shias.

In the broader sense, the Saudis are part of the Muslim ummah, but (this is assumed, if not stated openly) they view themselves as the most righteous members of it, who follow the “purest” form of Islam, free of various innovations which emerged after the end of the righteous Caliphs era.

Tribal Traditions

As was noted above, the second important component of Saudi identity is tribal traditions. The Russian scholar Grigory Kosach described the foundations of Saudi statehood, citing the words of Crown Prince Muhammed bin Salman, who is presently the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia: “Our monarchy does not resemble its European equivalent. Our monarchy has the form of a tribal institution. It is based on the connection of the main tribes and regional communities with the top [ruling establishment]. We must all take into account the privileges and needs of these tribes and communities”⁵.

During the early years of Saudi Arabia's existence, the new nation was inseparable from the person of Ibn Saud and his sons. The break of bond between the dynasty and the political entity would have undermined its legitimacy, and led to collapse⁶. An important traditional symbol is the Bedouin ceremony of pledging allegiance to the new King as a tribal leader. The role of the ruling house was also reflected in the national symbols – the coat of arms, flag and national anthem. The coat of arms of the country is the coat of arms of the Al Saud house. The flag is the military banner of Al Saud family. The role of the ruling family is emphasized in the country's name, which is rarely encountered in international practice.

The Saudis view themselves as part of the Arab nation but this is often acknowledged with a hint of special purity, authenticity and certain aristocratism. As an official Saudi publication stated: “The rulers and citizens of the Kingdom are Arabs belonging to 100 ancient tribes which form the Saudi nation”⁷.

Distinctive Features of Saudi Nationalism

Modern Saudi nationalism is of the unifying type, though until recently, it was characterized by discrimination against minorities – primarily the Shias, and also Sunnis from Hijaz. Saudi society is divided into several groups, as the country consists of several regions united by military expansion. Real power belongs to natives of Najd, the home region of the Al Saud family.

At a certain stage (around the 1950s - 1960s), researchers even suggested that in Saudi Arabia there was a state, but not a common nation. This may have been because of the weakness of national identity and the fragmented nature of Saudi society. Since the late 20th century, one may observe attempts to transform national identity on the wave of modernization, secularization and partial democratization.

The need for transformation of national identity was dictated by changes that took place in the Saudi society⁸. Development of the economy and education in the country led to the emergence of a new social group - young technocrats, who were less religious and more focused on secular values. It also became obvious that there was a necessity to integrate minorities – Shias, Isma’ili and Zaydi. Thus, a need arose if not for a secular identity, then at least for an identity more tolerant towards other branches of Islam. Finally, it was also important to counter the radicals, since excessive purism prevented the development of the country and reforms, as radicals were able to criticize the country’s leadership for any deviation from the fundamental norms.

The current Saudi leadership continues the policy that was first adopted under Abdullah bin Abdel Aziz. The goal of this policy is to build a modern nation state and to turn the population of Saudi Arabia into a national (and patriotic) community, As Kosach notes, new terms have appeared in Saudi discourse – “watan”, homeland, and the

derived term, “muwatynun”, citizens. New symbols, designed to emphasize national solidarity, are being established and, in 2005, King Abdullah introduced a national holiday – Unification Day.

The accession of King Salman bin Abdel Aziz to the throne marked the beginning of a new stage of transformation of Saudi society. The evolution of national identity became an important part of this process. The rise of young technocrats, or as Kosach calls them, the “educated class”, dictates the need to create a third pillar of national identity, based on such values as patriotism, the supremacy of law and equality (equality of different branches of Islam and gender equality). This mission was taken on by Prince Muhammed bin Salman, who became the Crown Prince in June 2017 and is now trying to accelerate the process of transforming the Saudi nation with its ethno-religious and tribal dimensions into a civic nation.

We should pay special attention to the figure of Muhammed bin Salman (the abbreviation MBS is often used in the Western media). As his father is an elderly man, he swiftly became the de facto head of state, and has already proved to be a strong-willed but also impulsive leader. It is believed that the Prince makes decisions quickly, but is unpredictable and emotional. He is used to dominating and controlling the situation, owing to his physique (tall stature, powerful build) and upbringing (the favorite child). He is not inclined to give in even to his elders, and often forces his opinion on others. For example, he insisted on expanding the rights of Saudi women, ignoring the objections of the conservative faction of the ruling family and the clergy. MBS likes to demonstrate his education and intellect, so he gives great attention to the development of the educational system, digital technology and museums. The Prince is proud of his knowledge of English and demonstrates it during public appearances. MBS is ambitious and believes in his great mission, which is clearly reflected in his modernization projects and reforms.

MBS has shown that he is not afraid to take risks, and is ready for an open confrontation even with his relatives. For example, he carried out a large-scale anti-corruption campaign and removed his main rival Muhammed bin Nayef from power, taking practically the entire security apparatus under his control. He is not trying to preserve the status quo at any cost, as his predecessors were – the older generation

of Saudi Princes who valued stability above anything else. In critical situations, MBS chooses proactive tactics – he tries to anticipate his opponents. This is what he did in 2015, when he practically became the main advocate of the Saudi military intervention in the civil war in Yemen, to prevent the growth of Iranian influence in this country. Another example of the Prince's harshness is the blockade of the "brotherly" Qatar, which almost led to the collapse of the Gulf Cooperation Council in 2017.

We should note that the "perestroika" that has begun in Saudi Arabia cannot only be explained by Muhammed bin Salman's ambitions. The Crown Prince has to solve numerous internal problems: the opposition from a large section of the elite, unemployment, discontent of population by the increasing social inequality, and the threat of Jihadism. This is why MBS is attempting to create a support base for himself – the educated class, of which he evidently considers himself to be a member. Young technocrats rather than princes have come to be appointed to government positions during his rule. This cohort, for example, includes the former head of the Foreign Ministry Adel al-Jubeir and his successor Ibrahim al-Assaf, previously the Finance Minister. However, the educated youth will become an integral part of society only with a national identity which would respond to their liberal aspirations. Prince Muhammed bin Salman, of course, does not initiate new trends, but he does legalize them – admitting that Saudi identity is changing, and that new components are appearing in it. An important tool of this legalization was the development strategy "Vision-2030" unveiled in 2016, which includes a special program to consolidate national identity¹⁰.

Despite all the innovative drive and boldness of Muhammed bin Salman, he pays enormous attention to continuity. He does not try to break Saudi identity and rebuild it from the scratch, but only to update it, to take into account new realities. The authors of "Vision-2030" do not cast any doubt on the importance of Islam for the Saudi society. They note that Islam and its teachings make the basis of the Saudi way of life: "They make up the foundation of our laws, decisions, actions and goals" ¹¹. However, there is clearly an attempt to introduce new elements, without undermining or devaluing those already existing. The "Vision" itself has a special section entitled "Pride of Our

National Identity”, in which the authors write about the three elements of identity – “the Saudi, Arabian and Islamic heritage”, and also note the “cultural wealth and diversity” inherent to Saudi society. If the policy of diversity is continued, one may hope that nationalism of the unifying type will be replaced with a more flexible model (the process is only beginning, and the results are unpredictable).

At any rate, it is clear that Muhammed bin Salman strives to weaken the religious component of identity and get rid of excesses, in order to unite the nation as much as possible by integrating minorities and overcoming the rift between conservatives and liberals. In 2017, at the Investment Forum in Riyadh, the Prince promised that “following the aspirations of the young society”, the country “will put an end to religious extremism”, returning to “moderate Islam, which is open to the world, to all religions, all traditions and all peoples”¹². In the practical sense, these aspirations of the young Saudi ruler already lead to the emancipation of women, unprecedented for Saudi Arabia, and the liberalization of public life. All of this meets the requirements of the educated class that Muhammed bin Salman is relying on.

The modern world is breaking into the social fabric of Saudi Arabia, changing its inhabitants, the state itself and the national identity that lies at its foundation. However, we should note that the “perestroika” personified by Muhammed bin Salman is often implemented by rather archaic methods, and discussions about building a knowledge-driven economy and liberalizing cultural life go along with the suppression of critics, which was illustrated by the assassination of dissident Jamal Khashoggi. This raises doubts about the prospects of liberalization, and stresses the role of traditional elements of identity, of which tribalism is the most important.

As modern researchers note, the residents of the Kingdom still identify themselves primarily with certain tribes, as their connections, career opportunities and status depend on this¹³. Boasting of one’s origin is considered to be bad manners, but an unwritten hierarchy of tribes does exist. The feeling of tribal solidarity, or *asabiyyah*, is familiar to all Saudis, even if they live in a big city. The connection with the tribe becomes especially significant in difficult times. Customary law is widely used along with Sharia in legal practice. Tribes have great influence at the provincial level, and the central

authorities control the situation through tribal mechanisms. Tribal customs also influence the mentality of Saudis – they are primarily loyal to the family and the tribe. The tribal loyalty is strengthened by marriage bonds. Tribalism feeds corruption and nepotism. It also prevents real equality among citizens: members of nomadic tribes, who are considered more noble, will always display their superiority over members of less noble settled tribes. It is also hard to expect fair elections, as people vote for candidates supported by the Sheikhs of their tribes, and family ties are often more important than skills or political program.

The current Saudi national identity is a rather controversial phenomenon. On the one hand, there is a clear policy towards modernization and maximum inclusivity, to ensure that the nation unites in the face of challenges. On the other hand, even such agents of modernization as Crown Prince Muhammed bin Salman often use very archaic methods, and tribalism is still very strong in the society. This all casts a long shadow on the future of the Saudi national identity: whether it will be possible to create a unique alloy of incompatible components, or whether modernization leads to an internal split in the country.

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Section II. FROM EMPIRE TO NATION- STATE

Empires have dominated in world history as a special type of statehood. They emerged and formed as sufficient means of coercion were acquired. Territorial expansion and inclusion of various ethno-religious groups transform an empire into a method for organizing space. Nationalist movements strive for independence, and parts of the empire separate and become states. At the same time, for the imperial core, a shift to a new form of existence is always more painful than for its regions that have gained independence. The establishment of nation-states in Iran and Turkey, the two countries that chose different paths of nation building, has been accompanied by a search for national identity in each of the two former empires.

Chapter 5

Irina Svistunova

The Experience of the Turkish Republic

The Turkish Republic arose in 1923 in the aftermath of the First World War, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the struggle for national liberation, where Turks defended territory that is now part of their country. The gradual collapse of empire had begun 100 years previously with the liberation of Greece, and spread first to the Balkans, and then to the Middle East. The decisions of the Turkish parliament to liquidate the Sultanate in 1922 and abolish the Caliphate in 1924 marked the end of this complex process. Closing the book of the imperial history chronicle, the new Turkish authorities led by the first President, war hero and general Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, worked on developing the foundations of the national state, and radically reforming the system of rule and all aspects of society after the European manner.

Ottomanism, Islamism, Pan-Turkism

An integral part of fundamental transformations was the search for a new concept of national identity which would meet the tasks for building the nation, inculcating ideas that would consolidate society. The issue of national identity was acute during the period of the Ottoman Empire, as the border regions began to separate from the empire. The crisis of the system of rule also highlighted the degradation of state ideology, which had ceased to meet the requirements not only of the ethno-confessional minorities, but also the Turks themselves¹.

In Ottoman society, historically, the concept of religious identity existed, which replaced ethnic identity. Society was divided into millets, or religious communities, which had considerable autonomy

in their internal life, including issues of property and family rights, education and theological practice. Muslims were the leaders of the millet regardless of their ethnic background. Various Muslim peoples preserved their languages and traditions, but from a legal standpoint, the state did not recognize the existence of ethnic groups outside the ummah. Religious minorities in the empire were represented by the Orthodox millet (Rum milleti) (including Orthodox Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, Romanians, Arabs etc.), the Armenian millet and the Jewish millet. Minorities had their own courts, which dealt with conflicts between their members. If one of the parties was a Muslim, the case was examined in a Sharia court. Representatives of non-Muslim millets faced a number of restrictions in public life. In particular, they could not enter into military service or hold state positions.

The system of millets was destroyed by the Westernizing reforms of the 19th century and the pressure from Western countries, which demanded that the Ottoman government provide all subjects of the empire with equal political rights. In 1839, a document was issued declaring the equality of all subjects before the law, regardless of faith. In 1856, Sultan Abdul-Mejid published a firman which further widened the rights of non-Muslim minorities. Following this, attempts began to form Ottoman identity in society. Ottomanism meant the priority of the concept of a common homeland – united and undivided, in which there were no individual peoples, but all were Ottomans. The Sultan manifestoes declaring this principle also mentioned Sharia and Europeanization, equality of nations and the prosperity of the empire². A common national identity was never realized. On the one hand, Ottoman identity did not take into account such fundamental aspects as religious belief, ethnicity and language. On the other hand, a large section of society could not accept Ottoman identity as a unifying factor. Christians suspected it to be a project for assimilation. Many Muslims saw Ottomanism as a different form of Islamic identity³. At the same time, the aspiration of the Slavic peoples of the Balkans to independence was a clear sign that Ottomanism was unpopular in outlining regions of the empire.

According to the Turkish historian K. Karpat, the development of nationalism among Turkish Muslims was a reaction to the gradual collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and the projects of Western countries to divide it up. At the end of the 19th century, nationalistic moods

intensified among the Turkish intelligentsia. Idiomatic Turkish began to be used increasingly in the press and literature (instead of the official Ottoman language), and interest grew in the Central Asian past of the Turks. Politicians gave assurances that the Ottoman Empire had been created by Turks who were its true patrons and protectors⁴.

The Sultanate government noted the tendency for the spread of the Turkish language, hoping to use it as a tool to increase the unity of society. By decree of Sultan Abdul-Hamid II, instruction at professional academies was given exclusively in Turkish, including in Arab provinces. Academies which provided good career opportunities were popular, and that led peoples of the empire to study Turkish. This policy made a contribution to the gradual formation of the Turkish national identity.

In the early 20th century, the Young Turks, having seized power, made attempts to spread a concept of Islamism – the unity of all Muslims of the country on the base of religious identity. This ideology, which was first born in the period of Abdul-Hamid II's rule and with his direct involvement, was designed to neutralize the national movement of non-Turkish Muslims of the empire – Arabs and Kurds. Under the Young Turks, it acquired the form of Pan-Islamism, which justified the claims of the Ottomans to ruling the Muslims of other countries. Islamism failed after Ottomanism: the Muslims of the Middle East did not wish to abandon their national hopes for the sake of preserving the Ottoman Empire.

Then the Young Turks turned to the policy of Pan-Turkism, which had an external focus, involving the ethnic national identity that tied all Turkic peoples of the world in a union led by the Turks. With the start of the First World War, attempts to spread this expansionist ideology in Turkish society intensified. Its second name, Turanianism, derives from the mythical country of Turan, which is considered the common ancestral homeland of the Turks⁵. In another interpretation, Turan meant all the territories in which the Turkic people lived (Asia Minor, the Balkans, the Crimea, the Caucasus, the Volga region, Siberia, Turkestan, Azerbaijan), which were to be unified in one nation⁶. These were mainly lands of the Russian Empire, with which Turkey was fighting, and it is unsurprising that a considerable contribution to developing the idea of Turanism was made by Turks who had emigrated from Russia for various reasons. The activeness of Russian Turks in the ideological sphere could be attributed to the fact that

Russia was more open to the influence of Western concepts than Turkey. Additionally, as the Turkish author S. Hilav notes, “Russian Turks did not consider themselves to be “Ottomans”, and they did not have to overcome the complex of Ottoman identity”⁷.

Turkish Nationalism: the Early Stages

One of the ideologists of Turkish nationalism was the Tatar Yusuf Akchura (Akchurin), from Simbirsk, Russia. His father owned three textile factories in Russia, but later went bankrupt, and the family moved to Istanbul. Here Yusuf studied at a military school and the General staff academy, then led the “Turkish Homeland” society, which published a magazine of the same title, developing the concepts of nationalism and Pan-Turkism. Akchura believed that the Turks of the Ottoman Empire would unite with the Turkic people of Asia and Eastern Europe in a Turkic Union, which would become a great political nation⁸. With the active involvement of Akchura, discussion began in the Ottoman society about the nature of Turkish identity. Akchura believed that race, clan or ethnos lay at the basis of national identity, while religion played a secondary role.

He was opposed by another prominent theorist of Turkish nationalism and Pan-Turkism, Ziya Gökalp, who created the nationalist society “Turkic Hearth” in Istanbul. Gökalp claimed that in forming identity, a key role was played by Islam and Turkish culture, which was hindered by Ottoman identity. This thinker connected the search for national identity with Turkification, Islamization and modernization of society⁹. Gökalp’s books “The Principles of Turkism” (1923) and “A History of Turkish Civilization” (1926) became the ideological foundation for national thought of the republican period.

The defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War and the creation of the Turkish Republic led to a review of Young Turk’s concepts of national identity. The ideological foundation of the new state was the doctrine of Turkish nationalism – Turkism - the priority was the construction of the Turkish Republic, so ideas of expansion went to the background.

In a certain sense, Turkism was the product of the policy of Westernization, which required that the nation-state had a common national identity, unlike the traditional imperial approach, allowing the co-existence of different ethno-confessional groups. In the late 19th - early 20th century, Turkic studies began to develop in Europe. After

the First World War, Turkism became politicized, going outside the sphere of culture. Politicization of Turkism gave rise to nationalist movements in former Ottoman provinces – in the Balkans and the Middle East¹⁰.

M.K. Atatürk, who saw the future of the country on paths of Europeanization, planned to use Turkism as a civil concept of national identity. The term “Turk” was supposed to mean the name of citizenship of each resident of the new Turkey. The 88th article of the first Constitution of the Turkish Republic passed in 1924 stated that “from the standpoint of citizenship, every person in Turkey is called a “Turk” regardless of religion and race”¹¹.

The term “Turk” gave rise to debates in parliament, which was obliged to approve the text of the Constitution. Some deputies doubted whether to use this word in the sense of citizenship or in an ethnic sense. The opinion of parliamentarians on this issue was divided. The deputy from Konya Naim Hazım even proposed to replace the word “Turk” in the sense of citizenship with the word “Turkeyite” (*Türkiyeli*) derived from “Turkey”, which does not coincide with the ethnonym of the national majority¹². However, the majority of parliamentarians voted for the proposed text of the Constitution, according to which all citizens of the country became “Turks”.

In practice, super-ethnic civil identity was not achieved. The universal dissemination of Turkish culture began by the state’s efforts, in which ethno-confessional minorities of the country were forced to become involved. This process was caused by the outburst of the national feelings of Turks, who in the period of empire had a weak ethnic self-awareness, calling themselves “Ottomans” or “Muslims”. “Ottomans” were considered to be all subjects of the empire in which different peoples lived. “Turks” were only the names of peasants, and this concept had derisive overtones.

The Russian turcologist D.E. Yermeev notes that the ethnonym “Turk” became the general self-application of the Turkish people only in the republican period, when the construction of the Turkish nation took place. The issue was discussed of introducing the new ethnonym of “Anatolians” for the Turks (after the name of the Asian part of Turkey, Anatolia), and it was proposed to call the country the “Anatolian Republic”¹³. But eventually these geographical terms were rejected, and names based on ethnicity were approved.

An important characteristic of the new state regime and new national

identity of the Turks was secularity. This was a complete shift in the mindset of society. In a country where the Sultan had borne the title of Caliph for 400 years, religious institutions were officially separated from the state, Sharia law was replaced with civil laws, and a secular system of education was created. All Turks were forced to wear European-style clothing. Many places of religious worship were closed: Sufi cloisters and tombs of revered spiritual leaders. In the 1924 Constitution, it was written that the religion of Turkey was Islam, but the Criminal Code of 1926 prohibited introducing religious principles and convictions into the political, social and economic life of the country.

Reforming legislation proved easier than changing people's mentality. As the renowned Russian scholar N.G. Kireev writes, "secularization was initially only accepted by a small section of Turkish society... A period for forming the influential secular elite was required, and a long transformation of social ideology during the dictatorship of the Kemalists, when age-old Sharia canons in the minds of the people could be replaced by ideas of nationalism and Europeanization"¹⁴. The state ideology became Kemalism – a form of "revolutionary nationalism"¹⁵ named after the first Turkish President. Nationalism and radical cultural reforms became important tools of Westernizing society, combining Turkism with ethno-secular Western codes¹⁶. At the same time, throughout the entire republican period, secularism met with resistance from religious sections of society, and Turkification from ethnic minorities, the largest of which were the Kurds.

The situation of the minorities in Turkey was determined by the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, signed after the First World War. The Turkish delegation succeeded in rejecting the principle recognized by the League of Nations of defining minorities on the basis of ethnicity, religion and language. Only non-Muslims were recognized as minorities – Orthodox Greeks, Armenians and Jews. Essentially, the Ottoman system of millets was taken as the foundation. These three groups of the population received certain autonomy in the sphere of education, culture and religion. Turkish Muslims, like in Ottoman times, were seen by the state as a single community.

The task of forming national identity of the Turks was solved by the authorities through language policy and new historical concepts. With this goal, the Turkish historical society and the Turkish linguistic society were created, with state support and wide possibilities for

activity. The transition from Ottoman writing based on the Arabic alphabet to the Latin alphabet, which was easier to learn, the substitution of words of Arabic and Persian origin for equivalents formed from Turkic roots made it easier to spread literary and strengthen national awareness. Turkish linguists, striving to glorify Turkish culture, even invented the “solar theory” that all the world’s languages originate from the ancient Turkic language.

Search for Historical Roots

A curious phenomenon was the Turkish historical concept which was developed in the 1920s – 1930s. Despite the priorities of Westernizing state and society, the Turkish leadership, preserving their former imperial spirit, strove to confirm the idea of the greatness and uniqueness of the Turkish nation. In this sense, Western historiography, which critically assessed Ottoman expansion in Europe, drew hostility in Turkey. Atatürk set historians of the country the task of studying the role of the Turks in world history, and to prove that they were bearers of an ancient civilization. The searches for the ancestors of contemporary Turks among peoples living in Asia Minor led to the Sumerians, Hittites and even the Etruscans being declared to be Turks. It was also decided to consider the Trojans who fought the Greeks to be Turks, along with the inhabitants of other ancient states.

In the 1930s, the so-called Turkish historical thesis was formulated, it became the official concept of historiography in Turkey. “The Turkic brachycephalic race is a people which created the first state in Anatolia. The original country for this race was in Central Asia, where the Neolithic use of stone was mastered, and the transition was made to agriculture and the use of metals was discovered. But because of the worsening climate (periodic droughts), this people was forced to become nomadic. It spread from Central Asia to the East, South and West. At the end of their journey, they settled down, created their own culture, in some places became autochthonous, in others mixed with local autochthons. The former residents of Europe whom they encountered were dolichocephalic. But the civilizations of Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Egypt, the Aegean and many other regions were founded by brachycephalic settlers from Central Asia. The modern-day Turks are their descendants”¹⁷.

This thesis was one of the most important tools for forming the

national identity of the Turkish nation. On the one hand, it was necessary to justify the right of the Turkish people to the territory of the country, whose borders were established with difficulty in a conflict with Europeans after the First World War. On the other, it was necessary to separate the history of the Turkish ethnos from the history of the Muslim ummah. The special nature of Turkish nation-building lay in attempts if not to reject completely, then to reduce significantly the importance of the imperial past with its Islamic component. The most valuable historical legacy for the Turkish nation was considered to be the pre-Ottoman and pre-Islamic period.

This new concept entered school textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education, so many Turks were brought up with a very specific picture of the world. Turkish historians believed that ancient culture spread from the East to the West, so Greeks owed their civilization to the Anatolians, and it was the Turks who brought culture to the Hungarians, Slavs and other peoples of Eastern Europe.

New historical concepts drew criticism not only in the West, but in Turkey itself. Nationalists declared that the Turks were not descendants of the Hittites, but the Huns who populated the steppe to the north of China. Without insisting on the Turkic origin of ancient civilizations in the region, they advanced the idea of the unique historical development of the Seljuks and the Ottoman state, which allegedly borrowed nothing from the Arabs or the Byzantines¹⁸.

Subsequently, Turkish scientists abandoned the most odious ideas which were excluded or considerably watered down in the educational literature. Nevertheless, ideas of the ancientness and greatness of the “Turkic race” is to a considerable degree part of the national awareness of present-day Turks. Some Turkish historians are still convinced of the Turkic origin of the Sumerians, the Gutians, the Cimmerians and other ancient peoples¹⁹.

During the Second World War, the popularity of national ideas saw a resurgence in Turkey in the form of Pan-Turkism, directed towards the territories inhabited by the Turkic peoples of the USSR. After the war, Pan-Turkism once more yielded its position, but anti-Communist moods and joining the Western bloc in the Cold War became factors of national identity.

Citizenship and Nation

In the 1950s, with the rejection of the single-party system in Turkey,

nationalist and Islamic trends began to develop. Under pressure from the religious community and parliament members, compulsory classes in Islam were introduced in primary and secondary schools, and a theological faculty was founded at Ankara University, the ban on religious programs on the radio was lifted, and on reading azan in Arabic²⁰. The return of religion to the education system and cultural life led to a transformation in the understanding of secularism. Nevertheless, the principles of Kemalism remained the dominant ideology under all ruling parties.

In the 1980s, under the influence of the global process of the spread of multiculturalism, criticism increased of the Kemalist model of unified national identity, whose basis was Turkism and laicism. The concept of a Turco-Islamic synthesis began to spread, according to which Islam was an integral part of Turkish identity. Society began making demands for the open expression of Muslim and Kurdish identities. The process of dividing national identity did not end with this. Within Muslim identity, Sunni identity and Alevite identity were defined. Opposition figures took Western tools into their arsenal: the Islamists acted under the flag of democratization, and the Kurds – under the protection of human rights. Kemalism, once considered a progressive ideology, was in the position of a conservative force defending an unchanging social order²¹.

The Constitution of 1961, passed after a military coup, formulated Turkish citizenship more briefly than in the Main law of 1924: “Every person connected with the Turkish state through obligations of citizenship is a Turk”²². This phrase was used again in the Constitution of 1982, and exists in unchanged form to this day²³. The name of the paragraph “Citizenship” was altered to “Turkish citizenship”. Ethno-confessional minorities were not mentioned in any of the Turkish Constitutions, this led to ongoing disagreements in society about the understanding of the term “Turk”.

The contemporary Turkish author K. Korkut writes of the two ways this issue is approached in Turkey. The first group of researchers believes that the concept “Turk” has an ethnic overtone and serves as a tool for the Turkification of society, not allowing minorities the opportunity to manifest their identity. Another group insists on the significance of citizenship with geographical characteristics. According to these researchers, the constitutional term “Turk” is not connected with nationality and does not only mean ethnic Turks²⁴.

When the pro-Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in 2002, discussion of the constitutional article on citizenship entered a new phase. This was because the Turkish leadership planned to review the Constitution passed in 1982 after the military coup. The discussion was started by a publication in 2004, “Report on Issues of the Rights of Minorities and Cultural Rights” prepared by the Commission for human rights under the Turkish government. The report was approved by 24 votes, 7 members of the commission voted against it, and two abstained. Even after approval, heated debates continued among commission members, which also found resonance in society after the document was published. The author of the report, a specialist on problems of ethno-confessional minorities, renowned Turkish professor Baskin Oran, and the chairman of the commission Professor Ibragim Kaboglu, were charged with “inflaming hatred and hostility in society”. The public prosecutor demanded five years in prison for them, but the court found the scholars not guilty. The issue was not closed until 2009 after several lawsuits were rejected by various courts. What caused such a heated reaction in Turkish society? The sensational report proposed to replace the word “Turk” as the name of citizenship with the word “Turkeyite”, which does not have an ethnic sense and is derived from the name of the country²⁵. Oran tried to revive the idea which was raised in Turkish parliament in 1921-1923 in debates on the Constitution. Oran stressed the fact that Atatürk had used the word “Turkeyite” in his speeches during the national war of liberation in Turkey, and in the draft of the Constitution. Subsequently, the first President rejected this concept, giving preference to Turkism²⁶.

Professor Oran, who explained his position in various publications, stated his belief that the lack of super-ethnic identity in Turkey undermined national unity, as minorities perceived the concept of “Turk” as a narrow ethnic characteristic, and did not associate themselves with it. The term “Turkeyite” could become an acceptable concept uniting ethno-confessional groups on the basis of a common territory of residence²⁷. Oran gave the example of Great Britain, where members of all ethno-confessional groups of the country are called British²⁸.

The idea of the report drew protests from the Turkish expert community, and for many years became the topic of debates. The main objections against the term “Turkeyite” were the following:

- The term “Turk” indicates a nation, not an ethnic group;
- Changing the term will not solve the problem;
- The term “Turkeyite” is artificial, it will be impossible to translate into other languages;
- This term will lead to the disintegration of the country;
- It is impossible to reject the dominant position of Turkish national identity²⁹.

In 2007, the government once more created a commission, including renowned legal scholars, in order to develop a project of amendments to the Constitution. In particular, the project proposed three alternatives concerning citizenship:

1. Everyone connected with the state through obligations of citizenship is a citizen of the Turkish Republic.
2. Everyone connected with the Turkish Republic through obligations of citizenship is considered a Turk regardless of religious belief and race.
3. Citizenship is the main right. Everyone who has received this status on legal foundations is a citizen of the Turkish Republic³⁰.

None of these proposals was used as a constitutional amendment, but discussion of the article on Turkish citizenship continued. In October 2011, on the initiative of the AKP, a constitutional commission was formed at the mejlis of 12 deputies – three from each of the four parliamentary parties (the ruling AKP, the Republican People’s Party – CHP, the Nationalist Movement Party – MHP, and the pro-Kurdish Party of Peace and Democracy – BDP). The commission, which had the task of preparing a common project of amendments to the Constitution, represented the opinions of members of 42 political parties, 39 trade unions, 79 societies and foundations, and 440 non-governmental organizations. In 2013, the commission was dissolved, as its work had reached a dead-end. It did not prove possible to agree on a common project of amendments: each of the four parties proposed its own version, which confirms the depth of the ideological division of Turkish society. The formulations proposed by parties on citizenship were also different:

AKP: Everyone connected with the state through obligations of citizenship is a citizen of the Turkish Republic. (The ruling party used the proposals of the commission of 2007).

CHP: Turkish citizenship means that everyone is a citizen of the Turkish Republic on equal foundations regardless of language,

religion, race, gender, ethnic roots, political views, philosophical convictions, religious tendencies etc.

MHP: Everyone connected with the Turkish state through obligations of citizenship is a Turk.

BDP: Receiving, using and losing citizenship of the Turkish Republic is carried out regardless of language, religion, race, ethnic roots, culture, gender, sexual orientation etc. The rules of citizenship are regulated by law³¹.

In the end, in the new version of the Constitution, the 66th article (part 1, “Turkish Citizenship”), remained unchanged. It is noteworthy that it was the nationalists (MHP) who proposed to leave the formulation unchanged, who in their own version of amendments simply reproduced the text of the existing Constitution.

The theme of defining higher-level national identity (*üst kimlik*) and lower-level identity (*alt kimlik*) continues to occupy the minds of Turkish researchers and historians, who examine the issue not only in the present day, but also in the light of Turkey’s Ottoman legacy. The renowned political analyst H.D. Güzel wrote in the newspaper “Sabah” that in the republican period, “one-party regimes conducted the policy of assimilation and unification, striving to erase lower-level identity— ethnic identity... For this reason, it was difficult to explain what “Turkish citizenship” was as a concept, and what higher-level national identity was”³².

Turkish historian M. Karakas believes that a higher-level identity emerged in the Ottoman Empire (Ottomanism, Islamism) as a result of the policy of Westernization. The Turkish Republic, in pursuing Europeanization, tried to construct a common national identity for all its citizens. However, the inflexibility of the republican model of national identity caused splits and even clashes in society. It is necessary once more to formulate national identity in such a way that it reflects all Turkish realities. This will help to solve outdated internal political problems and improve Turkey’s international image³³.

The Turkish researcher of identity issue, O. Turkdogan, believes that the concepts of the “majority” and “minority” are not reflected in the public traditions of the country. He states that the concept “Turk” is not the name of citizenship of the Turkish Republic, but a reflection of a common national identity of Turks, Kurds, Circassians, Bosniaks, Laz and other ethnic groups, united by a common history and culture. Turkdogan is opposed to separate ethnic identities of the lower level,

and criticizes the studies of other experts on the ethnic make-up of the Turkish population, accusing them of an anti-scientific approach and the desire to lead the country to multiculturalism³⁴.

At the same time, Turkdogan admits that within the Turkish intelligentsia, there is a division into supporters of Turkism or multiculturalism as the foundation of national identity. When the AKP came to power, the concept of neo-Ottomanism became popular, which found its reflection in a growing interest in the idea of multiculturalism. At the same time, one should distinguish between multiculturalism as interpreted by supporters of broadening the cultural rights of ethnic minorities (Turkey has up to 47 ethnic groups) and the neo-Ottoman approach to a common culture, the dominant element of which remains adherence to Sunni Islam³⁵.

The author of the book "Identity and Foreign Policy of Turkey" U. Uzer writes that the word "Turkish" which Europeans used in application to the Ottoman Empire, did not reflect the ethnic identity of the country's population, but the fact that Turks held the dominant position in society³⁶. Professor K. Karpat notes that Turkish society is an amalgam of very different cultures with a long history³⁷.

The ruling AKP builds the concept of nation on the basis of elements of Islamic culture, and with an emphasis on the memory of the Ottoman past. The policy of forming a united national identity is carried out, under the slogan "Common nation, common flag, common homeland, common state"³⁸. The idea of the historical continuity of the Seljuks, Ottomans and modern-day Turks is spread. In 2017, speaking on the anniversary of the foundation of the Turkish Republic, President R.T. Erdogan announced that it was not created by one person, and not by a sudden decision. This event was the continuation of the victory of the Seljuks over the Byzantines at Manzikert in 1071, the formation of the Ottoman Empire in 1299 and the conquest of Constantinople in 1453³⁹. It should be mentioned that during the period of rule of the AKP, the date of the battle of Manzikert, which opened the path to Asia Minor for the Turks/Seljuks, began to be celebrated annually at state level. In 2019, by order of Erdogan, next to the site of the historic battle, the construction of a presidential palace began, with an area of 1,071 square meters (the same as the year of the battle).

In its strategy for forming national identity, the ruling party often appeals to values that are close to society. An important place is given

to the family as a source of religious and traditional values of the individuals. The image of the family is also used in the election advertisements of the AKP, where society is represented as one big family, in which the young and elderly people work together to achieve a common goal⁴⁰. Often, such consolidating images are used as the national flag, anthem, the sounds of azan, the idea of the country's greatness and the battle against a common enemy. The symbol of this battle, in particular, is the memorialization of events connected with the suppression of the unsuccessful military coup in Turkey in 2016. In memory of this event, the 15th of July was declared a new state holiday – the Day of Democracy and National Unity.

The Religious and Imperial Dimension of Identity

One of the key areas of the domestic policy of the AKP was returning Islam to socio-political life of the country and the awareness of society. The party abolished the ban on women wearing the Muslim headscarf at state service and universities, which was an important event on the path of re-Islamization of Turkey. Members of the higher leadership began regularly performing namaz in public, which was unthinkable in the previous decades of the republican regime. Religious education flourished and new mosques were built.

The formation of religious and imperial national identity in society serves as a process for turning former Christian churches into mosques, which were used as mosques under the Ottomans, but were subsequently turned into museums by the Kemalists, who strove to integrate Turkey into the community of European countries. In 2011, a mosque was opened in the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Iznik (Nikea). The cathedral was built in the 6th century under Emperor Justinian, and was the site of the last (seventh) Universal congress in 787 AD. In 2013, the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Trabzon (Trapezus) also became a mosque, it was built in the 13th century by Byzantine Emperors who made the city the capital of the Trapezus Empire. In late 2019, the museum status of the Istanbul church of Chora (Turkish Karie), which contained the finest specimens of Byzantine icon and mosaic frescoes in Turkey, was repealed.

In 2020, the authorities turned their attention to the main Hagia Sophia of the entire Christian world – the cathedral in Istanbul built in the 6th century AD by Emperor Justinian and serving as the spiritual inspiration and architectural model for churches in many countries

around the world. It had been used by the Turks as a mosque since the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 AD. In 1934, Ataturk signed a decree to turn Hagia Sophia into a museum. Over several decades, there was a group of supporters to give back the status of mosque to the cathedral, but the authority of Ataturk was unattainably high. After the pro-Islamic AKP came to power, the Association of the permanent service of foundations of historical monuments and the environment began to submit appeals to legal bodies and to Erdogan himself, demanding for Hagia Sophia to be made a mosque once more.

For many years, the Turkish authorities did not give a positive response to these demands, but in June 2020, the decision was passed to transfer Hagia Sophia to the jurisdiction of the Department of religious affairs, and award it the status of mosque. The issue poses interest in connection with the stance held by the Turkish leadership as regards the formation of Turkish national identity. The annulment of Ataturk's resolution of 1934 was portrayed as restoring the will of Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror, who turned the cathedral into a mosque. Erdogan presented the issue of Hagia Sophia as the will of the nation and a matter of the national sovereignty, as the victory of the Turks and a triumph of historical justice. In this situation, the calls of the international community not to change the status of a monument of world cultural heritage were unanswered, and only became grounds for consolidation of the President's supporters.

The majority of Turkish society, influenced by years of propaganda of values of imperial greatness and the Islamic way of life, greeted the authorities' decision with enthusiasm. In public discourse, such expressions became widespread as "the right of the sword", "the resurrection of Hagia Sophia", "fallen chains". Even the People's Republic Party did not openly oppose the decision, although secularly-minded Turks do not support the change of the museum status of Hagia Sophia, considering it to be one of the symbols of the secular path of Turkey's development.

The issue of national identity, included on the agenda by Turkish intellectuals after decades of the dominance of the Kemalist ideology, will continue to be a subject of discussion and scholarly analysis for a long time. The renaissance of the religious way of life initiated by the AKP has changed former stereotypes of thinking and formed new

realities. A century after the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the national state in Turkey, imperial ideological history has once more proved in demand.

The Turkish leadership pursues the goal of strengthening national unity on foundations that differ from the ideological principles of the republican period, which is becoming just one of the components of the wide historical picture of the life of the nation. At the same time, issues of national identity of ethno-confessional minorities remain unresolved, which is shown by discussions about defining Turkish citizenship. In Turkish society, the divide between the traditionalist supporters of the AKP and adherents of secularity is preserved, and continues to deepen. This means that an understanding of the national identity of the Turks will continue to change, reflecting the arrangement of forces on the political stage.

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Chapter 6

Anastasia Bogacheva

The Islamic Republic of Iran: the Results of a Long Journey

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a relatively young nation. It emerged after the Islamic revolution of 1979. Power in the country shifted to the Shia clergy, which determined changes in the political, economic, and cultural life of the nation. However, the history of Iranian civilization dates back millennia, and Iranian identity, besides an Islamic component, also contains imperial “Great Persian” and nationalist “Arian” elements. Each component may be associated with a specific stage of the history of Iran, has a specific set of parameters, which when combined give us an idea about the modern national identity of Iran. The features of its formation as a historical phenomenon¹ are accompanied by the establishment of national statehood and national self-awareness in the country, while in many ways they are also determined by Iran’s imperial past.

Memories of the enormous territory of the Achaemenid and Sassanian Empires are still a source of national pride for the Iranians. A key role in this sense is also played by myths and historical memory, based on which a general cultural code of Iranian civilization formed over centuries. It subsequently absorbed Zoroastrian, Aryan-Persian, Islamic, and numerous local ethnic components.

The Sources of Imperial Identity: a Great Past

A special historical narrative used to play an important role in forming imperial identity. Persian (Iranian) civilization is one of the oldest, and its narrative (in the broad sense of narrative as a mental structure, a method of contemplating and organizing the surrounding world) involved imperial awareness and was based on specific ideas about a

unique civilizational mission.

The spread of Zoroastrianism through Iranian ethnic groups was an important milestone in gaining identity. The new religion assisted the formation of a dichotomy among the previously united Iranian world – “we”, who recognized and accepted Zoroastrianism, and “they”, who maintained their adherence to pre-Zoroastrian cults. Based on certain models from Vedism, Mazdaism, Sabian and Turanian religions, models of Zoroastrian mythology formed, which created such figures as the bird Smeurg, Shakhbaz, or the spirit Fravashi, an integral part of genuine Persian identity.

In the Achaemenid Empire (550-330 BC), adherence to Zoroastrianism became one of the main criteria of Iranian identity. In official documents of the empire, the term “Iran” or “Ariana” (literally “country of the Arians” in Avestan)³ meant the Zoroastrian Iranian population, which was the result of the unification of two Iranian speaking peoples – the Persians (Farsi) and Medians.

Over time, the Achaemenid state turned into a world power. At the period of its highest prosperity, it included the greater part of Western Asia. The empire stretched through the Caucasus, the Balkans (Thrace, Macedonia, and Paeonia). It included a considerable part of the Black Sea coast and Central Asia, stretching from the River Indus in the East to the Aegean Sea in the West, and from Transcaucasia in the North to the first rapids of the Nile in the South.

The Sassanid State (224-651 AD), also known as the New Persian Kingdom, became the legal successor of the Achaemenid Empire. The Sassanian Empire was the second and last Persian civilization in history that succeeded in bringing its borders close to the borders of Iran of the great era of the Achaemenids⁴. Achaemenid rulers preferred to use the title “Shah of Iran and Aneran” (“Not Iran”), that is the territories which besides Zoroastrian population included Kushans, Saks, Eftalites, etc.⁵ From the foundation of the State, Sassanians considered themselves as Achaemenids' successors. Dynasty members strove to form an ideology based on memories of a glorious past⁶.

Zoroastrianism, as a state religion, again became the main tool for the legitimization of Sassanian power. The religious component, which was more prominent than in the Achaemenid era, was added to foreign

expansion⁷. National policy towards conquered peoples was generally tolerant⁸. Nevertheless, they had to adopt the culture of the conquerors.

One important trend of this period was the increased centralization of state power, which to a considerable degree was assisted by the element of the imperial ideology of the sacralization of Royal or Shah's power. In the Avesta, the Shah is the bearer of power, which is of divine nature. According to Zoroastrian tradition, Shah's power is a reflection of the higher world order created by Ahuramazda⁹. In sacred texts, Shahs are presented as the executors and guarantors of the divine will on Earth. The functions of the ruler duplicate the functions of God, restricted to the earthly world. The King must ensure justice, implementation of laws, and protect and cherish the prosperity of all his subjects, regardless of their class and social group¹⁰. An important attribute of the monarch's power in Zoroastrian time was the *faravahar* – grace given to people by God¹¹.

However, this period is not only significant in itself – its interpretation in subsequent eras was also very important for the formation of Iranian identity. Great kings of antiquity became symbols of the period of the greatest flourishing of Iranian culture, which meant that many members of subsequent dynasties sought to be (or considered themselves to be) like them. Former notions of the world – the empire, the greatness of Iranian civilization and its messianic role – were subsequently laid in such concepts as Iranian nationalism and Pan-Iranism.

Islam in Iran: Islamic Identity through the Centuries

The conquest of Iran by the Arabs (in 651 AD the Sassanian Empire was almost entirely conquered by the Arabs and made part of the Omayyad Caliphate)¹² had several consequences, including migration to the territory of Iran of both the nomadic and the settled Arab population. In Iranian cities, entire districts inhabited by Arabs gradually appeared. B. Bartold notes that the immigration of Arabs was expressed firstly in establishing Arab military camps in the country, and secondly in capturing specific territories by Bedouin tribes. Arab settlements usually swiftly became centers of city life, places where a type of general Muslim culture was established¹³. For

example, in the city of Qom in the 10th century, the Arabs already made up the majority of the population, and in neighboring towns, the Arabic language predominated. We may say that from the 7th century, Persian and Islamic identities began to be combined within the Iranian cultural tradition.

Arabs brought with them to Iran the literary Arabic language, which soon became the official language of documentation and the language of religion (including for newly converted Muslims). Although the conquered people of the former Sassanian Empire did not hurry to convert to Islam, as at that moment it did not give them equal social rights with the Arabs, Islamization still proceeded: the ethnic composition of the population changed, Islamic and Persian culture became intertwined, with mixed marriages and new generations being born.

An important consequence of the Arab conquest was the spread of Islam in Iran. The new religion gradually replaced the ancient religion of the Persians, Zoroastrianism, and placed a limit on the spread of Christianity.

The period from the 11th to the 15th centuries was marked by the gradual shift of power over Iranian lands by Turkic and Mongol dynasties, which adhered to Sunni Islam, while Iranian residents dissatisfied with their administrations moved to Shiism and filled the ranks with various mixed sects. Thus, while Sunni Islam was preserved as the official religion in the majority of states on the territory of modern-day Iran, in the north of the country (primarily in Qom and its surroundings) and the Caspian regions (Kashan, Sabzevar) purely Shia regions were preserved.

It was Shia Islam that played a key role in the formation of the present-day image of Iranian national identity. Shia concepts of the imamate and the infallibility of pure Imams were organically placed on ideas of the ancient Iranians about the sacred and divine nature of the power of the Sassanid rulers of Iran. As the possession of power in Iranian traditional society was considered a sacred right and divine blessing, this perception influenced the entire course of Iranian history. The Islamic concept of *baraka* – divine blessing – was very similar to the Zoroastrian *faravahar*.

If for the Arabs, who, with their predilection for the traditions of

nomadic democracy, mainly kept adherence to Sunnism, the choice in favor of the Caliphate was natural, for the Shia Iranians this was categorically unacceptable. Shiism became something like an ideology for the Iranians, sometimes harsh, often requiring self-sacrifice from members of the community, but compensating for the national humiliation suffered by Iran during the Arab conquest. Additionally, Shia Islam allowed the possibility of the emanation of divine barakah for people worthy of this (and not only for prophets) through divine inspiration sent down to them. In Shiism, Sayyids and Sharifs, the descendants of Ali ibn Abu Talib and the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad Fatima, are considered to be endowed with barakah. Not only living people can be the source of the blessing, but also their personal belongings or burial places.

Dynasties replaced one another, shifting from Shiism to Sunnism and back, glorifying the legendary past or rejecting it in favor of their historical memory. Eras of flourishing were replaced with periods of decline, but the best episodes remained in people's memories, over time turning into components of identity. From the 11th to the 19th century, the starting point for almost all ideologies originating in Iran was Islam, and also traditional values of inherently Persian culture that were adapted to it. By the 20th century, the Iranian and Islamic components were equal elements of self-identification for many people. The politicization of Islamic identity became a response to attempts by the unpopular ruling elite to exclude from public consciousness the concepts of Islamic justice and the Islamic way of life, which did not fit in with their policy of Westernization.

Although the evaluation of the Islamic conquest of Iran is far from clear-cut, Iranian and Islamic civilizations objectively gave each other a great deal. The fact that many works of Middle Persian (Pahlavi) literature were translated into Arabic gave a powerful impulse to developing Islamic sciences. Iranian authors, in their turn, began writing poetry in Arabic. The merger of Islamic and Iranian identities gave the world the works of Ferdowsi, Rumi, Nizami Aruzi, Ibn Sina, Saadi, and Hamdallah Qazvini, Hafiz Shirazi, and many other poets, scholars, and writers. Furthermore, by the early 9th century, Persian was gradually reborn in a new phase (so-called New Persian) – the language of the founder of Persian literature Rudaki's work, of Sufi mystic literature, and many scientific works. By the 16th century,

Islam, gradually spreading through the country, was the religion of 90% of the population, which allowed Iranians to acquire not only Persian but Iranian-Islamic identity. But after the 1979 revolution, the Islamic component (in a new interpretation convenient to the leadership) began to be forced on the population too harshly. State propaganda was portrayed as being fundamental and without alternative, which could not help but meet with rejection in a section of society. The population rejected not so much the Islamic identity as the compulsory ideology, way of thinking, and moral value guidelines.

Iranian Nationalism – Stages of Formation

Modern concepts of Iranian national identity began forming in the era of the Qajar dynasty (1795 – 1925), a period that preceded Iran's transformation into a semi-colony. From the 1830s, with the gradual transformation of the country into a training ground for growing Russian-British rivalry, national self-awareness began to increase in Iranian society.

Amir-Kabir (1807 – 1852), who was the first to begin the process of modernizing Iran, used the term “nation” (Mellat) and “homeland” (Vatan) in their modern meaning. Previously, the concept “Vatan” had been used to define a local place of residence, and “mellat” a religious community (“mellat-e musleman”)¹⁴.

Iranian nationalism began to form as an independent field of Iranian socio-political thought under the influence of the French school¹⁵ and gained shape by the late 19th-early 20th century. From the second half of the 19th century, views of the first ideologists of Iranian nationalism began to spread in the country – Mirza Fatali Akhundzade (1812 – 1878) and Mirza Aga Khan Kermani (1854 – 1896/97).

By the 1900s, the narrative of Iranian identity thus focused on the fate and destiny of Iran and the need to fight for independence and historical justice. The swiftly diminishing authority of the ruling Qajar dynasty was aggravated by worsening socio-economic conditions in a country that had lost its independence. This served to stimulate another socio-political transformation of Iran. In 1903 – 1906, a wave of mass protests swept the country, inflamed and directed by influential members of the Shia clergy and members of the higher bureaucracy, forcing Shah Mozaffar ad-Din Kajar to sign a decree

establishing a Constitution in the country.

The Constitution was passed on 30th December 1906. The Persian ethnos was confirmed to have the status of the dominant nation; it officially restricted national minorities' political rights; for the first time, a vague definition of the nation as a confessional community of the population was offered. Thus, the status of the Iranian nation was acquired by Muslims, while non-Muslims, accordingly, were defined as national minorities. The Constitution seemed to contradict itself, as, on the one hand, it did not correspond to the Pan-Iranian ideas found among the nationalist-minded intelligentsia, based on Persian chauvinism. On the other hand, it ignored the interests of individual ethnic groups (each of which had its own ethnic and/or national identity), included in the project of a common Iranian nation, and the concept of the Persianization of national minorities¹⁸. The project of a common Iranian nation stipulated the construction of an identity common for all peoples living in the country. Nomadic tribes were to become settled. For provinces, where the population was predominantly non-Persian, no rights of autonomy were allowed. In shaping the administrative apparatus, the national specifics were not taken into account, and documents in national regions could only be written in Farsi from now on¹⁹. Any speeches in the languages of minorities, and also the publication of books and other materials in these languages were forbidden²⁰.

However, the programs of the first pro-government parties (the number of which had already begun to grow in this period)²¹ did not yet contain a precise definition of the Iranian nation. Electoral rights, and also the right to be elected to the *mejlis*, were only given, besides Persians, to such non-Muslim minorities as Zoroastrians, Christian Armenians, and Jews. There was no place at all in the upper chamber of parliament (the Senate) for non-Persians. Although the Constitution was abolished in 1908, the national component of Iranian identity continued to be reviewed, and from the 1920s found precise expression in the national policies of both members of the last Shah dynasty in the history of Iran.

In the period between the Constitutional revolution of 1905 – 1911 and the beginning of the rule of Reza-Shah Pahlavi (1925), one of the main threats to the territorial integrity of the nation, and also one of the factors that made it easier for Western powers to enter Iran, was

regional and ethnic separatism. Separatist movements, encouraged and supported from outside, were especially strong at this time in Iranian Azerbaijan, Gilan, and Kurdistan.

During the anti-colonial and anti-Shah uprisings of Sattar-Khan (1908 – 1909) and Sheikh Mohammad Hiyabani (1920) in Tebriz, and also the Jangali movement of Miraz Kuchek-Khan (1920 – 1921, Gilan province), the theme of rising national self-awareness came to the fore in the self-perception of rebels. In particular, in Tebriz, the Persian flag was used without the official coat-of-arms out of principle, as it was associated in rebels' minds with the weak Qajar dynasty, subordinate to colonial powers. The new flag (in contrast to the coat-of-arms and portrait of the absolute monarch) was supposed to symbolize both the power of the constitutional state, which broad sections of the population stood for, and the national autonomy of the province inhabited by ethnic Azerbaijanis. In 1920, the territories around Tebriz, which were taken under control by the rebels, were even given the name of Azadestan ("country of freedom"). The Jangali, who in 1921 were drawn to Communist ideas, used somewhat different symbols. However, the red flag they used in 1921 (partly to please Soviet allies) was interpreted as the ancient banner of the Iranians, which was also designed to emphasize the anti-colonial nature of the Jangali movement and the ancient roots of the struggle, in accordance with the old narrative "us and hostile them"²². It was in these years that Iranian nationalism gained new force, which, although it did not reject the Islamic heritage, actively appealed to pre-Islamic historical memory, stressing the ancient nature of Iranian history, recalling the glory of the first Persian Empires, as if to give contemporaries hope for a future that was just as great.

The surge of ethnic separatism in many ways defined the future national policy of the Iranian state and determined many military, demographic and ideological measures that were passed at the time in solving the national issue. The measures taken by Pahlavi in battling separatism served to strengthen the authority of the dynasty only initially, at the same time provoking the growth of a negative attitude to it among national minorities, and ultimately only led to freezing the problem. Regional separatism continued to be one of the main problems for Iran throughout the entire rule of the Pahlavi dynasty.

In 1925, the Iranian philosopher of Azerbaijani origin Mahmud

Afshar, opposing the spread of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Arabism in the country, made attempts to deepen the Pan-Iranist ideology formulated by Aga Khan Kermani in the 19th century. In his works, he promoted the idea of a nationalistic component of Iranian identity, which he believed was inherent to all Iranian peoples. Pan-Iranism was formulated as an ideology designed to reunite all peoples scattered across the Iranian highlands and neighboring regions, which historically were subject to a significant influence of Iranian culture. Pan-Iranians included not only Persians, Tajiks, Kurds, Talysh, Zazaki, Baluji, and Pashtuns among these people, but also the Azerbaijanis, considered to be a Turkic people, appealing to their origin and area of habitation.

During the rule of Reza Shah, Iranian nationalism was the foundation of both the foreign and domestic policy of the country. This ideology was similar to Pan-Iranism, but not identical to it, and concentrated on the essence of Iranian identity – love of Iranian culture, Iranian languages and history, and a feeling of national pride. In the 1920s – 1930s, a process of forming the so-called great Iranian chauvinism²³ took place in the country. It was derived from great Persian chauvinism and was directed towards preventing and suppressing national liberation movements of peripheral ethnic groups. The concept of a “common Iranian nation” was formed, which later became one of the foundations of Iranian national policy in the period up until the Islamic revolution. The concept appealed to a feeling of the national-cultural exclusiveness of Iranians, proposed the creation of a cult of the monarchy (primarily of the Shah personally) and the propaganda of the ethno-national homogeneity of the Iranians. Over time, it began to be used more widely in domestic policy and gained a prominent assimilating direction²⁴, and by the mid-1930s (when the majority of tribes had already been assimilated) began to be realized on a nationwide scale.

The policy of ethnic assimilation involved a campaign to mix national and ethnic identity – resettling members of the Persian majority in territories of ethnic minorities. In the border zones, priority for appointments to civil service was given to ethnic Persians, and Persian officials constituted the majority in high-ranking positions. At the same time, a policy was pursued to convert nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes to settled ones, whereby unruly tribes were scattered

around different provinces. The authorities also frequently resorted to the tactics of suppressing one ethnic minority with the help of another, which, combined with other measures, only served to significantly undermine the authority of the Pahlavi government and aggravate a series of problems existing in the country.

In the period of 1941 – 1979, under Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, the situation did not improve. The new Shah, like his father, was forced to solve the problem of the decentralization of the country²⁶. The suppression of rebel movements in Southern Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, with subsequent imposition of the Iranian national identity on them, was the logical continuation of the harsh national policy of Reza Shah. The nature of the policy towards minorities did not change. The only difference was that now the tactical forms of its realization occasionally became more flexible (especially in the 1960s – 1970s), and sometimes minor temporary concessions were made²⁷ (1945 – 1946). Azerbaijani and Kurdish, as the languages of the two largest national minorities, were declared the official languages in their provinces²⁸. But on the whole, the policy remained harsh, and uprisings were still prevented or crushed – in 1946, the Kurdish and Azerbaijani national liberation movements were routed.

A so-called new strategy was proposed and implemented by the Shah in the early 1960s – 1970s. It involved a gradual transition from harsh repressions to ensuring governmental control over the cultural and social life of national minorities. The policy of assimilation was continued. The Organization of National Orientation was created to develop recommendations on issues of national policy. In one of his speeches, the Prime Minister of Iran (1965 – 1977) Amir Abbas Hoveyda even publicly expressed the hope that the organization would turn into a “school of Iranization”²⁹.

The Shah’s attitude to the national issue is shown by his works, in which he mentioned the “Aryan” nature of Iranian civilization but made it clear that he referred to the “true meaning of Aryan civilization”³⁰ and not its Nazi definition. He also showed pride in the “strength of spirit” and “exclusive origin” of his people³¹.

Although the majority of adherents of Iranian nationalism left the country during or after the Islamic revolution, the national agenda remained relevant. The Iranian nation was formally renamed the

Islamic nation of Iran, and the main activity directed towards advocating Persian identity moved outside the country. In its original concept, Iranian nationalism was a secular ideology, traditional opponents of which were Communists and members of Islamic leftwing forces before the revolution, but afterward, nationalism turned into opposition to Islamism. Nevertheless, this had almost no influence on the real position of the Islamic and Persian-Iranian components in identity, which form the national identity of modern-day Iran.

Using romantic revolutionary slogans, the leadership of IRI led by Ayatollah R. Khomeini (1900 – 1989), and later his successor Ayatollah A. Khamenei (born 1939) tried to build a society of social justice. The task was set, based on Islamic religious principles, to create and realize in practice a theory of state development that could become an alternative to the Western doctrines used by the Shah. This inevitably affected Iranian self-identification, which in the first post-revolutionary decade was portrayed as revolutionary and rejecting the legacy of the previous Shah period.

The contemporary Iranian nation, even while it is ethnically complex, could, if with reservations, be considered to be a homogeneous political society as a whole. The numerous peoples living in Iran have a common civic identity. The absolute majority speak Persian, while far from everyone knows and can use national languages even at a basic level.

The Religious and National Elements in IRI

The balance of identities of different levels is an important factor for the Iranian nation in its modern understanding. Essentially, common Iranian national identity (like the identity of any poly-ethnic state) is a construct of numerous tribal, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, and other identities. The levels of this construct may exist separately or may be layered on one another, forming smaller structure-forming constructs. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, these are categories of religious and national, the differing ratio of which in different periods was a determining parameter of the self-perception and self-portrayal of the country.

Given their lack of homogeneity, numerous peoples living in the

country united based on a feeling of historical belonging to a common Iranian cultural space or based on common religious beliefs (initially Zoroastrian, but later Islamic). Coexisting for many centuries, religious and national components in the minds of many people became inseparable components of self-identification of separate individuals and/or social groups, in no way conflicting with other identities inherent to them. Contradictions between religious and national elements usually arose on political grounds in attempts to instrumentalize certain identities.

For example, the Constitutional Revolution (1906 – 1911), in which the social emphasis of political reforms was put on Islamic slogans, was carried out in the period of the politicization of Iranian identity, stressing classical Iranian nationalism. The first Constitution of Iran, on the one hand, established the Persians in the status of the dominant nation, and on the other, contained a vague definition of the nation as a confessional community of the population³².

From the 1950s, the construction of a single Iranian nation took place almost in parallel with the strengthening of the Iranian Shia clergy. Iranian nationalism and religious-political modernism in this period had an equally important influence on public thought. The fundamental difference was that the national element was promoted by the regime, while the religious element was in opposition. Both Great Persian and Shia Islamic identities were tools in a political game. The administration of Mohammed Reza Pahlavi took countermeasures, attempting to suppress any public manifestations of Shia Islamic identity in the 1950s – 1970s. Repressions were conducted against the clergy, continuing until the Islamic revolution of 1979, which changed the configuration of identities. One of the results of the revolution was that the Shia Islamic component of Iranian identity became the main component of official ideology.

However, the new leadership was forced to deal with previous problems – the task of preventing separatism was still crucial, and adjustments to national policy were required. With the new constitution, the concept of the community of the Muslim ummah³³ became the basis of national policy, which involved replacing the term “national community” with “religious community”³⁴.

At the same time, although Shia Islamic identity became predominant

in the country, the idea of the exclusiveness of the Iranian nation (devoid of an Islamic context) was not completely removed from public discourse. There were still people in Iran (indeed there still are), who regard the Islamic Republic with skepticism and only accept Iranian identity.

In general, the concept of the national identity of modern-day Iran may be reduced to several theses of Imam Khomeini, stating that Iran belongs to Islamic civilization and that the country needs a republican system. These theses do not directly mention the problem of identity, but partially reflect his attitude to the issue of the self-definition of Iran as the Islamic Republic. "The only monarch is Allah alone, and He needs no partnership", "The Qur'an and the Sunnah and decrees are necessary for people to achieve the happiness and perfection of their nation"³⁵. The Imam believed that Shia Iranians had passed a long path of development and were the creators and bearers not only of their own culture but of Shia Islamic identity. He stated his belief that the true values of the country's culture were created at a time when Iran was formed primarily as a country of Shiism, which had a profound effect on all aspects of its life, including culture, politics, and ideology.

One of the main problems on the path of constructing (and maintaining) Iranian national identity exclusively based on Islam is, some scholars say, the cosmopolitanism of Islam, which complicates the perception of a "national territory", and ethnic and cultural boundaries within the Islamic world³⁶.

However, not only Iranian³⁷ but also several Western authors disagree³⁸, calling cosmopolitanism one of the main benefits of the Islamic religion for a series of constantly changing ruling dynasties. The numerous ethnic and religious minorities in the country link their destiny with the history of Iran, as the history of many of them took place within Iranian culture.

Some Western scholars, such as Adam Saleh, citing such Iranian authors as S. Zahed, Z. Safa, and M. Motahari, describe the multidimensional and complex sources of Iranian identities and emphasize the Iranian and Islamic factors³⁹.

Zabiholla Safa classified and analyzed the phenomenon of historical memory in Iran, and also such components of Iranian identity as the

Persian language, the epic, poetry, the institution of the monarchy, and culture. Murtaza Mutakharri and Reza Shabani have discussed the importance of Islam, the Islamic factor, and Islamic identity for Iranian civilization in many of their works⁴⁰. Farhang Raja singled out components in Iranian identity which were brought by Zoroastrianism⁴¹.

However, in scholarly and sociopolitical discourses in Iran, it is customary to place the accents differently. Several authors (Ali Shariati⁴², Abdul Khossein, Zarinkub⁴³, and also Mahmood Sariolghalam and Mehrdad Mashayekhi)⁴⁴ have attempted to work under the official ideological line of the Islamic Republic. Their works are primarily directed at explaining the priority of Shia Islamic identity over all others; to call on youth and students to respect Islam, including as a religion that determines the greatness of their culture. In several works, religion is portrayed as virtually the only effective weapon “against imperialism and the cultural expansion of the West”. Achieving national unity is seen as possible only after victory over external enemies, who force on the Iranian people the destructive identities of the past, which are an objective evil and either call for a rejection of Islam in favor of secularism or equate Iranian-Islamic civilization with Western civilization. However, not all authors of Iranian origin take the position that the Islamic component is an inseparable part of the construct of Iranian identity. For example, Said Zakhed analyzes Iranian identity as a complex and multidimensional concept, in which the Iranian and Islamic components combine (and are not opposed). In total, he defines three main elements competing for the right to be considered the chief source of Iranian national identity: Iranian, Islamic, and Western civilization⁴⁵. One must agree with him, as in Iranian identity we may indeed find elements of the cultural influence of each of these three civilizations.

In present-day Iran, it is customary to be proud of the history of the country, the Persian language, and the cultural heritage which was influenced by Arab-Islamic and Western cultures. Iranians’ love for their country is manifested in the knowledge of the national epic, the key literary works, poetry, and music. Despite their dissatisfaction with the policy of the present leadership of the Islamic Republic, many remain religious. And Iranian nationalism, despite its exclusion from official ideology, in its least radical form is still shared by many

supporters. In many homes in the Islamic Republic, one may see decorative bas-reliefs with legendary subjects, and regardless of ethnic origin, families preserve traditions of celebrating national holidays, and in villages (especially in regions of national minorities), people still wear national clothing and are engaged in traditional crafts.

According to official data, the vast majority of the population of the IRI (99%) practice Islam, of whom 90 – 95% are Shias, 5 – 8% Sunnis, and thus Shia Islamic identity among the local population may seem obvious. However, this is not quite the case, and the views of the local population (both Shia and Sunni) are in general less fanatic than local pro-government and Western anti-Iranian media portray them to be.

Still, Shia Islam for many centuries has had an enormous influence on the culture and way of life of the Iranians. In Iran, traditional festivals for Shias are celebrated widely, but participation in celebration has always been voluntary. Growing up in an environment where religious education is compulsory at primary school, from childhood people accept basic concepts of Islamic morality of justice and honor. In many ways, this is why when the Commander of the special division of the bodyguards of the Islamic revolution “Al Quds” General Qasem Soleimani was killed, he was seen by the masses as a victim who had to be avenged. Soleimani, as fitting for a national hero, was declared a shahid after his death. As an authoritative figure in his lifetime, after his death, he joined the ranks of holy martyrs, and his picture began to be displayed alongside the pictures of the most revered Imams in Shiism, Ali, and Hussein, and also the former Supreme Leader of the IRI R.M. Khomeini. All the doctors who died in the COVID – 19 epidemic in 2020 were also declared shahids.

The present-day national identity of Iran is a complex phenomenon in which the key elements are historical memory, nationalism of the Western kind, and Shia Islam. Iranian-Persian, Shia Islamic, Sunni Islamic, national, tribal, folk, religious, and other identities of a lesser scale are the components which, depending on circumstances, are chosen to be included in a general identity. The ratio of elements, their significance, and configuration is individual in each specific case.

In multiethnic Iran, where society is represented by 40 different ethnic groups, the problem of constructing a general identity has always been acute. Unwanted religious/tribal/linguistic/political identities were suppressed and found themselves in opposition to the officially approved identity. In different periods, the main identity was the imperial-Persian one, subsequently replaced by the Sunni Islamic, then Shia, and finally Iranian identity.

Despite the clear reluctance of the leadership of the Islamic Republic to include national narratives in the official discourse, the importance of the national component of Iranian identity must be acknowledged.

Classical Iranian nationalism (secular, which was the basis of Pahlavi's national policy) and modern nationalism in the Islamic Republic are not identical, proposing different models of national identity. In the modern model, Shia Islamic identity, as the main one, is supplemented by elements of imperial Persian and national identity to a lesser degree. However, how long this ratio remains relevant will depend on the stability of the Islamic regime and its tolerance to identities of a lesser order. All of these elements of national identity will certainly remain in public awareness for a long time, but their ratio and configuration are not static, and in the future have significant potential for changes.

Despite the seeming stability and permanence of its modern Islamic essence, Iran has an enormous civilizational experience and Aryan-Iranian identity, which, if necessary, will come to the fore. The issue of the Iranian nation is not so straightforward, as there are different opinions on this question. On the one hand, it is possible to speak of a single civil community, as even members of different nomadic tribes may call themselves Iranians. However, at the same time, modern Iranian society lacks social solidarity. Conflicts of identities (above all ethno-political conflicts), although to a lesser degree in comparison with the 20th century, are still characteristic for Iran and are unlikely to be resolved soon.

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Section III. NATIONAL IDENTITY: AFTER OR BEFORE STATEHOOD?

National identity may be formed during the struggle for statehood, before a state has been created. Individual ethnic groups perceive themselves as communities that differ from others and are bonded by a common destiny. After the creation of a state, the construction of a new nation, while accelerating, is enriched by new experience and new tasks. The level of national consolidation of ethnic groups without a state of their own can be difficult to assess because of their fragmentary nature, the prominent role of traditional elements in society, weak political self-organization, and fierce rivalry between elites. Nevertheless, acquiring national statehood becomes a special mission for these groups, and as they work together for a common cause they may at least for a while set aside existing differences and disagreements.

Chapter 7

Liudmila Samarskaia

Israel: a New State – a New Nation

Contemporary Israeli national identity has a complex nature. On the one hand, it is based on centuries of religious tradition, which determined that Jews belong to one community. To be a Jew meant to be a religious Jew, to practice Judaism. To deviate from Judaism meant to reject Jewishness, i.e. completely change a person's self-identification. This made a deep mark on Israeli identity and became a "sore point" of political Zionism. On the other hand, a key factor in the emergence of Israeli identity was political Zionism – a form of Jewish nationalism that appeared in the second half of the 19th century, and which transformed and adapted many traditional postulates and symbols of Judaism.

Hebrew transformed from the language of religion into a living, spoken, modern language. A people in exile, who according to their religious beliefs could only expect salvation from the Messiah, were offered the idea of independent development in Palestine, the return of the Jews to the land. The history of the Jewish people, the ideology of state construction and the realities of the Middle East which the settler community faced had a direct influence on forming modern Israeli identity. This was not just because the national character was forged in a constant conflict with neighbors and in resisting threats, but also due to the special Levantine cultural milieu which influenced certain behavioral models, culinary preferences etc. In the first decades of state building, the ideas of Levantine culture and art became particularly popular – this was an attempt to fit into the overall culture of the Middle East.

The Jewish and Israeli Nation – the Transfer of the Concept

Jewish nationalism is traditionally considered a product of the modern era, a contemporary and continuation of ideas of European nationalism. However, there is another point of view, which is

debatable but undoubtedly original. According to an American historian Aviel Roshvald, nationalism in general (and not only specifically Jewish) did not emerge in the modern period, but only underwent a transformation in this era (albeit a rather serious one).

Roshvald claims that “by late Second Temple times ... it seems clear that Jewish nationhood was a social and cultural reality” and provides a parallel between the weekly reading of the Jewish Bible and the daily reading of newspapers¹, which Benedict Anderson describes as one of the symbols and signs of an “imagined community” (in which he also includes a nation)², noting, however, that the perception of time in the first and second cases were completely different. While listeners of Torah readings perceived time as cyclical, a constant repetition without development, mystically connected with legendary events, for newspaper readers time was linear, with constant forward movement.

As is widely known, a relatively small number of nationalist movements can be solely ethnic or solely civic: most are a combination of these two principles (with an emphasis on one of them). Modern Israel combines real legal equality of its citizens regardless of their origin and the legally established right of Jews to be automatically granted citizenship and the chance to live a “Jewish life”. This, essentially, is the main contradiction.

Roshvald writes that “Jewish and Zionist cases appear to be anomalies that do not clearly fit any well-defined typology of nationalism”, a specific phenomenon which “may force students of nationalism to question some of their fundamental assumptions”, but in fact ancient Jewish collective identity itself in many ways was the foundation on which the “paradigm of the modern nation-state” is based³.

A completely different view on this issue is presented by an Israeli “new historian”⁴, the post-Zionist Shlomo Zand, in his book “The Invention of the Jewish People”. In his opinion, Jewish nationalism (like any other) is nothing more than a constructed phenomenon, despite the fact that a religious community lay at its basis. He also claims that modern Jews are not the descendants of the Jews of antiquity. Zand believes that the emergence of the Jewish people in their present form was based on a generally accepted idea of the Jewish people, which once lived in the land of Israel and were exiled

from it at the beginning of the Christian era. This conviction was held not only by the Jews themselves, but also by the Christians in whose religious tradition this concept was firmly established. "The ultra-paradigm of deportation was essential for the construction of a long-term memory wherein an imaginary, exiled people-race could be described as the direct descendants of the former 'people of the Bible'". Here, Zand stresses the special "mythological nature" of Jewish nationalism⁵.

A more moderate position is adopted by a contemporary American historian and political scientist Dov Waxman in his work "The Pursuit of Peace and the Crisis of Israeli Identity: Defining/Defending the Nation". Like Zand, he takes a constructivist approach, but does not absolutize the "constructed nature" of the Jewish nation. Waxman writes that the Zionist nation-building project was based on "already existing Jewish traditions, memories, myths and symbols" and was not invented from scratch. Secular Zionists tried to move away from Judaism as far as possible, while the entire idea of returning to the land of Israel was inseparably linked with an eschatological Messianic religious paradigm. The main problem, which required a new unified ideology, was the lack of consolidation of Jewish communities from different countries. It was solved by appealing to a common Biblical and heroic past⁶. In many ways a similar position is held by the Israeli scholar Yael Zerubavel, author of the book: "Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition"⁷.

Political Zionism as a Source of New National Identity

Zionism is a specific type of nationalism which to this day determines the foundations of Jewish-Israeli self-identification. It involves a combination of nationalist and religious discourses, as the definition and self-definition of Jews as a special group of the population developed on the basis of their religion. *Firstly*, Zionism was created as a political movement, as an ideology that inspired people to certain actions, within capitalist society and under its influence. *Secondly*, it emerged on the wave of European nationalist movements, and so acquired some of their qualities. *Thirdly*, political Zionism is inseparably linked with Judaism and the cultural memory formed by it, and in a certain sense is its logical continuation, although secular by

nature (B. Anderson wrote about the connection of nationalism and religion⁸). *Fourthly*, Zionist leaders realized (although not immediately) the special importance of the cultural component in developing Jewish statehood, a common language that brought together separate communities. Hebrew became a supranational language, common for the Jews in Palestine regardless of which languages they initially used for daily communication (Yiddish, Ladin or the language of the countries they came from).

The role of revived Hebrew in developing the Jewish nation is difficult to overestimate. It was the commonality of language that allowed members of different ideologies to find grounds for unification within the Zionist movement. The use of Biblical Hebrew vocabulary in a new context was a reflection of Jewish cultural memory: even legal terms were borrowed from the Rabbinical tradition⁹. The increased use and further development of Hebrew contributed to the success of the Zionist movement to a significant degree¹⁰. At the same time, it was no accident that Sephardic pronunciation began to be regarded as the primary, “Israeli” kind – this allowed European Jews to stress the difference between the newly formed nation and the Jews in exile, rejecting “*Galut*” (exile) Yiddish and the Ashkenazi accent¹¹.

The close connection of Zionism with religion gave it a firm foundation of cultural and collective memory. The vast majority of the so-called national myths (although not all of them) were taken from religious tradition. Primarily, Jewish nationality was determined on the basis of religion (and was not conditioned by birth on a certain territory, which was characteristic for most other peoples¹²). Furthermore, the idea of a “return to Zion” was born within the Jewish religious tradition.

One of the reasons for a strong link between Zionism and Judaism was the lengthy preservation of traditional Jewish social institutions. While nationalism was coming into being in Europe, Jews still remained a special group, who to a considerable degree preserved their way of life and traditions, and thus stood out among the rest of the population¹³.

Noting that political Zionism relied on Jewish religious tradition, scholar Shlomo Avineri called it a “transformative revolution” which integrated historical memory into political ideology and thus ensured

its success. The partial break with certain basic postulates of Judaism was inevitable: the ideology of Zionism involved the return of the Jews to Palestine, which went completely against the traditional “longing for Zion” – waiting with patience for the arrival of the Messiah who would return the people of Israel to their land. This was to a considerable degree connected with the influence of Jewish nationalism, which provoked the rise of such ideas (that were radical for traditional Jewish thought)¹⁴: Jewish collective memory was intertwined with European concepts of nations and nation states – the concept of territories and attachment to them.

New Ideology: Zionist, Settler, Hero

Judaism and European nationalism were not the only sources of the basic ideas of the Zionist movement. Another source, which arose before¹⁵ and during the First (1882 –1903) and Second Aliyah¹⁶ (1904 – 1914), was the idea of the return of the Jews to the land and the independent agricultural development of Eretz Israel¹⁷. In 1878, Petah Tikva was founded, the first *moshava* (a special type of agricultural colony, differing from the later kibbutz and moshav); before that, instances of Jews purchasing land in Palestine for agricultural purposes were isolated and not part of an organized movement¹⁸.

Both in the First and Second Aliyah, socialist ideas were more or less common, but settlers of the second wave brought with them a new concept: independent work on the land, “redemption through toil” – essentially the ideology of pioneer settlers. For settlers of the Second Aliyah, physical labor was “not a necessary evil, but an absolute moral value, a means to heal the Jewish people of its social and national calamities”. Being incapable of hard agricultural work was seen as the greatest vice, a weakness that had to be overcome (this was also characteristic of members of the Bilu movement, an organization of settlers from the Russian Empire in the First Aliyah)¹⁹. The land of Israel had to be “conquered”, and local Arab labor replaced with the settlers’ own Jewish labor.

A logical continuation of ideas about the model of the “new Jew”, the “new Hebrew” was the rejection of the *Galut* legacy. The very idea of rejecting the *Galut* way of life was not new: these thoughts had already been expressed by *maskilim*, members of the Jewish

Enlightenment (*Haskala*, a phenomenon of the late 18th century), which described a “highly negative picture of traditional community life among observant Jews, with an emphasis on talmudic learning and use of the Yiddish language”²⁰.

For the new settlers, the “Old Yishuv”, i.e. the religious population of Eretz Israel before the First Aliyah, was in many ways comparable with *Galut* Jews. One of the settlers of the first wave, Dov Haviv-Lubman, wrote about the attitude of the local Arab population to the new settlers: “...they had nothing in common with the familiar and justly despised ‘walad-al-mut’ – ‘children of death’ [note by A. Yaari: “This is what Arabs called Jews of the Old Yishuv...”], cowardly and debased, who could be mocked and harassed with impunity, and no one would speak up in their defense”. This attitude is also seen in the memoirs of other *olim hadashim*²², who were often not prepared even to acknowledge any of the achievements of the “Old Yishuv” in the agricultural development of Palestine (this is particularly evident in the name of the first settlement of the New Yishuv – Rishon LeZion, “first to Zion”)²³.

On the whole, the contrast between *Galut* (exile) and Zion (the land of the people of Israel) was nothing new for secular Zionism. The roots of these ideas also lie in the religious sphere: *Galut* was considered a divine punishment, contrasted with life in Eretz Israel. Besides, over time the idea arose that Zion was also a “metaphysical land which the Jews carried with them”, wherever they were. Zionists developed this idea and applied it to reality in a nationalist context: from now on, exile symbolized the weakness and submissive position of the Jewish people, but return to the land of Israel would liberate them and help them to recover their former glory that they had lost after the defeat in the Jewish War and the rout of the Bar-Kokhba uprising²⁴.

It was the settlers of the Second Aliyah who built the first kibbutz – Degania – in 1909 – 1910. This new type of settlement was distinguished by the commonality of property and the priority of Jewish labor over hired work by local residents. The kibbutz ideology demonstrated a gradual retreat from Biblical associations: if early settlement names usually had their roots in the Tanakh tradition (as noted above), over time this was replaced with agricultural symbolism. The name “Degania” was an allusion to a type of cereal (“dagan”) or cornflowers (“dgania”)²⁵. The socialist agriculturally

oriented ideology of the Second Aliyah was continued and developed by settlers of the third wave (1919 – 1923). Subsequent aliyahs (the fourth in 1924 – 1929 and the fifth in 1929 – 1939) did not have such a strong ideological basis and were primarily motivated by the anti-Jewish policy firstly of Poland and later of Nazi Germany²⁶.

The Heroic Myth

The heroization of events of the Jewish ancient and antique past as well as creating new myths, which drew analogies between the achievements of Zionist pioneers and Biblical or historical figures, gradually became an important element of the new national identity. Dov Haviv-Lubman recalled in his memoirs that the battle with Arab villages neighbouring Petah Tikva was for him a “holy war and privilege” as if he, “like in ancient times”, took part in the “conquest of the Promised Land and its partition”, and received his portion. “The village residents who plotted war against us,” he wrote, “were for me the ancient kings of Canaan who went to war with Joshua and his army”²⁷.

The pioneers of Degania were already debating their main purpose: being settlers or conquerors? “Conquest” was meant not so much in the military as in the pioneering and agricultural sense. One of the first settlers of the kibbutz, Shmuel Dayan, an *ole hadash* of the second wave and the future father of Moshe Dayan, wrote about this debate in his memoirs: “Some expressed the desire to become *halutzim* – the pioneers of developing new lands... They dreamt of conquering new lands: to cultivate the land and give it to settlers, and then set off to develop new lands... Are we settlers? How disdainful we were back then of those who possessed homes and comfort! Our task was to conquer and master, we were fighters, warriors, *halutzim*”. But there were also people who said that they “had not come here for wars, but for building a new homeland: to create Jewish villages, to live and subsist on their own products and production, to live an independent life and become permanent residents on this land”²⁸. This partially became the prototype for the later discussion between moderate socialists and more belligerently inclined revisionists about the main task of the “new Hebrews”: peaceful settlement of land or the battle for territory against the local population²⁹.

The subsequent development of the concept of the Jewish warrior as an integral part of Zionist ideology, and later of Israeli national identity, was influenced by several factors. *Firstly*, the “return to Zion” had a historical-mythological basis: the Land of Israel, according to the Tanakh, was already conquered by the Jews after the Exodus from Egypt, when the Ancient Jewish state arose. *Secondly*, the active and sometimes even militant position of the pioneer settlers was opposed to the passivity of *Galut* and the period of national decline. *Thirdly*, the realities of life in Palestine often proved less favorable than many of the idealist settlers had hoped: this was not just because of the hostility of local Arab residents towards the Jews (for a number of reasons this was connected mainly with socio-economic conditions³⁰, and even by 1910 this was not ubiquitous³⁰), but because of the unsafe conditions in general, and so *olim* increasingly had to protect their settlements with weapons in their hands. Zerah Barnett, one of the first residents of Petah Tikva, described one attack on a *moshava* in 1886: “The Arabs came with the goal of looting – they had no political goals at that time”³².

The initial associations with Biblical characters and events were mainly derived from traditional Jewish religious education, received by most members of Jewish communities of the time³³. Subsequently, the emphasis in the ideology of the Zionist movement shifted to the events of the Second Temple era (516 BC – 70 AD), especially the uprising of the Maccabees (Hasmoneans) (167 – 164 BC), as well as the siege of Masada (72 – 74 AD) and the Bar Kokhba revolt (132 – 136 AD).

Even the interpretation of the motivations of the heroes in these historical events was transformed in the Zionist perception. In the story of the Hasmonean uprising, the emphasis was shifted from the religious undertone (a protest against Hellenization and a return to Judaism in pure form) to the idea of an uprising against foreign rule. And if the Maccabees are still portrayed in the tradition of Judaism in a positive light (the holiday of Hanukkah is associated with them, and the idea of resisting assimilation among surrounding peoples is generally characteristic for the Jewish diaspora), the Zealots and *Sicarii* of the Jewish War period (i.e. the defenders of Masada) and the rebels of the first half of the 2nd century AD are rarely given a positive assessment in Jewish Talmudic literature³⁴.

Furthermore, the history of Masada is disputed, as according to “The Jewish War” by Josephus Flavius (the primary text source that mentions the siege of fortress) the defenders committed mass suicide to avoid being taken into slavery by the Romans. *Firstly*, this is not welcomed in Rabbinical tradition, with the exception of special cases of “*Kiddush haShem*”, practiced among Jewish communities of Europe in the Middle Ages as a reaction to forced Christening³⁵. *Secondly*, suicide, as an example of passive struggle, contradicts the concept of the active struggle of the New Yishuv³⁶, for which even “*Kiddush haShem*” was a sign of weakness³⁷. In the Zionist context, the emphasis in the history of Masada shifted to the heroism of its defenders, a battle to the death for the sake of their country and freedom³⁸.

“The second Masada” for the Zionist ideology was the battle of Tel-Hai in April 1920 (in Upper Galilee, at that time part of the disputed British-French territory), in which eight Jews were killed in a clash between local Arab tribes and a small group of Jewish settlers. In this context, the “resistance of the few against the many” was important, echoing examples from the distant past. One of the defenders of Tel-Hai was particularly singled out, Joseph Trumpeldor (a settler from the Russian Empire): he became a hero of the New Yishuv, comparable with Biblical and ancient fighters for the freedom of the people of Israel. The memorial to the Jewish heroes that was subsequently erected in the settlement portrays a lion, and this is not just an allusion to strength and bravery: the lion was the symbol of the tribe of Judah (one of the 12 tribes of Israel), and later of the Kingdom of Israel. This monument thus linked the heroes of the past and present, uniting the ancient Jews and the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine³⁹.

The history of the defense of Tel-Hai became an important ideological milestone for the Zionist movement and the collective awareness of the “new Hebrews”. It strengthened and united the images of the pioneer Jew and the warrior Jew: Trumpeldor was often depicted with a plough and a gun in his hand (which reflected reality)⁴⁰. The idea of protecting Jewish agricultural settlements was the basis for Haganah, an illegal military organization of the Yishuv, created in 1920 in response to the first significant Arab anti-Jewish disturbances in Mandatory Palestine.

After the creation of Israel, the concept of the warrior Jew did not

vanish, but only grew stronger – the First Arab-Israeli War of 1948 – 1949 was in that sense a significant factor. Haganah, transformed into Tzahal (the IDF), continued to play a special ideological role. The fact that military service was compulsory for all Jews regardless of gender had an important consolidating function (along with a socializing and educational one). At the same time, a part of the population of the young state was practically excluded from its ranks (Arab and Haredi population), which deepened the division in society on an ethno-confessional basis. The army continued the idea of the “new” warrior Jew and made it possible to form a new collective identity. Since the early 1950s, Tzahal soldiers have been making a sort of pilgrimage to the Masada fortress, which involved swearing an oath on a historically (as well as nationally and mythologically) significant site of Israel⁴¹.

The Attitude towards the Holocaust: from Rejection to Acceptance

The initial rhetoric of Zionists in Palestine concerning the Holocaust and its victims thus logically fit into this paradigm: the catastrophe of European Jewry was perceived as a vivid demonstration of the need to put an end to *Galut* and create the State of Israel. The passivity of the Jews who were driven into ghettos en masse without any significant resistance on their part (as the Jews of Palestine believed) was condemned in the Yishuv. The Zionists of Palestine contrasted themselves with the European Jews, believing that they would have put up active resistance to the enemies, preferring death in battle to submitting to fate and living in a ghetto⁴².

Cases of resistance to the Nazis were particularly emphasized (for example the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto, the feats of Jewish partisans or spies in Europe) and regarded as examples of true heroism, but dying, let alone surviving, in ghettos or concentration camps were not considered to be significant achievements. According to Yael Zerubavel, this was also seen in official formulations: the Israelis revered the memory of “martyrs and heroes”, “the Holocaust and the uprisings in ghettos”, “the Holocaust and heroism”. This attitude divided those who were passive victims and those who actively fought Nazism, without giving due recognition to the strength of spirit among people who were killed, and especially those who

survived⁴³.

In many ways, because of this image of victims/martyrs, in the first years after the foundation of the State of Israel, the topic of the Holocaust was somewhat sidelined. The catastrophe of European Jewry in its most terrible manifestation did not quite fit into official ideology. At state level, a myth was formed about national heroes who lived in Palestine, but helped to save the Jews of Europe during the war (one of these heroes was Hana Senesz, who was part of the group of Palmach parachutists captured in Hungary after an unsuccessful operation in the German rear in 1944⁴⁴). This myth, as well as the portrayal of Jewish partisans and members of uprisings in ghettos as “Zionists” and “Jewish youth”, their comparison with the “Zealots of Masada” and “the heroes of Tel-Hai”, was a way of connecting narratives about the activity of the Yishuv during the Second World War and the catastrophe of European Jewry, and perhaps of overcoming a certain feeling of guilt⁴⁵.

Meanwhile, in 1952, an agreement on reparations was already made between Israel and West Germany by which Germany undertook to pay funds to the Jewish state for the settlement of Jews who had survived the Holocaust along with compensation for Jewish property confiscated before and during the war. This decision of the Israeli government (which was primarily motivated by practical considerations) drew a highly mixed reaction from society and was criticized by political opponents of the Mapai party⁴⁶. However, after raising such a painful theme, at the same time, it made the problem of the Holocaust relevant for Israeli society and provoked its discussion. This, in all likelihood, was one of the factors that led to the gradual change in the perception of the topic of the Holocaust in the Jewish state.

In 1953, the memorial museum Yad VaShem was founded, immortalizing the memory of the Jewish victims of Nazism. In 1959, the Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day (established in the early 1950s) became a compulsory state memorial day. Commemorating the date of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (but not coinciding with it), it once more stressed the division between the two categories of Jews who suffered during the Second World War and the importance of active resistance for Israeli ideology⁴⁷. However, the path to the unification and the acceptance of “armed” and “passive”

resistance was already laid.

Israel as an Ethno-National State

Israeli national identity is mainly determined by the connections of its citizens with the state, and not by primordial ethnic and religious criteria. The classic concept of *sabra* – i.e. born in Palestine, and later in the State of Israel – is an example of modern secular Israeli identity.

Nevertheless, the ethnocentrism which is contained in the basis of Israeli statehood undoubtedly includes archaic elements. The position of the Jewish state as a state for Jews was embodied in the Law of Return, which determined the right of anyone who is Jewish by blood to receive Israeli citizenship.

The sub-ethnic component of Israeli society also influenced its national identity for a long time. The majority of immigrants, members of different sub-ethnic groups in Israel (communities of Jews from different countries) were subjected to attempts to determine their identity by state power, which made them feel that their rights were infringed, as if they were second-class citizens. They justly believed that the indifference of the authorities to their fate would destroy the true unity of Israelis, the idea of the “Jewish spirit” which was declared by the founding fathers of the Israeli state⁴⁸. For a long time, a certain contradiction remained (and partially exists even today) between the state and the sub-ethnic communities which fight for equal rights and conditions of their development as part of Israeli society. The attitude of sub-ethnic groups to national identity in Israel also affects such delicate and painful issues as ethnic community solidarity, which is a very emotional subject.

At early stages of state-building, the main efforts were directed towards achieving consensus in politics and did not focus on difficulties resulting from the diverse forms of national and ethnic identity which developed in the new state. The existing concept of a common Israeli political culture, known as Ben Gurion’s idea of the “melting pot”, did not initially pay necessary attention to the ethnic diversity of Israeli society, to the divide between the interests of the Ashkenazi elite and the Sephardi members of Eastern communities. The same thing happened with the growing contradictions between the secular and religious sections of the Jewish population of the country.

These already noticeable problems were postponed because of the urgent tasks of developing the economy, and accepting and absorbing new immigrants, which immediately led to serious omissions and compromises in the life of civil society. Additionally, for a long time it seemed that in the face of external danger, national unity would form automatically in society, relegating all “smaller” conflicts to the background, including religious, ethnic and sub-ethnic ones.

In issues of the balance between contemporaneity and traditions, secular and religious parts of society, a certain internal cultural dialogue was preserved: Jewish holidays became state holidays, the Jewish tradition was respected, the idea was supported that the state set the goal of realizing the national hopes of the Jewish people, without backing down from democratic values. Until the present day, this point of view is customary for many Israelis. The agreement adopted by Ben Gurion on the status quo with regard to mutual relations of the secular society and religious parties and institutions ensured public consensus for quite a long time⁴⁹.

The Formation of the Identity of Israeli Arabs

The harsh ethno-national model of state building of the Israeli leadership put the Arab population in the position of a minority that was discriminated against, although it felt a gradual improvement in its material situation and an expansion of its political rights within the Jewish state. The rights of Israeli Arabs, unlike those of the Jews, are observed on an individual basis, but not as the rights of a national community. The issue of the Arab minority being included in collective Israeli identity remains open. On the one hand, the majority of the Jewish population strives to preserve its separateness from the non-Jewish minority. On the other hand, the Arabs themselves, insisting on the principle of cultural pluralism, do not strive to become close to the Jews⁵⁰. The presence of an Arab ethnocultural minority, which has been discriminated against since the state was created, and its position in Israel change the character of political identity and the nature of Israeli democracy.

Israel was founded as a state of all citizens, which is the principle of liberal democracy. However, the Arab minority comprises a group of the population that is discriminated against. In summing up the results

of the first decades of domination of left-wing parties, the Israeli leadership ignored the rights of the Arab community, submitting it to harsh control and isolation of Arabs from the political process of the state, stimulating dependence of the Arab sector, while at the same time refusing to help it. In the Middle East conflict, up until 1966, Arab citizens of Israel were subject to wartime emergency legislation and various types of political restrictions.

After Likud came to power, the attitude to the Arab minority did not fundamentally change. The situation nevertheless began to transform. By the late 1980s, the passing of discriminatory laws and expropriation of land from Arabs on a mass scale ended. In the 1990s, the government took important steps to reduce the gap between Arab and Jewish sectors in the field of education and municipal financing. However, differences between the two systems of education are still enormous and are mainly expressed in the total domination of one system over another. The Arab sector has no opportunity to set goals and tasks of its education system and be an equal partner in setting common state goals and tasks. Basic circumstances existed which negatively affected the process of socialization and integration, such as the structure of Arab society, the extremely different development conditions of the Jewish and Arab sections of the population, the dominant moods in the Arab community, religious differences etc.

The Arab population at present is experiencing a painful process of reassessing their self-identification, characterized by two mutually exclusive tendencies – recognizing itself as part of Israeli society and at the same time part of the Palestinian people. These tendencies began to develop in the Arab sector at almost the same time. As a result of the non-regulation and regular outbreaks of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the process of “Palestinization” of Israeli Arabs was increasing, which led to a certain political radicalization of the Arab population. The first Palestinian uprising, the intifada that began on the West Bank and in Gaza in 1987 drastically changed the situation in the Arab sector, where processes of political awakening and national consolidation began to develop. Political goals were formulated – the battle for equal civil rights and the transformation of Israel into a nation for all citizens.

The process of forging Israeli national identity was long and not entirely linear. Despite the secular nature of the movement itself, the tradition of Judaism played an important role in its formation, becoming a source both for the basic principle of identification for the Jewish people and for fundamental national myths as an inseparable part of collective awareness. Ideas of European nationalism were combined with ancient traditions, the socialist ideology of the pioneer settlers was mingling and intertwining with concepts of the warrior Jew, the successor of great heroes of antiquity, and the freedom, power and independence of the new Jew, “new Hebrew” conflicted and coexisted with the idea of the weakness and submissive position of the Galut Jew. New Israeli Jewish identity is not a copy of traditional Jewish identity – utilizing its centuries-old legacy, the Zionists determined new national values and tasks, requiring self-respect and the readiness to confront any challenges. An objective decrease in existential threats cannot change behavioral models, characterized by a rigid vindication of the unilateral interests of Israel, even to the detriment of norms of international law.

Notes

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2 Anderson Benedict. Op. cit. P. 35–36.

3 Roshvald Aviel. Op. cit. P. 16–18, 22–24.

4 A revisionist movement in Israel historical science that emerged in the 1980s; it goes against mainstream Israeli ideology.

5 Sand Shlomo. The Invention of the Jewish People. L.: Verso, 2009. P. 31, 75, 130.

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- 9 Avineri Shlomo. *Zionism and the Jewish Religious Tradition: The Dialectics of Redemption and Secularization* // *Zionism and Religion*. Edited by Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira. Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1998. P. 6–7.
- 10 Laqueur Walter. *A History of Zionism*. N.Y.: Schocken Books, 2003. P. 154, 284.
- 11 Aronoff Myron J. *Myths, Symbols, and Rituals in the Emerging State* // *New Perspectives of Israeli History: The Early Years of the State* / Ed. by Silberstein Laurence J. N.Y.: New York University Press, 1991. P. 178.
- 12 Grosby Steven. *Nationalism: A Very Short Introduction*. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2005. P. 7–11.
- 13 Bartal Israel. *Responses to Modernity: Haskalah, Orthodoxy, and Nationalism in Eastern Europe* // *Zionism and Religion*. Edited by Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira. Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1998. P. 15–16.
- 14 Avineri Shlomo. *Op. cit.* P. 7, 3.
- 15 The idea of the organized agricultural development of Palestine emerged even before the First Aliyah: in 1870, the French Jewish organization Alliance founded Mikve Israel – the first new agricultural settlement in Palestine (it also had an agricultural school, which was its main aim) [The Aliyah of the Bilu movement and their settlement on the land. From the diary of Chaim Hisin (1882-1885) // *The Land of Israel in Letters and Memoirs of the 17th-20th centuries: In 2 v. V. 1* / Translation from Hebrew by G. Maziel; edited by I. Lurye, with L. Trembovler-Amir, Kh.-B. Korzakova. M.: Bridges of Culture, 2018. P. 399. (In Russ.)]
- 16 Aliyah — the repatriation of Jews to Eretz Israel.
- 17 Eretz Israel – the land of Israel, one of the Biblical names of the Holy Land. During the British Mandate period, this was the Zionist name of Palestine.
- 18 Negotiations on the purchase of Jericho lands. From the memoirs of Yeoshua Elin (1872) // Yaari A. *Op. cit.* P. 168; The First Agricultural Settlement in Upper Galilee. From the memoirs of Israel Bak (1831–1839) // Yaari A. *Op. cit.* P. 110–111. (In Russ.)
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The Foundation of Degania. From the Memoirs of Shmuel Dayan (November 1910) // Yaari A. Op. cit. P. 887–902. (In Russ.)

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21 Stories from the Life of Petah-Tikva. From the memoirs of Dov Haviv-Lubman (1885– 1886) // Yaari A. Op. cit. P. 272. (In Russ.)

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Chapter 8

Grigory Kosach

Palestine and Palestinians: Homeland and Community

At the beginning of 1969, proclaiming the reality of the existence of a national community, the Palestinian poet (and Israeli communist) Samih Al-Qasem wrote: “We are here, ladies and gentlemen, here, at the crossroads”¹. The national choice prevailed over class, as the poet illustrated the leading theme of the era – “the crystallization of Palestinian identity”².

The idea of crystallization (in its revolutionary framing) was formed by the achievements of previous years, when the Palestinian project entered the stage of realization. The Myth of *Al-Nakba* – the catastrophe of 1948 – 1949 – in its political meaning acquired a canonic frame: “The Palestinian issue is the issue of a people whose homeland was usurped, and who were exiled from their native land”³. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) founded in 1964 became a structure with considerable financial resources necessary for “restoring the right of the Palestinian people to a sacred homeland” and “the battle for liberating its usurped part”⁴.

The PLO was created on the initiative of Gamal Abdel Nasser inspired by ideas of Pan-Arab policy. The aim of the PLO was to restore the Palestinian “right” through the efforts of Israel’s Arab neighbors, with Egypt playing the leading role, rather than through the efforts of the Palestinians themselves. The main document of the PLO – the Palestinian National Charter (in the edition of 1964) limited the objectives of the organization. It could not “exercise sovereignty over the West Bank of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, or the Gaza Strip”⁵, and only the Palestinians of *shatat* – diaspora, exile – were included in the sphere of its operations. The Arabic title of document contained the word “*qawmy*”, which is translated as “*national*”, although in Arab discourse this word is used to define a common Arab community, and not a country.

The Charter proclaimed the existence of “Palestinian identity, handed down from fathers to sons”. The document outlined the limits of the “homeland” – Palestine within the boundaries of the British mandate as an inseparable territorial whole. The Balfour Declaration, the mandate of Great Britain for Palestine, and resolution No. 181 of the UN General Assembly were declared to be illegal, and the spiritual ties of the Jews with Palestine to be anti-historical.

In 1969, the PLO was joined by Fatah, which had previously operated outside it (and in the night of 1 January 1965 carried out its first armed attack on Israeli territory), along with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), both Marxist organizations. The PLO ceased to be a unitary organization, and became a coalition, where Fatah (with its leader Yasser Arafat heading the executive committee of the PLO) played the role of the supporting structure. There were good reasons for this: the January attack of 1965 was proclaimed as the beginning of the Palestinian revolution, and in March 1968, in the “battle of Karamah”, the *fedayeen* of Fatah forced the Israeli army to retreat, and defended the “dignity of the Arabs”⁶. By revolutionizing the PLO, its members used slogans that corresponded to crystallization – “revolution until victory”, “revolution until complete liberation”, “a rifle is the path of power”, “my identity is a rifle”⁷. But Palestinian identity is also the result of the June 1967 war, which created a new Middle Eastern reality. The Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip restored the territorial unity of the “homeland” – the former mandated Palestine. The defeat of Egypt (which became a defeat of the Pan-Arab idea) “freed” the PLO from the custodianship of the regime, which lost its former significance as an Arab revolutionary center.

Crystallization of Identity: Theory and Practice

The post-war regional situation adjusted the goals and tasks of the PLO. In July 1968, at the Cairo session of the Palestinian National Council (the PLO parliament), a new version of the Palestinian National Charter was passed. The common Arab concept of *qawmy* in its name was replaced with the country-based concept of *watany*⁸. The PLO gained a natural field for its activity – the entire territory of the

“homeland” (without any confiscations). The only holder of the legal right to it was declared to be the Arab people of Palestine.

The Charter declared the armed struggle to be the only method of liberating Palestine. The campaigns by the *fedayeen* were seen as the basis of the people’s liberation struggle, intended to solve “the contradiction between Zionism and the Arab people of Palestine”. The provisions on the illegal foundations of the legitimization of Jewish state and the anti-historical connection of Jews with Palestine were harshened, becoming truths that were not a matter of discussion.

The document in its 1968 edition expressed the opinion of a political elite of different social classes that had arisen “in exile”, which had split with the influential families and clans of the West Bank (in a certain measure of the Gaza Strip as well). These clans (*hamail*) played a leading role in the nascence of the national movement in the 1930s – 1940s (the connivance of mufti Amin Al-Husseini made Al-Nakba possible), and also in the PLO in the period from 1964 to 1969 (when it was headed by Ahmad Shuqeiri). Supporters of the new elite were *lyajiun* – *exiles*, inspired by the idea of return and revenge.

Bearers of the crystallized identity were declared “victims of Zionist aggression”. The *lyajiun*, concentrated in refugee camps scattered around the Arab world, were transformed into *aidun* – people returning to the “usurped homeland”. From the “exiles” came the *fedayeen* – “the advance guard in the battle for a sacred common national (*qawmy*) goal – Arab unity, which would bring the Arab world “genuine liberation”.

The ambivalence of the idea and practice of Palestinian identity is clear. Palestine was united by the victory of the army of a state which the PLO declared illegal. The very unification became illusory – the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which came under Israeli military and political control, once more became outside the sphere of action of the PLO. The legitimacy of Arafat and his circle (at the cost of being accused of terrorism, not without grounds) required a toughening in anti-Zionism and anti-Israelism – the markers of the Palestinian movement. The impossibility of acting where the “homeland” was located, directed the Palestinian project towards changing the situation in the Arab world.

This world was the source of regional (and subsequently international)

legitimization of the PLO, and its main sponsor⁹. In November 1974, at a summit held in Rabat, the Arab League recognized it as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people¹⁰. Speaking on 13 November 1974 at the 29th session of the UN General Assembly, which discussed the Palestinian issue on the initiative of the Arab nations, Arafat was eloquent: "I came to you with an olive branch in one hand and the rifle of revenge in the other. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand." However, this did not mean acquiring one's own "homeland", but liquidating the "illegal Zionist formation on Arab land"¹¹.

The June 1967, war changed the balance of forces in the system of inter-Arab relations. The defeat of "progressive" States (with the leading role of Nasser's Egypt) created a foundation for turning "conservatives" (primarily Saudi Arabia) into a central link in inter-Arab relations. The documents of the Khartoum summit of the League of Arab States (September 1967) declared only the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to be occupied Arab territories. For all the harshness of the "three no" in relation to Israel, this nevertheless did not mean what was previously known as "occupied Palestine"¹² – a euphemism to describe the sovereign territory of Israel.

The unprecedented step taken in the Sudan capital was consolidated by the results of the October 1973 war and its minimal number of Arab participants (compared with previous episodes of military operations against the Jewish State), which allowed Anwar Sadat to attempt settling Egyptian-Israeli relations. The move to put an end to the Middle East conflict as an interstate conflict became closer to reality.

The factor of Israel united the Arab world less and less. The peace plan proposed by the Saudi Crown Prince Fahd bin Abdel Aziz and passed at the Arab League summit in Fez in 1981, announced the right of all nations of the region to live in peace, specifying the provisions of the Khartoum summit documents¹³. The Arab peace initiative, initiated by Saudi Arabia and defining the borders of the State of Palestine (the territory of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip occupied in June 1967) spoke of an end to bloodshed, and of normalizing relations with Israel as part of universal peace¹⁴. The time had come to destroy old taboos, and contacts between Arab and Israeli

officials and bilateral agreements (although they were still often made behind the scenes) no longer looked impossible. The PLO slowly and inconsistently moved towards new trends, towards the "revolutionization", despite the fact that the response to her course was harsh and sometimes bloody. In September 1970 (*black September* in the Palestinian discourse), armed groups of the PLO attempting to change the situation in Jordan were expelled from its territory.

The freedom to fight for the "liberation of Palestine" on the territory Arab states bordering Israel continued to narrow. Participation in the civil war in Lebanon, where Palestinian *fedayeen* joined in a bloc with fighters against the "Maronite state" led to the forced relocation of the PLO to Tunisia in 1982. The proximity to the territory of the "homeland" was lost, and the Arab world ostracized those who considered themselves to be its advance guard.

This did not mean that the PLO completely rejected the policy of "revolutionization" (an element of which was anti-Israeli actions) – in August 1990, Arafat supported the annexation of Kuwait. Could an organization which was hardly capable of acquiring state territory and creating its own political regime be an independent player in the Arab world? The answer to this question is not put in the affirmative.

The coalitional nature of the PLO excluded its internal unity. The groups that were part of it were connected with Syrian or Iraqi branches of Baathism (Saiqa and the Arab Liberation Front). The expansion of the PLO looked inevitable, and its armed divisions and institutions were situated outside the territory of the "homeland". The process of this expansion was connected with external players – in the early 1980s, the Palestinian Communist Party joined its ranks.

Numerous ideological interpretations of Palestinian identity arose. Fatah did not consider it possible to appeal to social ideology, believing that the "battle with the occupants" could not be national, as it was being waged by a "class of refugees". The PFLP proposed a revolutionary ideology in the interests of winning the "national battle of the most radical classes – the workers and the poorest farmers"¹⁶. The DFLP believed that the ideology of the proletariat would triumph in a bourgeois democratic revolution (which would be the "liberation of Palestine")¹⁷. In the 1970s –1980s, DFLP supporters promoted the

idea of a union with progressive forces of Israeli society to create a “people’s democratic state, where Muslims, Christians and Jews would have equal rights”¹⁸.

The fragile structure of the PLO was shattered not only by different understandings of identity, but by the inter-Arab contradictions that affected them. If “conservative” States attempted to direct the actions of the PLO to solve a state problem – the opposition to Israel and the “liberation” of Palestine, “the progressives” were dragging it into the battle for regional influence. The issue was not only about the importance of external impact on the PLO. The focus on “returning refugees” as the basis of building a national community supported the existing regionalist splits among the *lyajiun*. In the PLO leadership, rulers came from towns of the West Bank (primarily Jerusalem). The representation of the Gaza Strip was insignificant. The differences in the views of tactical and strategic tasks of an armed people’s revolution made it difficult, and sometimes impossible, to reach agreement on key issues of national existence. The policy of “revolutionization” of the Arab world not only distanced the PLO from the territory of the “homeland”, but reduced the level of its influence in the Palestinian diaspora.

The first Palestinian *intifada* that began in 1987 gave the PLO the chance for the first time since 1967 to take part in processes developing in both regions of Palestine. In the Palestinian discourse, a concept arose known as *al-dakhil* – the inner space of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (along with the people inhabiting this region – *muwatynun*) as antitheses of *al-kharij* – countries of *dispersion* and *exiles*.

The PLO: from “Revenge” to Reality

In mid-November 1988, in Algeria at the 19th (emergency) session of the Palestinian National Council, the Declaration of Independence of the State of Palestine was proclaimed. “The National Council, in the name of the Lord and the Arab Palestinian people, declares the creation of the State of Palestine on Palestinian land, the capital of which is East Jerusalem”, the Declaration stated¹⁹.

The “parliament in exile” legitimized this step “as the historical right

of the Palestinian people to their homeland – Palestine”, which “members of many generations protecting their freedom and independence” had given their lives to realize. The legality of this act was determined by decisions of the Arab League summits, and also UN resolutions confirming the legal aspiration of “The Arab people of Palestine to self-determination, political independence and sovereignty on their own land”. The foundation for this was the Resolution of the UN General Assembly No. 181 on the partition of Palestine and the creation of two States, Arab and Jewish, and also the Resolutions No. 242 and 338 passed by the UN Security Council.

The declaration not only recognized as a *fait accompli* – the existence of Israel, but also set out (although not sufficiently explicitly) the boundaries of the future Palestinian State – “where the blessed intifada develops” – the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The “Arab people of Palestine” were no longer portrayed as *fedayeen* waging an armed struggle and having the right to “return” to the entire territory of Palestine, but were limited to members of the intifada. They were not *lyajiu*, but *muwatynun*. The intifada was declared as the starting point of the process of “liberation of the homeland”; the heroism of its participants made it possible to raise the issue of creating the State of Palestine. The step taken by the PLO did not make the possibility of creating a state any closer – Israel, which continued to consider the PLO a terrorist organization, had already agreed in the Camp David Accords on the Palestinian autonomy on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The situation only changed in the early 1990s, when the liberation of Kuwait brought to life the Madrid peace process with the participation of the Arab countries and Israel, and the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations held in Oslo. The direct talks ended with the signing of the Declaration of Principles. The two parties agreed "that it is time to put an end to decades of confrontation and conflict, recognize their mutual legitimate and political rights, and strive to live in peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity and security and achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement and historic reconciliation through the agreed political process"²⁰.

The Declaration of Principles involved the elections and the establishment of a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority. Establishing contacts with *muwatynun* (for predominance in self-

administration structures) required making connections with leading family clans (*hamail*) of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip – Fatah chose this path by overriding and marginalizing other groups of the PLO²¹. The time for peace had come, Mahmud Abbas said, and “Palestinians are obliged to remember the kind words of the mufti (Al-Husseini – *author’s note.*)”²².

In Oslo, the PLO agreed on the emergence of a *quasi-state*. Assessing this situation, Abbas stated: “The sovereignty which we discussed (in Oslo – *author’s note.*) is relative, connected with the principle of sovereign national rights, and with the creation of an essentially non-existent national life”²³. The former understanding of identity lost its significance – in 1993, the PLO accepted its partner’s demands, excluding from the Palestinian National Charter the provisions on the armed struggle as the only method to liberate Palestine, *fedayeen* as the moving force of the Palestinian national liberation struggle, and the illegality of the partition of Palestine and the creation of Israel²⁴.

This step was justified – the battle of the Palestinian people was directed “towards restoring wounded dignity, and not revenge”²⁵. Arising as a union of clan-regional groups, under the guise of parties, and Arafat’s inner circle (and creating on this basis institutions that were far from effective), the PNA could not appeal to revolutionary identity. From now on, appealing to *muwatynun*, it spoke of the Palestinian legacy – the Biblical myth was deprived of its Hebrew elements and made to fit into the Muslim context.

Jerusalem was *Ievus*, where “in the time of the Prophet Ibrahim” *Malkisadeq* ruled, “the Ievusi/Canaan-Arab King of Al-Quds, who practices monotheism”. He “laid the foundation of Al-Aqsa, rebuilt the walls of Al-Quds, and broke a path in the cliffs for water that fed the city”. He “prayed at Al-Aqsa, making sacrifices on the cliff next to it, and moved by the mercy of monotheism gave the meat of sacrificed animals to the poor and homeless”. From Al-Quds, the Prophet of Islam “was raised to the throne of the Lord”. If Al-Quds “was Arab”, and the “King Malkisadeq was an Arab”, if Al-Aqsa was founded before the Temple, and next to it the ritual of Eid al-Adha practiced, then the Palestinians have “the natural right to possess this city”²⁶.

HAMAS: the Religious Framing of a National Idea

The first intifada put adherents of the Islamic idea to the forefront of Palestinian political life. Created in Gaza in 1987 by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and registered by the Israeli occupying forces, the Muslim association²⁷ was a year later transformed into the Islamic Resistance Movement – HAMAS. The Charter which was published at the time offered a religious vision of the future.

The text of the document²⁸ opened with an Ayah from the Koran to describe the followers of HAMAS: “You will be the best of the communities who were brought out before the people”²⁹ has put forward a new version of identity. The words accompanying the Ayah were by the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood Hassan Al-Banna: “Israel will stand until it is cast down by Islam”, leaving no doubt that the organization’s goals were to liquidate the “Zionist formation”. The genetic connection with the Muslim Brotherhood (HAMAS is its Palestinian wing³⁰) did not exclude self-definition as a Palestinian movement, “serving Allah, seeing Islam as a way of life and acting in its name, so that the banner of Allah flies over every inch of the land of Palestine”.

Without defining the borders of Palestine, the Charter announced the existence of a “homeland”, which had acquired the status of *waqf*, “serving future generations of Muslims until Judgement Day”. The idea was clarified: “No Arab state or all Arab states, no king or president or all kings and presidents, no organization or all Palestinian and Arab organizations” have the power to “give up or concede any part of its territory”. Including the idea of a homeland in religious doctrine, HAMAS embodied “higher patriotism”, “raising the divine banner over the homeland linking earth and sky”.

The Muslim *waqf* was not just an equivalent of the space that was outlined by the Palestinian National Charter as the “undivided territorial whole in the boundaries of the time of the British mandate”. Palestine acquired a mystical dimension as a place where civilizations clashed. It was not a political conflict that took place there, but a conflict between Muslims and the “world evil” represented by Israel – “the liberation of Palestine” will destroy this “evil”³¹. HAMAS stated that the path to “liberation” was a jihad against the “Zionist-Masonic conspiracy that has triumphed in the countries of the East and West”. Resistance to the “Zionist invasion” demanded putting the *hadith* of

the Prophet into practice: “An hour does not go by without Muslims fighting the Jews and killing them”³².

The “patriotism” of HAMAS indicated the limits and possibilities of its cooperation with Palestinian organizations and movements. Announcing that the PLO (primarily Fatah) was the closest structure to the Islamic Resistance Movement (“we have the same homeland, the same calamities, the same destiny and a common enemy”), HAMAS nevertheless stressed the fact: “The secular idea absolutely contradicts the religious idea”. The Charter stated that only when the PLO “accepts Islam as a way of life, we will become its warriors”.

HAMAS emerged and acted within the boundaries of the “national” territory – in its case, the idea of Palestinian identity also applied to *muwatynun*. In using this concept, HAMAS took account of the real situation – in this community the level of religious belief was higher than among Palestinians of the diaspora. The occupation, which assisted the transformation of agricultural orientations and social structure of Palestinians of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, did not change their consolidation in resisting an external force. This consolidation, as a Palestinian sociologist wrote, relied on religion, which played the “leading role among value guidelines of society”³³. The religious, liberating and anti-Israeli rhetoric of HAMAS was a tool in resisting not so much the Jewish state, as the PNA and Fatah.

HAMAS portrayed *muwatynun* as an indisputable myth that was remote from any rational explanations and not a matter for discussion. This myth was effective when it was required to prove the “opportunism” of the PNA leadership, and it was not intended solely for supporters of political Islam. Supporters of Fatah and other organizations of the PLO were also pulled into the sphere of influence of this myth..

The appeal to divine right, the identity cultivated previously by the PLO and based on the idea of vengeance and return, was now turned to *muwatynun*. They gained an enemy – the renegades connected with Israel, the administration of the PNA, who were defined as a “pseudo-national ally of Zionism”. This administration was “criminal”, as it “ignored the principles of Islam leading to salvation and revival”³⁴. Stating that “Islam is the solution”, HAMAS presented an alternative to corrupt reality.

PNA: the Bipolarity of Palestinian Policy

In October 2000, the territory of the PNA was swept by a wave of violence and anarchy – the “uprising of the masses” began – the *intifada of the Al-Aqsa mosque*. For HAMAS, the opportunity arose to hold a leading position in the *muwatynun* community. The reminiscences of historical memory were combined with vital tasks, and appealing to the “rebels”, the leadership announced that “the time had come for the liberator of Jerusalem Salah ad-Din Al-Ayyub”, who fought against the “desecrators of Al-Aqsa”. The example of the great commander demanded “expanding armed operations” and undermining “normalization of relations with the Zionist formation”³⁵ – and the PNA in its current form was to become a thing of the past.

The development of the second intifada showed the clear inability of the PNA to resist the growing and universal violence, which arose from its structure itself. The armed formation of the Fatah – the Brigades of the Martyrs of Al-Aqsa (along with the armed wing of HAMAS – the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades) carried out anti-Israeli operations. The regular conflicts that arose between Arafat and members of regional and clan structures, creating their own armed formation, shook the regime. The head of the PNA followed prevailing moods, reviving the anti-Israeli “national liberation” rhetoric and supporting the intifada. The stay in the residence in Ramallah, blocked by the Israeli army, returned to Arafat the aura of sacrificial heroism, even in his opponents’ eyes. HAMAS also acquired this aura – in March 2004 as a result of the actions of the Israeli special forces and the army, Sheikh Yasin was killed, and a month later his successor Abdel Aziz Al-Rantisi. But the possibilities of HAMAS were narrowed, and the “Arab peace initiative” passed in 2002 tied down supporters of anti-Israeli violence.

The second intifada did not seriously change the political map of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, preserving the equality of forces between Fatah and HAMAS. Both groups (facing severe pressure from Arab monarchies, the West and Israel) vowed (after the death of Arafat in November 2004) to search for mutual understanding. The possibility of moving in this direction was determined by the newly arising situation of bipolarity. In January 2005 Abbas was elected to the

position of head of the PNA, a year later HAMAS won in the elections to Palestinian parliament – the Legislative Council. Fatah continued to dominate in the highest level of power of the PNA. Its head maintained broad powers both in the legislative sphere and in areas connected with foreign ties, security and negotiations with Israel.

HAMAS did not have a parliamentary majority, which did not allow it to determine the procedure for passing the primary laws of the PNA. In its turn, the parliamentary group of the Fatah was obliged to achieve consensus with deputies representing HAMAS, in order to ensure the possibility of passing the legislative documents it had lobbied.

Based on the support for the *muwatynun* community expressed by HAMAS, on 15 June 2007, rebels of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, “following the policy of Sheikh Yasin and Abdel Aziz Al-Rantisi” carried out an armed uprising in Gaza, creating their own “state”³⁶. Commenting on the events in Gaza, an Arab journalist wrote: “Instead of a Palestinian state we have returned to zero, instead of a potentially possible state quasi-states have arisen in Gaza and on the West Bank. The dream to create a Palestinian state no longer exists, it has disappeared for an entire generation of Palestinians. From now on this dream is an illusion”³⁷.

HAMAS in Gaza: a “Religious Liberation” Mission?

Demarking the spheres of influence of leading political forces of the PNA (the Gaza Strip as the domain of HAMAS, the West Bank of Fatah), the rebellion showed the deep regionalist divisions in Palestinian society. These divisions raised the issue of the real existence of Palestinian identity, and a Palestinian “homeland”. At the same time, the political dominance of HAMAS, which had lasted over 10 years, did not cast doubt on the *muwatynun* of the region they controlled. The Israeli army responded to shooting and suicide bombing in Israel by air attacks and invasion operations that destroyed the infrastructure. Egyptian and Israeli sanctions (as an element of international sanctions) turned economic life of the sector into a “tunnel economy”. By putting pressure on HAMAS, the PNA introduced measures of economic optimization – data published in April 2019 by the Central Statistics Bureau showed that at the

beginning of the year the level of “deep poverty” in the sector came to 53%³⁸.

HAMAS preserved power, relying not only on measures to suppress dissent, but also on a course of economic *laissez-faire*. In the Gaza Strip, a group of smugglers connected with HAMAS appeared, the activity of local business structures was not regulated, which independently (but with the regime’s approval) developed contacts with foreign counteragents (primarily Israelis). The connection of the workforce of the Gaza Strip with the Israeli labor market remained unchanged (which closed in response to acts of violence).

The liquidation of the influence of previously leading families created new opportunities for social mobility. Iranian and Qatar financial aid funded the activity of repressive structures, the police and the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades – unemployed youth joined their ranks. The need to satisfy urgent life needs of the population opened a field for creating diverse workshops, and primitive equipment was no hindrance to work. The society of Gaza became archaic, and one of the signs of this process was the high level of religiosity, which gave rise to stoicism in a situation of sanctions and Israeli military repressions. Religion was accompanied with national identity – 72% of respondents in the Gaza Strip announced in January 2018 that they considered themselves primarily to be Palestinian Muslims³⁹.

HAMAS continued to appeal to “liberation” in a religious framing, but sometimes new notes have also appeared in the discourse, such as when residents of Gaza were proclaimed the advance guard of the Palestinian battle. Commenting on the events in spring 2018, “The Great March of Return”, a HAMAS press released stated: “The heroic Palestinian people of Gaza... sent a powerful message to everyone who ignores its inalienable rights: its situation is not a situation of starvation, its tragedy is not a humanitarian catastrophe, but a fundamental political problem of the battle with the Zionist opponent”⁴⁰.

On 1 May 2017, at a press conference in Doha, Qatar, Khaled Mashal (at that time the General Secretary of HAMAS) presented the “Document on General Principles and Policies”. This was a new version of national action (although it retained the previous basic approaches) which had much less religious rhetoric. HAMAS bade its

past farewell – the Document no longer contained references to the genetic connection with the Muslim Brotherhood movement. Islam was proclaimed to be the religion of peace and tolerance⁴¹.

The document discussed Palestine as a “land where the Arab Palestinian people emerged, with which they are connected, and which belongs to them”, defining the essence of the Palestinian issue – “the problem of a people deprived of land”, on which a “predatory and racist Zionist project was realized”. The borders of Palestine were marked – “from the River of Jordan in the East to the Mediterranean Sea in the West, from Ras-el-Nakura⁴² in the North to Umm al-Rashrash⁴³ in the south”.

Palestine was examined not as a *waqf*, but as the property of a common religious, cultural and political diverse Palestinian people, and Jerusalem with its Muslim and Christian sacred sites was not just the first *qibla* of the Muslims and the place of the Ascension of the Prophet, but also the cradle of Christ. HAMAS was defined as a Palestinian Islamic national liberation movement of resistance, whose battle “with the Zionist project is not a religious struggle with the Jews” – blatantly anti-Semitic passages of the Charter were omitted.

The position of HAMAS remained unchanged – “regardless of the reasons and circumstances, regardless of the length of occupation [the time of the existence of Israel – *author’s note*], no concessions of the Palestinian territory could be possible”. The unchanging position was obvious – “the full (“from the river to the sea”) liberation of Palestine”. This did not apply to the issue of refugees, whose right to return was declared to be natural. The Declaration of Principles and the subsequent Palestinian-Israeli agreements “could not lead to peace, but resistance and jihad in the name of liberating Palestine – the law, duty and honor for the sons of its people”. The document considered armed resistance legal “from the viewpoint of divine precepts and international law”. The document also contained more significant nuances, above all the declaration of the aspiration to national partnership with Fatah on the basis of national consensus, the form of which was supposed to be “the creation of an independent Palestinian state with the capital in East Jerusalem and the borders of the 4th of June 1967, and the return of refugees”. HAMAS stated that this did not involve “an alternative to the liberation of Palestine” or “a

recognition of the Zionist formation”. However, the according provision of the Document was regarded as a partial recognition of the existing reality. The statement contained in the document on the right of the people to develop methods and mechanisms of resistance in order to stop an escalation of threats, arose from contacts of HAMAS with the Israeli side, and the truce they had signed.

The new emphases of the document meant that HAMAS laid claim to expressing the will of all Palestinians, absorbing the agenda of the PNA and Fatah and acting on the “free territory of Palestine”, from which the battle for the “final liberation of the homeland” was supposed to begin. These were ambitions of the higher leadership re-elected in May 2017 (the position of General Secretary was held by Ismail Haniya, and the political office was filled with heads of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades), ensuring the support of Qatar and Iran⁴⁴, ignored by the leadership of the PNA and leading actors of Arab policy.

The poet and idol of many generations of Palestinians (who was also an Israeli communist for a short time), Mahmud Dervish, wrote: “From my country, which fell out of the window of a train, I need my mother’s scarf and a reason to die again”⁴⁵. Words spoken many years ago, in the early 1980s, now seem prophetic. What is the Palestinian national movement today, which was once formed as the PLO? Does a Palestinian “homeland” exist? And does Palestinian identity exist?

At first glance, the PLO does not appear to have become a thing of the past – Abbas continues to be the head of its executive committee. But the changes that have taken place in it seem irreversible.

The fall of the Ba’athist regime in Iraq and the transformation of power in Syria brought the Arab Liberation Front and As-Saika to the brink of extinction. The era after the signing of the Declaration of Principles and the creation of the PNA narrowed the possibilities of the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine), which became a satellite of HAMAS and a structure carrying out acts of anti-Israeli terrorism. The split in the ranks of the DFOP (Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine), which led to the formation of the Democratic Palestinian Union supported by the PNA leadership, weakened the position of the previously third political force in the PLO, turning it into an ally of HAMAS. Finally, the communists,

deprived of external support, transformed into the social democratic Party of the Palestinian People and a satellite of Fatah. Fatah and HAMAS today seem to be the forces that dominate in the Palestinian political field.

This domination is detrimental, because both of these movements (which is already clear in the case of Fatah, and in many ways in the case of HAMAS) are becoming phantom structures, only necessary for the leaders in power to give legitimacy to their clients united by clan or regional interests. The formal existence of the “homeland”, including the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, turns these structures into irreconcilable enemies, each of which aspires to establish their own control over the entire territory of this “homeland”.

The content of the main concepts of the Palestinian project – the “homeland” and identity, have always been determined by factors arising from pragmatic circumstances of the time and place of its evolution. Arising as a response to the activity of its rival – Zionism/Israel (and also experiencing its discursive influence), the Palestinian project was forced to go with the flow of powerful ideological currents developing in the Arab world, or be influenced by the politics of States on whose territories Palestinian institutions, parties and movements were framed. An important role here was also played by the Israeli view of methods of ensuring the regional presence and security of the Jewish state. The result of this effect was the constant erosion of the proclaimed task – the “liberation of Palestine”.

The concept of the “homeland” proved shaky and fluid, undergoing an evolution from the territory of the “mandated Palestine” to the area of the PNA. But this space, reduced by an agreement by PLO leaders at the time the Declaration of Principles was signed, may become further curtailed as a result of the plan “Peace to Prosperity” proposed by US President Donald Trump in January 2020 and passed by the Israeli establishment.

The concept of “homeland”, like Palestinian identity (still narrowed down and painted in the colors of ideological views popular at a

certain time) is the subject of endless manipulations of the groups of the elite which owing to the historical conditions of the development of the Palestinian project headed the national movement. These groups could not put an end to the conflict with the Jewish state and create conditions which would make it possible to ensure the gradual transformation of the PNA into a state. Instead of moving on the path of peace, they chose the policy of inflaming hatred and destroying the basis on which the potential prospect of eliminating factors and prerequisites for mutual alienation and hostility rested. This policy created obstacles on the path of solving the Arab-Palestinian conflict.

The League of Arab States constantly stresses the fact that it stipulates the recognition of the rights of the two States, including the “sovereign Palestinian state within the boundaries of the 4th of June 1967, the capital of which is East Jerusalem”⁴⁸.

The idea of the Palestinian state is an unchanging element of the Arab position. The result of this position was a “cold war” in Egyptian-Israeli and Jordanian-Israeli relations, and a breakdown in diplomatic and trade ties between Israel, on the one hand, and with Mauritania, Qatar and Oman on the other, in the period of the *intifada of the Al-Aqsa Mosque*.

This position is preserved today, despite the fact that Arab conservatives – the monarchies of the Persian Gulf are far from excluding the Jewish state from its potential partners, or considering it a source of a threat to stability and security. In late summer – early autumn of 2020, this approach received a natural development – the UAE, and then Bahrein signed peace accords with Israel. The leader of the conservatives, Saudi Arabia, was far from condemning the actions of its close neighbors and allies. Commenting on the Emirate-Israeli normalization, a Saudi analyst, previously the editor of the international Arab-language publication, the newspaper “Asharq Al-Aawsat” and the former general director of the satellite television channel “Al-Arabiya”, Abdul Rahman al-Rashed, considered it necessary to separate the two aspects of relations with Israel. The first, in his opinion, is that “no Arab party can force their opinions on Palestinians about how they should solve their problem”. The time of “looking after the Palestinians has ended – the decision on Palestine is taken by the Palestinians, and not by Qatar, Syria, Iran or Saudi

Arabia”. The second is that “each Arab state has the right to build its international ties independently, including relations with Israel”. He went on to draw a harsh conclusion: “Israelis have visited all Arab capitals – they have been received as diplomats, athletes, officers of security services and journalists. The Palestinians proved to be the losing side. This was the choice of the PNA, which only observes events and makes nothing but negative judgements about them”⁴⁹.

These words contain a large dose of bitter truth. If in Abu-Dhabi and Manama it was stressed that the next step did not at all mean rejecting support of Palestinian rights, including the demand to create a state, the Palestinian reaction (regardless of whether this was from the PNA or HAMAS) was based on the idea of the “betrayal of Jerusalem, the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Palestinian cause”, and highlighted the “solidarity of the Palestinian people, united in resisting a treacherous resolution”⁵⁰. Assessing the step made by Bahrain, the leadership of the PNA qualified it as actions directed to “giving legality to barbaric crimes of the Israeli occupants against the sons of the Palestinian people”⁵¹. This was the position of a categorical refusal to recognize the realities of the present day, and appeal to the outdated slogan of “Arab unity”.

The factor of Israel (and the related “unquestioning” support of the “righteous Palestinian cause”) no longer unites the Arab world. Its devaluation today is the winning trend of the Middle Eastern region, when national interests of each country of the Arab world become a factor determining its foreign policy decisions. Perhaps the most striking example of this was the refusal by members of the Arab League Ministers’ Council held on 9 September 2020 to discuss the resolution proposed by the Palestinian delegation to condemn the agreement on the normalization of Emirate-Israeli relations⁵².

Commenting on this event, the Saudi analyst went on to write: “For the first time in history, the PNA faced an unanimous Arab rejection, when the Palestinian leadership was told that each Arab state, like the Palestinian administration itself, has the right to self-determination”. He added: “The dam has burst. The UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt and Jordan before them, Sudan is almost ready, Oman is welcoming, Saudi air space is open [for flights by Israeli civilian airplanes – *author’s note*] – it won’t take long before everyone else joins the

moving train”⁵³.

The Palestinian project is being marginalized. But neither global players nor regional powers seem far from realizing a certain form of Palestinian statehood. Assessing the present situation of the Palestinian project, the General Secretary of the Arab League Ahmed Aboul Gheit spoke of “preserving unity of all Arab nations”, involving “the emergence of an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian state”⁵⁴. However, there is a more important consideration.

Describing the situation in both regions of Palestine, “Peace to Prosperity” plan, known as the “deal of the century” noted the unacceptability of HAMAS quasi-terrorist attacks on Israel, and the “failure of institutions”, “bad governance”, “universal corruption”. The document states that “a culture of peace should include an end to incitement... It should also prohibit hostile propaganda, as well as textbooks, curriculum and related materials contrary to the goal of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Agreement, including the denial of one another’s right to exist”. This document stressed that “Palestinians deserve a better future”, which may be a Palestinian state. But for the sake of this they must “reject terrorism in all its forms”, promote the “security of the region”, and no less importantly, create effective institutions and make a choice in favor of pragmatic decisions⁵⁵.

Will Palestinians be capable of taking this path? The answer to this question is still unclear.

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Chapter 9

Victor Nadein-Raevsky

The Kurds: Ethnicity versus National Identity

There have never been favorable conditions for the Kurds to create their nation states. Mighty states were created in territories inhabited by Kurds, and each time the area they lived in was divided between rivals.

The disintegration of the Kurdish ethnos always took the upper hand over integrational processes, but at the same time the territory of residence of Kurdish tribes did not allow any ruling states to completely control it. The Kurdish “native mountains” not only fed the Kurdish tribes, but also served as a refuge from numerous conquests and raids.

The fragmentation of the territory of what is now customarily known as Kurdistan, the fact that different Kurdish tribes lived in different states could not but shape their lives. The Kurdish regions in these countries were backward and underdeveloped, and capitalist relations there were held back by the traditional feudal-tribal way of life, based on communal nomadic farming. The very situation in all parts of Kurdistan constantly led to conflict with the ruling authorities, which tried to subdue disobedient regions, and uprising by Kurds became the distinguishing feature of the entire region.

Features of the Kurdish Ethnic Group

The largest national ethnic community in the Middle East without its own statehood is the Kurds – a people who live on a territory shared between four countries – Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. The search for national identity and the struggle to gain their own statehood have made the Kurds an important player in the system of Middle Eastern politics. Their history, origin and political fate have enabled the development of two opposing processes – the consolidation of the Kurdish ethnos and also its internal fragmentation, given the cultural-

religious differences between individual groups and communities.

Assessments of the number of Kurds vary from 25-30 to 40 million. According to Garnik Asatryan, the population of the Kurds “is around 15-20 million, although one may encounter figures ranging from 30 to 60 million, as all the peoples speaking unwritten Iranian languages are often classified as Kurds”¹. However, national censuses, which can be trusted and take into account the ethnic composition of the population of the countries, have not been carried out, and all figures both on the total size of the Kurdish population and on individual ethnic groups of Kurds have always been approximate.

The territory occupied at present by a compact Kurdish population has an area of around 500,000 sq. m. They live in the border regions shared by Iran, Turkey, Syria and Iran, and also in a number of neighboring countries, not counting the diaspora in other places. Around 8.1 million Kurds live in Iran (10% of the population), 5.5 million in Iraq (17%), 1.7 million in Syria (9.7%) and 14.7 million in Turkey (18%)².

The scholarly community and political circles in all of these countries have many disagreements about the origin of this people. “Kurds” (at least, this was originally the case), along with Armenians, Assyrians, and to a certain extent Turks and Jews, are the genetic and anthropological descendants of the Alarody (Hurrite-Urarta) language family”³.

Currently fashionable genetic studies give very unexpected results. They show that the Kurds are close to the Iranian Azerbaijanis and the peoples of Western Asia⁴. At the same time, the Iranian Azerbaijanis differ genetically from the Turks of Asia Minor. The language differences of these peoples are also evident.

The actual name “Kurd” is classified by many researchers not as an ethnic group, but as a type of activity, as the Persians once gave this name to all nomads, and the main activity of the Kurds was livestock breeding, usually free-range. The history of the formation of the Kurdish ethnic group numbers many hundreds of years, but the Kurds did not succeed in creating a unified state. Individual Kurdish principalities existed, but they were destroyed by their stronger neighbors. At the same time, ethnic Kurds often became the rulers of powerful states.

According to the renowned Russian historian M.S. Lazarev, “the ethnic consolidation of the original Kurdish people (which may be confidently dated to the 5th - 6th centuries AD) continued for centuries and in certain aspects may not yet be considered to be complete”⁵. Over the course of centuries, waves of conquerors passed through territories populated by Kurdish tribes, and the Kurds became part of the many nations created on this territory. At the same time, Lazarev believes, “the disintegrational factor in the ethnic unity of the Kurds should not be exaggerated. The ethnic differences (language, religions, everyday realities etc.) were not insuperable barriers for language, cultural or everyday communication within the Kurdish population. There were also no state borders as such, as they were poorly guarded and could be easily crossed from all sides”⁶.

The defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War and the subsequent division of its territory gave Kurds hopes for the creation of Kurdistan on the ruins of the Empire. The Sevres Peace Treaty did in fact envisage the foundation of a Kurdish state. In accordance with this document, the borders of independent Kurdistan were supposed to be determined by Britain, France and Turkey together. But the treaty was never ratified by the member countries, and the Lausanne Peace Treaty signed in 1923 after the success of the Kemalist revolution determined the contemporary borders of Turkey. Thus, the only chance for the Kurds to gain statehood was not realized⁷. Attempts by the Kurds at least to gain autonomy as part of Kemalist Turkey led to nothing, and numerous uprisings by Kurds were brutally suppressed throughout the entire period between the two world wars.

An object of pride for the Kurds, and an important element of self-awareness and the formation of national identity, is derived from famous historical figures who were ethnic Kurds. One of the most important of them is Yusuf ibn Ayyub Salah ad-Din (Saladin) – the Muslim military commander of the 12th century, the Sultan of Egypt and Syria, and the founder of the Ayyubid dynasty⁸. Ethnic Kurds, according to various sources, were the founders of several ruling dynasties in the Middle East and Central Asia.

Historically, the Kurds possessed a proto-statehood. In Eastern Kurdistan from the end of the 12th to the mid-19th century, the principality of Ardalan was located, and at different historical periods individual separate principalities existed in Diyarbakir, Mardin, Aran,

Ani, Dinaver, Shahrizur and Luristan which were ruled by Kurd dynasties⁹.

According to Lazarev, Kurds were a nation in the ethnic sense, all the regions were closely connected and “the binding compound was the unified ethno-psychological complex, based on a commonality of territory, origin, historical life and the unifying idea of national liberation that became increasingly deep-rooted in Kurdish society. In the face of this idea, differences in language, religious, culture, political-administration, socio-economic, everyday life soon faded into the background”¹⁰. However, tribal fragmentation continues to influence the actual process of forming Kurdish identity¹¹. Members of different Kurdish tribes primarily value their belonging to a certain tribe, and identify themselves with the forming Kurdish nation to a much lesser extent.

The tribal fragmentation and division of the Kurdish ethnos and the actual territory of Kurdistan between different countries has influenced the formation of the Kurdish language. Ethnic groups of Kurds use numerous dialects, which are often very different both in their vocabulary and their phonetics. At the same time, Kurdish literature has had a great influence on the formation of the national identity of the Kurds, like any other people. According to Garnik Asatryan, the earliest texts, mainly poetic works, date from the 16th – 17th centuries. The written literature of the Kurds on the basis of Kurmanji features a whole constellation of Kurdish poets: Malaye Ciziri, Feqiye Teyran, Ali Teremahi, and also the most important Kurdish poet of the Middle Ages, Ehmede Xani, the author of the famous epic poem “Mam and Zin”¹². This literary heritage plays a major role in the national consolidation of the Kurds.

In recent decades, an important center for the formation of Kurdish identity has been Western Europe, where hundreds of thousands of Kurds were forced to emigrate. For example, in Germany alone, according to various estimates, from 500,000 to 800,000 Kurds¹³ live, and up to 300,000 members of the Zaza people. It is this section of the Kurds that became the main bearer of ideas of Kurdish identity, and the battle for the creation of an independent Kurdish state. European Kurds have continued the literary tradition of their people, and have been the main bearers of ideas of Kurdish nationalism.

The Kurds and the Zaza

The formation of the national identity of the Kurds and the battle for statehood naturally involve the consolidation of the Kurdish ethnic group and a common national identity for all sections of the Kurdish people, separated by state borders and many centuries of fragmentation. However, this unity does not always take place painlessly. Kurdish politicians are also prepared to include other peoples who have a similar language in the Kurdish ethnic group. One of them is the Zaza people, which lives in the region of Tunceli in Turkey (the historical name of the province was Dersim). The Zaza language, Zazaki, or as a number of linguists call it, Dimli, belongs to the northeastern group of the Iranian group of the Indo-European language family¹⁴. The Zazaki language is related to Kurdish, Persian and Balochi. Some researchers assess the total population of the Zaza at 2 million, or 3% of the population of Turkey¹⁵. Some internal sources assess the Zaza population at 3.6 million¹⁶. In present-day Turkey, Zazaki is spoken by inhabitants of Eastern Anatolia, situated between the sources of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers.

Scholars believe that Zazaki comes from Northern Iran, from the historical province of Deylaman by the Caspian Sea, in the present-day Iranian province of Gilan. In this region, some national minorities speak languages of the Farsi group, classified as Caspian dialects, such as Sangsari, Mazenderani, Tati (Herzendi) and Semnani. Grammatically, these languages are closer to Zazaki than to Kurdish, linguists believe. Even closer to Zazaki is the Gorani language, spoken in a few former areas of Iraqi Mesopotamia, which the Kurds consider to be a dialect of Kurdish. Balochi¹⁷ (Baluji) is closely related to Zazaki, and spoken in Baluchistan, which is divided between Iran and Pakistan.

The Zaza people live among the Kurds in Turkey. Historically, not only the Kurds and Zaza had similar languages, but also similar historical fates. The Kurds fought selflessly for the independence of the Turkish Republic in the early 1920s among the supporters of Mustafa Kemal-Pasha (the future Atatürk). But in the Turkish Republic, the national rights of both Kurds and the Zaza were categorically ignored, along with the languages of these peoples, and

the culture of both the Kurds and the Zaza not only received no assistance from the state, but became an object of persecution. They gradually came under the program of assimilation by the state.

In the Turkish Republic, national identity of any non-Turkish people in the country was completely denied. The constitutional provision that all inhabitants of the country were Turks was always unshakable, and any attempt by citizens of the country to declare themselves to be Kurds was deemed to be separatist propaganda and punished by a lengthy prison sentence. The principle of nationalism remained the backbone of the Kemalist doctrine, on which the Turkish state relied for decades. It is not surprising that many Turks, even with European education, cannot understand why Turkish citizens of non-Turkish ethnicity refuse to consider themselves Turks. Curiously enough, Cemal Gürsel, the former head of the general staff of the Turkish army, who headed the coup in 1960 and was subsequently elected President of the Turkish Republic, could not believe that anyone wanted to be considered a Kurd, if they had the chance to be a Turk... He assured his eastern fellow citizens that they were Turks like everyone else, and even declared: "If anyone calls you a Kurd, spit in his face"¹⁸.

Accordingly, the Zaza people in this ideological and political situation could not expect assistance in developing their language and culture, or even acknowledgement of their national identity. Important features of the Zaza people are not only the existence of different dialects in which they speak, but also the religious beliefs. The Zaza have two main dialects: Dimli (southern Zazaki), spoken by Sunni Zaza, and Kirmanji (northern Zazaki), among Alevi Zaza¹⁹, whom the Turkish Sunni Muslims do not consider to be Muslims.

The Kurdish language was not permitted in Turkey until the 1980s²⁰. However, serious changes have not taken place in recognizing the rights of Turkish national minorities.

The Turkish authorities' attitude to the Kurds and Zaza began to change after the "Desert Storm" operation began in 1991 against Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. Turkey was flooded with Kurdish refugees, who had to be given some kind of name, and the problem also had to be defined. The subsequent establishment of a no-fly zone in northern Iraq led to a situation when Hussein's regime was

incapable of suppressing Kurdish autonomy, turning the territory of Iraqi Kurdistan into a de facto independent state.

Turkey's aspiration to join the EU also played a role. The conditions for joining the EU included bringing Turkish legislation into compliance with EU standards on human rights, including national rights. Turkey had to start the extremely painful process of reviewing not only the country's legislation, but also its ideological foundations.

As a result of this process lasting many years, the publication of newspapers in Kurdish was gradually permitted, and radio stations appeared which mainly broadcast in Kurmanji. The television channel TRT-6 began working, with broadcasts in the Kurdish language. There are also broadcasts in Zazaki, but only for a few minutes a day. Kurdish newspapers print articles in Zazaki, and some of them give a permanent place for publications in Zazaki.

At the same time, the Turkish authorities examined the possibility of a split in the Kurdish national movement itself. Official Turkish science began studying the national features of the Zaza, primarily the language differences of these two Farsi-speaking peoples. The difference in pronunciation and concepts in these languages is studied, but if Kurdish authors mainly see these differences as dialects, Turkish authors, also guided by foreign studies, emphasize the more distant nature of the language kinship. Accordingly, they are seen as different languages, and not dialects of a single common language. Other differences are also examined between the Kurds and the Zaza, primarily religious differences.

Both some foreign researchers and Kurdish politicians see the activation of "Zaza nationalism" as the work of Turkish state apparatus. Martin Bruinessen²¹, Vladimir van Vildernburg and other authors take this position in their publications²². According to the former mayor of the city of Sur in the province of Diyarbakir Abdullah Demirbaş, member of the pro-Kurdish Party of Democratic Society, Turkish politicians began to stress the differences between the Zaza and the Kurds (who speak Kurmanji) in order to weaken the nationalist aspirations of the Kurds²³.

The media has long been attempting to connect Zaza nationalism and state structures of Turkey, and even Turkish intelligence. For example, the founder of Zaza nationalism Ebubekir Pamukçu²⁴ (a literary figure

and Zaza Sunni who died in 1993) was accused of such ties. Kurdish nationalist, linguist and specialist on the Zaza language Malmisanij made these charges against Zaza nationalists, criticizing the idea of “Zazaistan” and the activity of the “House of Culture and Publications of Zaza”. He claimed that Zaza nationalist groups “rely on the state” or “think parallel to the state”²⁵.

Kurds and Yazidis

In the process of forming national identity of Kurds, and the attempts to consolidate the Kurdish ethnos, Kurds came up against the old problem of an ancient people, the Yazidis. The Yazidis would seem to be a small national-religious community which mainly deny that they belong to the Kurdish ethnos. Yazidis live mainly in the Sinjar region (the Arab name), known as Shangel to the Yazidis, and they speak the Yazdiki language, as they call it, which is close to the Kurdish dialect of Kurmanji (the northern dialect of Kurdish). The language difference between Yazdiki and Kurmanji lies in around 20% of vocabulary, because of the completely different religion of the Yazidis. They practice the religion of Sharfadin, or as the Kurds and several foreign researchers call it, Yazdisim.

Sharfadin is a monotheistic religion which the Yazidis themselves date back to pre-Islamic times – the era of Babylon and Media²⁷. The Yazidis do not have a customary sacred text, but their two known sacred books, “Kitab al-Jalva” (The Book of Revelations) and the “Black Book” written in code in the Yazidi alphabet are dated by specialists to the 12th century. It was the time of reformation of the Sharfadin religion, carried out by Sheikh Adi who is revered by the Yazidis. All the prayers in the Sharfadin religion, sacred legends and religious rites only exist in verbal tradition. However, the Yazidis had their own system of writing,

The Yazidi community has a rigid structure, divided into three main castes: shekh (sheikhs), pirs and mrids (myurids). The bearers of the sacred texts of legends and traditions are exclusively shekhs and pirs (sometimes another two castes are distinguished – servants of the sacred temple of Lalesh in Shangel and the Kavals – experts on hymns and ritual prayers).

Marriages are prohibited between members of different castes, as are

marriages with people from other religions, which is considered a mortal sin. Those who break this rule cease to be Yazidi and become simply... Kurds. However, it is impossible to become a Yazidi by converting to the religion of Sharfadin. A Yazidi is an ethnic concept, and one can only be born as one. Thus, Yazidi have never proselytized and have preserved their religion.

Without going into a more detailed description of the beliefs of the Yazidis, we may note that they identify themselves as Yazidi, i.e. a people who differ from the Kurds. The Kurds in their turn persist on classifying Yazidi as Kurds, and try to hush up the constant non-acceptance of the Kurds by the Yazidi at both a social and everyday level. At the same time, many Kurds believe that before they converted to Islam they were followers of Yazidism. None of this stopped them from mercilessly slaughtering Yazidi as infidels in the course of 74 genocides against the Yazidi over past centuries. The Yazidi believe that the Kurds were responsible for most of these acts of genocide²⁸.

The attitude of the Kurds to the Yazidi was demonstrated in the tragedy in Sinjar (Shangal, as the Yazidi call it). Both the Iraqi and Kurdish authorities hindered the Yazidi from arming themselves and forming divisions of territorial self-defense. The authorities of the Kurdish autonomy, after disarming the Yazidi, undertook to protect their settlements. However, on 3 August 2014, in an attack by ISIS, 10,000 Kurdish fighters of Peshmerga suddenly withdrew from the region, without putting up any resistance to the Jihadists, evacuating peaceful civilians or giving any weapons to local Yazidis. As a result of these actions, which the Yazidis saw as a betrayal, the city of Sinjar and the region of the compact habitation of the Yazidis Shangal was captured by terrorists, who carried out bloody reprisals against the local population. Up to 10,000 people were killed, over 400,000 were forced to leave their homes and flee to the mountains, and over 5,000 Yazidi women and children were taken into slavery²⁹.

Immediately after this incident, the President of Iraqi Kurdistan Masoud Barzani promised to punish those responsible for abandoning Sinjar. Barzani stressed that Kurdistan was a country of two religions. On the fourth anniversary of the ISIS genocide of the 3rd of August 2018, Barzani, who by that time was no longer President, wrote:

“To all Yazidi brothers and sisters: you are an integral part of Kurdish society”, stating that the Yazidi were the source of “enormous pride” for every Kurd throughout the world³⁰. Thus, Kurdish leaders continue the policy of consolidating the Kurds around already popular ideas of identity.

Among the Yazidi themselves, the issue of national identity is regarded differently. A large number of Yazidi are categorically opposed to being identified as Kurds, while other Yazidi activists consider themselves to be Yazidi Kurds.

Kurdish scholars working in Russia take the unusual view that if the Yazidi who became Kurds had not converted to Islam during the period of the Arab conquests, they would simply have been slaughtered. Despite the harshness of this argument, one must admit that it is logical, based on the multi-vector history of the Yazidis.

National Identity and Left-Wing Ideas

The Kurdish population mainly consisted of the poorest groups with a traditional tribal lifestyle in their countries of habitation, and this situation left its mark on the political position of the incipient Kurdish intelligentsia. Such prominent Kurdish leaders as Mustafa Barzani and his son Masoud Barzani (Democratic Party of Kurdistan), Calal Talabani (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan), leaders of the Iraqi Kurds, and Abdullah Ocalan, who founded the Workers’ Party of Kurdistan, held left-wing and radical leftist positions. Kurdish nationalists, fighters for the Kurds’ rights, supporters of the Kurds’ autonomy or the independent Kurdish state did not separate their national identity from the social orientation and goals of building various kinds of socialism in a future Kurdish nation state.

Perhaps the most active in their battle for the rights of the Kurds were the leaders of the Turkish Kurds. Organizations for Kurdish rights were formed in Turkey and abroad. In Sweden in the 1970s, the Organization of Revolutionary Fighters of Kurdistan (Bohoz), the Organization of Revolutionary Patriots of Kurdistan (“Pale”), the Kurdish Society of Culture and Solidarity, and the Kurdish Workers’ Union were formed. In Belgium the Organization of Revolutionary Turkish Kurds in Europe (“Hevra”) operated, the organization “Brüsk”, and in West Germany – the Federation of Workers’ Unions

of Kurdistan (“Komkar”). Such organizations are also known as the Committee of Action of Kurdistan, the Students’ Union of Kurdistan abroad (AKSA) and others. Foreign organizations of Kurds to a significant degree became the main ideological force that had a great influence on the formation of the national self-awareness of Turkish Kurds.

In 1984, after the weakening of the political regime and the permission for political parties to function in Turkey, the political association “Left-Wing Unity of Turkey and Turkish Kurdistan” was created, which included six parties: the Advance Guard Workers’ Party of Kurdistan, the Workers’ Party of Turkey, the Communist Party of Turkey, the Communist Labor Party of Turkey, the Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan and the Socialist Workers’ Party of Turkey, the majority of which worked illegally or semi-legally.

At the same time, especially radical positions were held by the underground Kurdish Workers’ party (in Russian scholarly literature, the more correct name is usually used – Workers Party of Kurdistan – WPK)³¹. In 1984, the WPK launched an armed struggle against Turkish troops in the eastern regions of the country. The party proclaimed its goal as the creation of an independent Kurdish state through an armed struggle. As a result of operations by the fighters, in which suicide bombers sometimes took part, over 40,000 civilians and soldiers of the Turkish army died during the years of partisan fighting. The punitive acts against WPK rebels in response led to the emptying out of the Dersim region and the emigration of Kurds and Zaza to large cities of Turkey and abroad.

The leader of the WPK Abdullah Ocalan lived in Syria for many years, where he received support both from Syrian Kurds and the authorities. But this situation always irritated the Turks, and on the insistence of the Turkish authorities, the Syrian leadership demanded that Ocalan leave the country. The Kurdish leader was unable to receive new political asylum³², and in 1998 he was captured in Kenya and taken to Turkey, where he is currently serving a life sentence in a prison on the Island of Imrali in the Sea of Marmara on charges of terrorism. Despite the attempts to reach an agreement with the Turkey authorities to stop the armed struggle, the negotiations, which promised the chance to move from an armed struggle to a political process, broke off, and in 2015 the Kurds resumed the partisan

fighting.

Turkey began military operations against the Kurds outside the country: bombing regularly took place of WPK bases in the northern regions of Iraq, and then in Syria. With the weakening of state power, the Syrian Kurds who were in opposition to the central government announced the creation of an autonomy in the north of the country, consisting of so-called cantons.

Together with other national minorities of the region, the Kurds created the political association “Syrian Democratic Forces” (SDF). The Turkish authorities consider the SDF to be part of the WPK, and accordingly terrorists³⁴. In reality, the political and military organizations of the Syrian Kurds are not part of the WPK of Turkish Kurds. However, the Syrian Kurds consider Abdullah Ocalan to be their ideological leader.

In the early 2000s, the WPK abandoned the role of “advance guard”, and it does not indeed have any general ruling bodies in Kurdish regions. For the development of the Kurdish autonomy in Syria, the Movement for Democratic Society was founded. The Syrian Kurds aspire to build a new society on the basis of principles of social justice, internationalism and local self-administration.

The configuration of the new power is based on the concept of democratic confederalism devised by Ocalan, which proposes organizing the structure of self-administration from the bottom up – through communes and councils. Thus, local self-administration gradually takes on a part of state functions: keeping order, courts, taxes etc. “The state is gradually pressured and fragmented through creating structures of democratic autonomy”³⁵. Observers note that Ocalan’s ideas are close to the anarchist concepts of Kropotkin, Bakunin and other famous anarchists.

According to this theory, the Kurds created councils at the level of villages, village regions, town regions, towns and entire regions. Thus, the system of rule in Kurdish cantons, as the Syrian Kurds call their enclaves, are organized from the bottom up.

The future will show how viable the system of power built by the Kurds will be, but evidently left-wing Syrian Kurds will have to be reckoned with in building post-war Syria. However, it is already clear today that regardless of the effectiveness of the public-state system

with which the Syrian Kurds link their future, the popularity of Ocalan's ideas has turned into a tool of national identification of Kurds, and not only in Syria. This is also important from the military standpoint. It is the Syrian Kurds with their allies who were able to crush the forces of ISIS with the air support of the USA, and take almost a third of Syrian territory under control.

The Kurdish people is experiencing a new, extremely difficult period of forming its national identity. One remarkable feature of this process is the fact that a considerable portion of ethnic Kurds entered the 21st century encumbered with the legacy of tribal relations, which considerably hindered national consolidation, especially in the countries that are not prepared to recognize Kurds' rights.

We may agree that the Kurds are a classic example of victims of geopolitics. The doctrine of Kurdish nationalism is also formed in a complex way, which to this day has not been developed as a more or less universal approach for the entire future of the nation.

Nevertheless, the very emergence of Kurdish autonomy in Iraq, or the existence of the self-proclaimed Kurdish autonomy in Syria is a clear sign of the success of the actual process of forming the national identity of the Kurds.

Notes

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24 Ibidem

25 Ibidem.

26 Ibidem.

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Section IV. MODELS OF POLITICAL IDENTITY

Manifestations of political identity are as numerous as groups identifying themselves by a shared ideology, ethnicity, religion, sect, tribe, race, territory or gender. “Political identity is formed in the politicization process of these identities, involving these groups in relationships relating to realizing their political interests, and so is one of the most important categories in conceptualizing the dynamic of social relationships,” Irina S. Semenenko wrote¹.

The concept of “political identity” is very similar to identity politics, the struggle of groups whose political and social rights have been denied public acknowledgement and political representation². Identity politics takes as its basis the features of a group distinguishing it from the rest of society. Identity politics turn the political, legal and cultural demands of these social groups into a political program³. At the same time, identity politics should not be reduced exclusively to the influence and activity of various groups, as the state also carries out this policy towards the entire community.

Politicization of identities, the battle for fair representation and access to resources are closely linked. Some western writers even see identity politics as an attempt to “overcome a lack of political representation” and the aspiration to “transform a mass of diverse preferences into a political policy through institutions of representation...”⁴ In the Middle East, where modern inclusive institutions capable of translating the interests of separate groups into public life, are rather the exception than the rule, and where the state plays the dominant role, political identity may be the classic case of ideological-party affiliation and/or the result of politicization of religious, ethnic, sectarian, territorial and tribal groups.

Chapter 10

Irina Svistunova

Turkey: Ideology versus Traditional Identities

Historically, political identity in Turkey has been based on ideological factors. Ideology is the dominant element in Turkish political identity to this day, with greater importance than ethnic or religious factors.

In the Ottoman Empire, the issue of political identity only became important in the 19th century, under the influence of pro-western reforms known as “tanzimat”. For the first time, the 1864 law on citizenship referred to the empire’s subjects as citizens, rather than “slaves of the sultan”⁵. The first political identity was Ottomanism – the idea of the unity of all peoples of the empire. As K. Karpat writes, Ottoman identity as such did not exist for a long time. Only members of the ruling dynasty were considered Ottomans⁶. An important role in promoting the ideology of Ottomanism was played by the “New Ottomans” movement, which emerged in 1865 among the pro-western intelligentsia.

From the late 19th century, attempts were made in the Ottoman Empire to create political institutions after the western model (parliament, constitution, political associations). In the 20th century, political parties emerged. The largest of them, the “Unity and Progress” party, even got into power with the Young Turk revolution in 1908. The transition to the republican system in 1923 was accompanied by profound westernizing reforms to all spheres of Turkish society. Making use of the religious factor in political and public life was prohibited.

As for the ethnic factor, only Turkism could be politicized, and became an important element of identity in Turkey⁷. The one-party system of the Republican People’s Party (CHP), which existed for a quarter of a century, firmly established the new order. Opposition to the ruling regime was constantly labelled “religious reaction”⁸, which hindered the use of Islam in politics. Even after the transition to a multi-party system, political parties in Turkey were founded

exclusively on ideological principles, and religious and ethnic factors were not openly politicized. However, ideas of neo-Ottomanism and Islamism gradually established themselves in society, finding practical expression in Islamic education, tariqas and so on.

Key Groups of Political Identities

Turkish researcher V. Göksu singles out three key groups of political identities that formed in republican Turkey, and exist to this day. The first group consists of modernists, laicists, Kemalists and left centrists; the second, conservative democrats, adherents of political Islam and right centrists; and the third, nationalists and right centrists.

Regarding the first group, we should note that left-wing political ideas emerged in the last period of the Ottoman Empire, on the wave of westernizing moods. This type of political identity reached its height when the CHP came to power, and during its rule the party merged with the state. The CHP offered Turkish citizens a completely new political identity on the European model, with practically no alternative: rationalism, positivism, statism, secularism. The transformation of the CHP into a party of military and civilian bureaucracy alienated the broader masses. The party lost power, and from 1950 was in the opposition, maintaining the position of the chief representative of the first group of political identities⁹. In the 1960s, a further drop in popularity led to the party developing a left-centrist ideology. An important political asset of the CHP is that its first leader was the founder of the Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In modern-day Turkey, the CHP plays the role of leading opposition party and has a devoted electorate, but its support is not large enough for the party to win elections.

The second group, conservative democrats, adherents of political Islam and right centrists, were able to express their political identities when Turkey moved to a multi-party system in 1946. These political forces relied on mainly rural groups of the population that were not affected by the pro-western Kemalist ideology of the CHP and stayed attached to traditional values and lifestyles. In 1950, the CHP was ousted by the Democratic Party, which took its name from the American model (Democrats vs. Republicans) and announced its adherence to liberalism¹⁰. The battlefield between two political

identities became the principle of the secular state introduced by the CHP. It is not surprising that the Islamists saw the Democratic Party coming to power as a victory for Islam¹¹. In that year, the government introduced a compulsory course of religious education in primary school, abolished the bans on religious programs on the radio and reading the call to prayer in Arabic. Prime Minister A. Menderes even announced he was prepared to restore the caliphate, if the people desired it¹².

In 1961, the Justice Party (AP) was created, which for the next 20 years was the ruling party on several occasions, or part of coalition governments. The AP right-centrists carried out a liberal policy towards the Islamic factor in the public life of Turkey. Wearing a chador was almost universally permitted, in some regions children did not attend secular schools and studied the Koran with mullahs, and tariqas became active¹³.

In this atmosphere, in 1970 the Party of National Order was formed, which had Islamic views although the 1965 Law on parties prohibited founding parties with a religious program. The party was led by parliamentary deputy Necmettin Erbakan, who became a prominent political figure in Turkey. In 1971, the party was disbanded, but a year later was revived under the name of the Party of National Salvation. After the military coup of 1980 it was disbanded again, to be revived once more in 1983 under the name of the Party of Prosperity, with Erbakan becoming prime minister in 1996. This event was the first triumph of political Islam in Turkey, only lasting a year, but Erbakan's pupil Recep Tayip Erdoğan drew lessons from this experience and came to power in 2002.

In the 1960s, the Turkish political stage saw attempts to demonstrate not only Sunni, but also Alevi religious identity. In 1966, the Party of Unity was formed, with slogans of freedom of conscience and religious convictions, and the protection of Alevi rights. Unlike the right-centrist pro-Islamic parties of the Sunni, the Alevi party took a left centrist position.

In the 1980s, right-wing political views received a new stimulus with the growing popularity of economic liberalism. Urbanization processes also played their role, as conservative and religious residents of the Turkish provinces moved to the cities and joined party

life. The Turkish magazine *Nokta* wrote that Istanbul, the largest city in Turkey, had been transformed from a megapolis to a mega-village. The right-centrist parties often changed their names during the political struggle, or were banned by the state. Conservatism often concealed religious identity that could not be expressed in political life¹⁵.

The multi-party system in Turkey led to the rise of the third group of political identities classified by Göksu – the nationalists and the right centrists, differing from the second group by an adherence to laicism and the emphasis on the interests of the Turkish nation. It should be stressed that for the Turks, the concept of “nationalism” does not have negative connotations, but rather means a love of Turkish national culture, history, religion etc. Turkish nationalism was a reaction to the extremes of westernizing policies and the rejection of the Ottoman past characteristic of the new republican ideology. In 1969, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) was founded, which remains the leading political force of the nationalists and is represented in parliament. Nationalism as a political identity gained wide distribution in the 1970s, especially among the provincial youth who moved to the cities. At the time, a striking characteristic of this movement was anti-communism. Later, the nationalists also began appealing to the Islamic factor, but for them it had secondary significance as an element of Turkish culture and history¹⁶.

The three groups of political identities in Turkey today are represented not only by major parties, but also a large group of small parties.

After the end of the cold war, which held back the freedom of ideological development in all countries, the role of ethnic and religious factors became stronger in the formation of Turkish political identities. From the 1990s, the Kurds established their own political parties. At present, the pro-Kurdish People’s Democratic Party (HDP) is represented in parliament. At the same time, this party’s slogans do not emphasize ethnicity, but such concepts as political pluralism, socialism and radical democracy, i.e. ideological aspects. The Kurds also take part in other political groups, for example they are members of the ruling Party of Justice and Development, and its main ideological opponent, the CHP.

Turkish nationalism remains a popular idea which to one degree or

another is used by all political forces of the country, with the exception of the pro-Kurdish HDP. The main political identity in Turkey remains ideology, which is expressed in a diversity of programs which Turkish political parties offer voters: conservative democrats, republicans, laicists, nationalists, socialists, communists etc.

Politicization of the Religious Factor

A successful attempt to politicize the religious factor in Turkey was carried out in the early 21st century, when the pro-Islamic AKP came to power, breaking former taboos and making changes to legislation. Its leadership learnt a lesson from the negative experience of the pro-Islamic Welfare Party (RP), which was undermined by conflicts with the military-bureaucratic mechanisms of the laicist state. In 1997, the military forced the leader of the RP, Prime Minister N. Erbakan, to resign.

In 2001, R.T. Erdoğan created a new party that won the first parliamentary elections in 2002. Officially, the AKP does not call itself an Islamic party, but actively uses the religious factor in forming its identity. The most noticeable markers of this process are lifting the ban on wearing Muslim headscarf for female civil servants, teachers and students of institutes of higher education, and also the official participation of the country's leadership in religious ceremonies.

At first glance, the issue of the female headscarf may seem unimportant, but it serves as a symbol of a certain way of life and identity both for Turkish Kemalists and for the Islamists. Turkish authors believe that Kemalism has never been an alternative to Islam, as it is much weaker than religion from the standpoint of values and ethics¹⁷. But the Kemalists prohibited the politicization of Islam, so demonstrating Muslim views in socio-political life meant a revolution in the mindset of Turkish society.

The AKP became a unique phenomenon in the political history of Turkey. It is remarkable to note how Erdoğan's party organizes its political identity. The Party of Justice and Development chose an ideologically neutral name, following the customary practice for pro-Islamic parties in Turkey. The word "justice" refers to moral values, and "development" signals the aspiration for progress and renewal. In

the election campaign declaration, the AKP spoke of a “search for changes in continuity, preserving differences in unity”, and “a policy that is open to world events and innovations”. The party called itself “democratic, conservative, reformist and modern”¹⁸. The idea of a “great Turkey” in the interpretation of the AKP contained clear references to the Ottoman past, which was sidelined in the republican period. At the same time, the party also did not reject the heroic legacy of the saviors of the homeland and the founders of the Turkish Republic. Thus, the party formed an image for the AKP with maximum attraction for wide groups of the population. The slogan “We are Turkey” on AKP election posters clearly showed its intention to become a national party¹⁹.

Researchers of the AKP phenomenon note that the party’s program contained no demands for Shariat law, compulsory religious education and Muslim clothing for women – nothing which would have made it possible to consider it an Islamic party²⁰. The statements and actions of the AKP leadership were so cautious that the Turkish republicans and military elite could not understand for a long time whether this party violated the principle of secularity. Members of the administration cautiously but consistently tried to connect the Republican and Muslim heritage. In 2003, on the 80th anniversary of the Turkish Republic, the authorities organized seminars, television and radio broadcasts about religious figures in the national liberation struggle²¹.

Erdoğan himself demonstrated the resolve to combine symbols of multi-faceted political identities back in 2001, when after he was elected chairman of the newly-formed AKP he visited Atatürk’s mausoleum, and then went to a mosque for Friday namaz²². The AKP adhered to a similar policy in subsequent years, including in their cultural policy. It is characteristic that the government gives great attention to the cultural figure of M.A. Ersoy is characteristic, author of the Turkish anthem “March of Independence”. Declaring 2011 the “Year of Mehmet Akif Ersoy”, the Turkish leadership emphasized his religious identity and activity as an Islamic intellectual²³.

Gradually, the AKP made changes of a pro-Islamic nature to Turkish legislation, including in the sphere of education, considerably widening the space of religious instruction. The party leaders gave their own interpretation of the concept of “secularity”, calling it an

important condition of democracy. They stated that the main meaning of laicism was the neutrality of the state before different religious beliefs and philosophical teachings. Thus, this concept does not control and restrict the individual, but the secular state itself²⁴.

J. Fedai, studying the political identity of the AKP since the party came to power, noted that at the early stage of its development, the organization avoided precise formulations on this issue. After his victory at the 2002 elections, in an interview with the Spanish newspaper *El Pais* Erdoğan called his party “conservative democrats”, on an analogy with European parties²⁵, but this concept did not receive a theoretical backing at the time. The leadership of the ruling party began to define its political identity by this term only from 2004²⁶. Previously, there had been a book with this name edited by prominent AKP functionary Y. Akdogan, outlining the theoretical foundations of this term. The concept of “conservative democrats” drew extensive criticism, while Akdogan responded that it meant political identity in the process of formation²⁷.

Analyzing discussions surrounding this topic, Fedai outlined two points of view in the AKP’s approach to the issue of identity. **1.** Political identity is not so important, it is a secondary issue; practical successes are important. **2.** There is no need to formulate political identity thoroughly from the very beginning. The issue is clarified over time, through social thought and as political events develop²⁸. Fedai states the political history of Turkey shows that for the country’s population, the charisma of the party leader has always been more significant than the organization’s political identity²⁹. Erdoğan’s image as a man of the people who speaks to the people in their language and has a great deal in common with them secured himself higher personal ratings than the ratings of the AKP.

An example of a charismatic leader’s role in Turkish politics is the Turks’ attitude to M.K. Atatürk. After his death in 1938, he was given the posthumous title of “Eternal head of the state”. The Democratic party, which replaced the republicans in power in 1950, accused the latter of insufficient respect for the first president, who was the ideologist and leader of the CHP. The democrats returned Atatürk’s portrait to Turkish banknotes and accelerated construction of the mausoleum. Subsequently, all ruling parties in Turkey, regardless of their political identity, hung portraits and placed busts of Atatürk

everywhere, and celebrated his anniversary.

Turkish political scientist K. Karpaz writes that nations which do not have deep traditions of political life and respective institutions often turn to ideology. This also happened in Turkey in the period of the one-party regime, when the provisions of the CHP party program (the so-called “six arrows”) were included in the 1938 Constitution. After this, any criticism of the government came to be regarded as an attack on laicism³¹.

Karpaz believe that the entire political history of Turkey since the CHP was removed from power in 1950 has been built around attempts to do away with the ideological restrictions of the previous period, and bring the life of society into line with traditional identity and culture. However, the leaders of different parties, as they succeeded each other on the political stage, mainly expressed the interests of the elites that stood behind them, and ultimately lost the trust of voters³². The new parties were often ideological coalitions, without the ability to appeal to the traditional values with powerful unifying potential for wide groups of the population. Perhaps this is one of the reasons for the drastic political polarization characteristic for Turkish society. In the late 1970s, this ideological diversity resulted in an extreme situation, when street clashes between supporters of extreme right-wing and left-wing views virtually brought the country to the brink of civil war. Throughout most of the history of republican Turkey, there were many supporters of both strongly nationalistic and socialist and communist views among Turkish youth.

It is curious that Karpaz sees the coming to power of the AKP in 2002 as the victory of a party which refused to promote an artificial ideology and gave priority to practical activity³³.

In the period of the AKP’s rule, a discussion arose in Turkish society concerning the definitions of “conservative democrats” and “Muslim democrats” as applied to the political identity of the ruling party. In August of 2012, Turkish political scientist A. Yayla called on the ruling party to use the concept of “Muslim democrats” on the analogy of European “Christian Democrats”. Yayla explained that previously he had been an opponent of this term, considering it inappropriate to make political use of a religious concept, which is wider and more important than any party ideology. But later he came to believe that

the proclaimed identity of “conservative democrats” did not match the real political activity of the AKP and the situation in the country. Many economic measures of the government do not fit into the definition of conservatism. At the same time, the party’s actions to transform the political system of Turkey place the AKP in the position of a reformer, but certainly not a conservative. Yayla believes that in the present situation, the role of a conservative force is played not by the AKP, but by the opposition, the republican CHP, which tries to resist change to the system and innovations introduced by the government³⁴.

Professor of theology at Hitit University M. Uyanyk agrees with this view. In an article in the newspaper *Yeni Safak*, Uyanyk noted that the definition of “Muslim democrats” is more suitable for the AKP, which conducts a policy with the priority of religious and national values, than the vague definition of “conservative democrats” found in western political science literature³⁵.

Features of Political Self-Perception

Data from field studies provides interesting material on the perception of political identity and respective self-identification of Turkish society. In 2009-2010 the EBSAM strategic studies center surveyed 2,190 respondents in 16 provinces of the country. The survey participants were asked to indicate their political identity of the first, second and third levels (by degree of importance). Thus, over 6,000 replies were received. The most popular political identity was “nationalist” – 808. Then came “democrat” -763, “Ataturkist” – 726, “right-wing” – 407, “Islamist” – 370, “left-wing” – 274, “idealist” – 96, “socialist” – 93, “liberal” – 50 “atheist” – 11³⁸. Not all respondents were able to state their political identity of the second level – only 1,179 answers were received, and only 701 for the third level.

The study aimed to test the stereotypical ideas that people choose related political identities. The survey gave a somewhat different picture. From those who called themselves democrats as the first level political identity, 31% consider themselves nationalists at the second level, 26.3% Ataturkists, 13.2% left-wing and 10.3% laicists⁴⁰. From those who define their political identity of the first-level as “nationalists”, 27.1% consider themselves Ataturkists at the second

level, right-wing 21%, democrats 18.7%⁴¹. From those who call themselves right-wing as the political identity of the first level, 32% consider themselves nationalists at the second level of political identity, 30.9% Islamists, 12.4% democrats, and 10.3% Atatürkists⁴². The authors of the study came to the conclusion that the identity of the first level does not determine political views, and that it may be a complex combination of different components.

In 2010, the Turkish research company KONDA published the results of a survey entitled “Political Identities”⁴³. 1,827 men and women were surveyed in this study from various age groups and different political parties. They were asked whether they associated themselves with the political identities suggested. They were allowed to give several replies, i.e. each participant could list several characteristics. 93% of respondents called themselves “patriots”, 76% Atatürkist, 75% laicists, 73% democrats, 64% nationalists, 47% conservatives, 42% social democrats, 35% right wing, 21% left wing⁴⁴.

Predictably, it was found that the same participants of the survey called themselves Atatürkists and laicists⁴⁵. These groups had more respondents with a high level of education, while citizens with a lower level of education were more likely to call themselves conservatives⁴⁶. A similar picture was also observed in the level of income: among participants of the survey with a high level of income, there were more Atatürkists and laicists than conservatives⁴⁷. Over many decades, Atatürkism (allegiance to the ideological-political heritage of the founder of the Turkish Republic M.K. Atatürk) and laicism were important elements of the dominant state ideology. For this reason, it is not surprising these concepts are quite widespread among members of different political forces. Interesting results were provided by an analysis of data of the survey from the standpoint of the party adherence of respondents. Members of the Party of Justice and Development had the strongest right-wing conservative moods. 72% of participants of the survey from the AKP called themselves conservatives, 52% right-wing, which exceed average indicators⁴⁸. At the same time, there were less than the average number of Atatürkists and laicists in this party – 67%⁴⁹, and just 3% left-wing⁵⁰.

The national republican party showed an extremely high level of support of Atatürkism – 95% and laicism – 96%⁵¹. A considerable part of members of this party 88% define themselves as democrats, 76% as

social democrats and 58% as left-wing⁵². All of these figures are higher than the average indicators of the survey. Only 19% of the members of the CHP called themselves conservatives, and 10% right-wing⁵³.

Parties of the nationalist movement have first place in categories of “nationalists” 94%, and “right-wing”, 70%⁵⁴. Unlike the AKP, among members of this party the percentage of Atatürkists is high - 90%, and of laicists - 83%⁵⁵. Only 1% of these people classified themselves as left-wing⁵⁶.

On the whole, the results of the survey reflect the high level of political polarization of Turkish society. Three major political parties represent completely different ideological trends. Separate characteristics of political identity of members of different parties may coincide, but at the same time, each of them has its own unique dominant ideological character.

In the KONDA survey, we may pay attention to the concept of “patriot” that leads in popularity in absolutely all parties, and is not typical for the western understanding of political identity. The EBSAM survey also featured the characteristic “atheist” that is also unusual for western countries. Non-western concepts are also encountered in another survey held in Turkey several years later. These include such characteristics as “religious believer” and “Muslim”. The use of these definitions reflects the national mentality of Turks and how the originally western concept of “political identity” is perceived in Turkey.

In July 2019, the Turkish research company Optimar held a survey of public opinion in 26 provinces of the country, where respondents were asked to define their political identity. This time, participants of the survey could only choose one characteristic. 25,2% called themselves Atatürkists, 22,1% democrats, 11,3% nationalists, 9,7% conservatives, 7,8% religious believers, 4,5% Muslims⁵⁷. The survey results show that political self-identification by ideology dominates in Turkish society.

In Turkish society, ideology maintains a priority over ethnic or religious allegiance, the result of almost a century of radical westernization in the country's political life. The system of state rule in Turkey is organized after the European model. The rule of the Party of Justice and Development, while it legalized manifestations of the Islamic factor in socio-political life, did not change the pro-western format for expressing political identity. Thus, the leadership of the party appeals to democracy and the will of the people to promote Muslim values and views. At the same time, Turkish citizens' mentality features characteristics of political identity that are not typical for westerners. Evidently, the country has its own emerging model for manifesting and perceiving political identities.

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Chapter 11

Nikolay Surkov

Syria: Patriotic National Identity as a Remedy for Sectarianism

The sectarian differences greatly influenced the development of Syrian political identity. The majority of the population are Sunni Muslims, while the country's leadership is dominated by the Alawi, usually considered a branch of Shia Islam, and in addition a significant number of Christians and Druze live in Syria¹. After the independence, different religious communities supported different parties and had their own foreign policy preferences, putting the very existence of the Syrian nation into question.

In the mid-1960s, the Ba'ath party (Party of Arab Socialist Renaissance) was forced to use a secular ideology as a basis for a common political identity, in order to unite members of different sectarian groups. To compensate for the weakness of Syrian identity, the Ba'athists had to politicize the ethnic issue and appeal to pan-Arabism² – the nationalist ideology that existed long before Ba'ath was founded. The second component of the developing national identity was socialism which strongly influenced foreign policy of Syria by encouraging struggle against the western, imperialist influence³ in the Middle East, and cooperation with the Soviet bloc.

The use of pan-Arab ideology also had a strong influence on Syria's foreign policy. It led to attempts (unsuccessful) to unite with other Arab countries (the most prominent example was the creation of the United Arab Republic), and active participation in the Arab-Israeli conflict. As a result, Syria was forced to pursue a foreign policy which required major military expenditure and became a burden for a relatively poor country. Pan-Arab ideology also led to worsening relations with western countries, primarily the USA, as support for the Palestinians provoked charges of sponsorship of terrorism.

The period between 1961-1966 is believed to be a critical moment in the development of Syrian identity. The Syrian nationalists won the

struggle within the Ba'ath party, and ousted the Arab nationalists to Iraq. Despite the de-facto victory of Syrian nationalism, Damascus continued to use pan-Arab rhetoric⁴. For another 30 years, public statements of the Syrian leadership and program documents emphasized ideas of the liberation and renaissance of the Arab nation. On paper, Syrian nationalism was pan-Arab and anti-western (and also anti-Zionist), but Damascus pursued a pragmatic policy by establishing ties with western countries and the Gulf monarchies⁵. This often made it difficult to understand the logic of behavior and the true motivation of the Syrian leadership. However, the task is simplified if one bears in mind that pan-Arabism was largely declarative. In reality, one should speak of country-based nationalism, which may be expressed with the slogan "Syria above all". For example, this was manifested in Damascus' support for Teheran (and not "brotherly" Baghdad) during the Iran-Iraq war. After the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty was signed, Hafez Assad labelled Egypt a betrayer of the pan-Arab cause, but in 1989 he pragmatically restored diplomatic relations with Cairo, in order to change Syria's image in the West and pull the country out of regional and international isolation.

It is widely believed that from around the 1970s, Syria's foreign policy was primarily focused on ensuring the survival of Assad's regime and its legitimization among the population. Pan-Arab discourse was the main source of legitimization for the regime. Under Hafez Assad, Syria positioned itself as champion of the Arab struggle against Israel and its aggressive policy. Damascus acted as the defender of common Arab interests⁶, giving Assad grounds to demand unquestioning obedience from the Palestinians and Arafat. In the 1970s and 1980s, Syria also positioned itself as the main defender of Lebanon from Israeli aggression, justifying its military presence in the Beqaa Valley and the establishment of de-facto protectorate over the neighboring country.

In the 1990s, Syria no longer received military and economic aid from the USSR, so the regime had to develop relations with western countries in order to survive. In this situation, Assad began to portray Syria as champion of peace and stability in the Middle East⁷, not as a fighter against imperialism and Zionism.

Besides ensuring the survival of the regime, Syrian foreign policy had

other tasks – to liberate the Golan Heights occupied by Israel and project influence on neighboring countries and territories (realizing the concept of “Greater Syria”⁸). That is why, the Syrian leadership became preoccupied with military parity with Israel, and the constant increase of military power. In some periods, military expenditure accounted for 70% of the country’s budget⁹.

The idea of “Greater Syria” had very strong effect on the foreign policy of the Assad government. Syria positioned itself as hegemon in the Levant¹⁰. It controlled Lebanon (directly until 2005, and through its proxies afterwards), and had major influence on Hezbollah and radical Palestinian groups (Hamas, Islamic Jihad). Damascus perceived any attempts by other countries to limit Syrian influence in the Levant as a hostile act.

In the early 2000s, with the liberal reforms initiated by Bashar Assad, the relationship between Damascus and the West enjoyed a brief honeymoon. The Syrian authorities even signaled their readiness to cooperate with the US on counterterrorism after the attacks of September 11. However, after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 Syria’s relations with the West began to deteriorate, because Damascus feared a repeat of the Iraqi scenario, after being accused by the US of sponsoring terrorism and producing weapons of mass destruction¹¹. The rift widened even more after the Lebanon crisis of 2005, which ended with the forced withdrawal of Syrian troops. As a result, the discourse of resistance once again began to dominate the Syrian foreign policy agenda and Damascus became part of the Iranian-led “axis of resistance”¹². The Assad government believed that external powers intended to deprive Syria of its influence in the region. In response, Damascus supported a proxy campaign against the US forces in Iraq¹³.

It is believed that Hafez Assad was trying to build a modern nation state and relied on secular, non-ethnic nationalism, in order to develop an identity which would unite the nation. The mature Syrian identity was based on readiness to accept differences, vital for the co-existence of different religious and ethnic groups. But in practice, this readiness was regularly challenged, because of public discontent with the political domination of the Alawites, and during the civil war that began after 2011, the issue of identity became especially critical.

The events of the Arab spring showed that the national identity created by the Ba'athists was very fragile, because they failed to overcome the religious and ethnic differences in the Syrian society. The political crisis that began in 2011 swiftly escalated into a conflict with a religious component, when some Sunni groups claimed that they rebelled against the "Alawi dictatorship"¹⁴. Sectarian identity became politicized, and the same happened with ethnic identity, when Kurds in the northeast of Syria began to build with US support a de-facto state¹⁵.

Settlement of the Syrian crisis, besides political agreements, requires restoration of national unity, thus conditions must be created for forming a new national identity. Syrian economist Rabi Nasser, the co-founder of the Syrian Center for Policy Research, SCPR, believes that the basis for this new identity may be common culture, common traditions and common language, the Syrian dialect of Arabic: "Syrians outside the country became aware of themselves as Syrians, because Lebanese or Jordanians perceive them as such, without dividing them into Sunni and Alawi. The experience of living abroad as a refugee may strengthen Syrian identity"¹⁶.

Syrian political scientist Mohanad Hage Ali from the Carnegie Center in Beirut believes that the Syrian authorities will continue to rely on secular nationalism as the basis for the national identity: "The nationalist rhetoric will be preserved, but without the pan-Arab component. It will be Syrian nationalism. Post-conflict identity will certainly not be sectarian, as this hinders the integration of minorities. Furthermore, in Syria now we may see a conflict of secular identity, which the government claims to defend, and Islamism. Opposition figures are portrayed as conservative Islamists"¹⁷.

Heiko Wimmen, Middle East expert at the International Crisis Group, has a similar opinion. He assumes that the authorities in Damascus widely use the idea of a homogenous nation for forming a new political identity, not fragmented by sectarian or ethnic differences. 'The nationalist discourse has preserved its mobilizing power, but this is a narrower nationalism, as Syrian nationalism may work with non-Arabs, above all with the Kurds, whom they are trying to integrate into society," says Wimmen¹⁸.

To summarize, we may say that the process of reconciliation in Syria

will very much depend on the formation of a new national identity. It is likely that during the post-conflict stage, the authorities will undertake an effort to build a nation-state based on common Syrian culture and language. This should be a multi-cultural environment characteristic for Sham (historical Syria), where different sects and ethnic groups will co-exist, and any sectarian, primarily Islamist, ideas will be regarded as a threat to the country's security. Neither religion nor pan-Arabism can be a basis for post-conflict political identity, but country-based patriotic Syrian nationalism.

We should also note that since the beginning of the Arab spring, the government intensified its use of the discourse of resistance. In his speeches and interviews president Assad positions Syria as a small state, which must stand against the conspiracy of western powers and hostile neighbors. According to the official discourse, since 2011 Syria has been fighting against terrorists, and for the liberation of its territory. President Assad regularly mentions hostile environment and attempts of influential external powers to isolate Syria. Assad claims that Syria has many enemies – states supporting terrorists and seeking to overthrow the government with their assistance, thus a proxy war is being waged against Syria. According to Assad the US seeks to replace secular regimes with Islamist ones, while on the regional stage Syria's main opponent is Turkish president Erdoğan, who is controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood and the US. Accordingly, the basis of current Syrian foreign policy is resistance to Islamism and fight against the occupation (American and Turkish)¹⁹.

Heiko Wimmen points out that the Syrian government actively uses the discourse of resistance emphasizing the aggressive policy of the USA and Israel, and necessity to defend the country and its people from foreign domination. This approach will dictate the confrontational policy towards America, Israel and their allies. Simultaneously, closer ties are being established with Iran, Russia and China, nations that are critical of the US policy.

The discourse of resistance also includes struggle against radical Islamists, who will be the main threat to developing national identity that is multi-cultural and non-sectarian. From the foreign policy perspective, this dictates the need for cooperation with the states of the region that face similar problems. It is also clear that relations must be improved with the monarchies of the Persian Gulf and Turkey, in

order to cut the foreign aid to Islamists. Syria will need allies that could assist transformation in the country, and protect it from foreign interference.

The need to demonstrate the non-sectarian nature of the central government prioritizes the development of relations with Russia, which is perceived to be a neutral player from the religious point. Mohanad Hage Ali believes that desire to build a secular national identity will affect foreign policy and lead to gradual distancing of Syria from Iran, as the Iranian's emphasis on religion is disliked by the Syrian public, especially minorities that support with the regime. "Modern Syrians consider themselves to be Syrians in the first place, and not Alawi or Sunni, so the preferable option is an alliance with secular Russia, which has good ties with both the Arab countries and Israel," suggests Hage Ali.

Despite the civil war and economic crisis, the idea of "Greater Syria" has not been completely forgotten. The Syrians, both opposition and loyalists, aspire to live in a strong state, so both sides clearly feel nostalgia for the Hafez Assad's rule, when Syria was one of the leading countries in the region and dominated the Levant.

On the whole, we may expect that post-conflict national identity in Syria will be distinctly secular, in order to overcome sectarian differences as much as possible, and the Arab component will also be minimized, to avoid alienating the local Kurds. The nation might be unified on the basis of the Syrian language and culture, and also "resistance" – the struggle against hostile forces both external and internal. The nostalgia for the country's former glory will also be an important incentive for reconciliation. In the ideological sense, all of this means an emphasis on patriotic nationalism instead of Pan-Arabism, while in foreign policy we may expect attempts to establish cooperation with countries which are concerned about the Islamist threat, but have no desire to meddle with the sectarian balance in Syria.

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Chapter 12

Tatiana Karasova

Israel: A Symbiosis of Secular Ideology and Religious Discourse

The politics of modern Israel is primarily the politics of identity that have shaped the political landscape and the cultural discourse¹. Israel's political identity is linked to the emergence and development of statehood, the social and psychological features of civil society, and the unique national character influenced in its turn by the special role of the religious factor and the settler nature of society.

Israel was created as a modern secular democratic state in the Middle East, and at the same time as a Jewish state and the Jewish center of the world. The political identity of Israeli society was a result of a combination of the fundamental ideological-political foundations of Zionism and the modern liberal-democratic standards of civil society. These two elements have been significantly influencing the political development of the country.

The Role of Political Parties

The processes of nation building, which began in the pre-state period of the Yishuv, were mainly determined by the doctrines of the main rival parties, with their conspicuous ideological and political programs². Each party had a set of ideological concepts justifying their political transformations in the interests of the elite that ruled the country at the time.

The left-wing Zionist leadership, the Labor party (and its predecessor, Mapai), that dominated all state and social bodies in 1948 - 1977, strove to ensure the Jewish nature of the state, absorbing new immigrants, preventing further segmentation of society; developing a "worker's economy" on the basis of labor values, and also strengthening the security of the country. These tasks remain relevant today³. They were actively pursuing the goal of transforming a

country of immigrants into a common Jewish (Hebrew) nation, achieving the political, linguistic, cultural and confessional homogeneity of the Jewish population. Israeli identity was formed “at the top”, as the government program of left-wing labor parties. The country’s leadership primarily consisted of Jews who had immigrated from European countries (Ashkenazi), who were accustomed to all elements of the system of western democracy. Therefore, Israeli political culture and daily life formed under strong European and Ashkenazi influence, for a long time remained alien to settlers from eastern and African countries.

The Crisis of Socialist Ideology

As soon as the state came into being, an unseen struggle began between the aims of developing a democratic modernized society and the legacy of Jewish traditionalism, represented by Sephardic settler communities from eastern countries and religious parties. The policy of the state always shifted between the officially proclaimed focus on democracy, and serious features of ethnic democracy in practical policy. Traditional Jewish ethno-religious identity had a serious influence on all Israeli Jewish society. According to data from the Israeli Central Statistics Office in 2016, 45% of Jewish citizens of Israel called themselves secular, while the rest declared that they were religious to some extent – from moderate traditionalists (25%) to ultra-orthodox (14%)⁴.

The traditional identity gradually came into conflict with dynamically developing Israeli society. This was caused by disagreements between the values of secular culture and religious tradition, which had the right not only to control certain issues of the personal status of Israelis, but also to determine whether they were Jews (on the principle of the “us and them” dichotomy), based on the idea of biological kinship⁵. According to Russian expert M. Chlenov, differences between secular and religious models of Jewish identification arise from a different understanding and different attitude to the ethnic and sectarian components of the general concept of Jewishness. Pre-state Jewish self-identification organically included both sectarian and ethnic characteristics of Jewish communities. But as part of the political identity of Israel, Jewish self-identification was

finally formulated as a purely ethnic model⁶, according to standards of Orthodox Judaism.

The essence of conflicts between modernism (and post-modernism), with its emphasis on the freedom of personality, and traditionalism, lies in ethnocentrism, *religious nationalism* with its rituals and religious laws⁷. The *provision on the Jewish state* as a state for Jews was laid down by the Law of Return, which determined the right to Israeli citizenship by having Jewish blood. Religious institutions and the parties controlling them had the right to determine citizens' ethno-social identity.

Ethno-social and religious factors have always been closely connected, directly influencing the formation of Jewish ethnic and religious identity. The history of the founding and development of the state determined the complex ethnic and sectarian structure of society, where Jews' adoption of a new identity coincided with a rise in religious belief. There were many reasons for this, including ideological crisis experienced by the founding fathers of the left-wing Zionist movement, and the growing crisis of religious Zionism (the ideology of the oldest religious party Mafdal) leading to the greater influence of ultra-orthodox parties.

At the same time, the Zionist mono-ideology and mono-culture began to weaken. With the growth of national self-awareness, and also changing internal and external factors in the development of the country (primarily the aftermath of the 1967 war), attitudes to the classical ideology of left-wing Zionism transformed. The occupation of Palestinian territories was a turning point in the political and ideological life of the country. Left-wing parties weakened, right-wing political forces and the ultra-religious camp grew stronger, and there was a rise in nationalist moods, reflected in particular in Israeli society's attitude to the unsettled Palestinian issue.

Likud came to power in 1977 and led the so-called right-wing national camp of political forces. The party was based on a common national idea – a synthesis of Zionism, traditionalism and religiosity. The leadership of Likud battled with the elite secular Ashkenazi culture of left-wing parties. Its support came from Jews from eastern communities (Sephardi), devotees of the Jewish traditions and religion that the leaders of Mapai disdained so openly. According to renowned Israeli

sociologist A. Arian, at this moment, ethnic self-identification for eastern Jews was more important than socio-political status. Israeli sociologist H. Herzog believed that the support of Likud by the Sephardi was caused not by narrow ethnic, but common national interests. Likud personified the national camp, a force to integrate eastern Jews into a common Jewish society by strengthening ethno-national and religious feelings⁸.

The Emergence of Post-Zionism

In parallel with the processes described above, major economic, political and cultural changes in Israeli society, gradually shook the original ideology of the founding fathers' generation. The lifestyle, values and world outlook of modern Israelis changed, only partially preserving components of classic Zionism. For this reason, the initial doctrine of Zionism and its real-life implementation have been constantly attacked both from the right and the left in recent decades, by different forces which push for alternatives to official ideology. These alternatives include post-Zionism and neo-conservatism, which have long drawn heated academic and political debates. These new forms of postmodernism with its ideology of the widest cultural and ideological pluralism, re-examining the Zionist history of the state, clash with traditionalism, currently manifested in the neo-conservative ideology of the main Israeli parties.

The ideology of the national camp is Jewish values. It is marked by a neoconservative approach, which is dictated not by ideals of democracy, but the reality in democratic countries. In order to preserve and develop Israeli identity, neoconservatives call to examine old values in a new way. Conservatives and neo-conservatives in Israel are represented by parties and by individual political figures. Yuval Steinitz, a Knesset deputy who has held various ministerial positions in Likud governments, once stated that the main problem of Israel today is postmodernism, which threatens the stability of civilization and responsibility to society⁹.

Postmodernism has traditionally been classified as the ideology of left-wing Zionist parties and academic circles close to them. But neoconservatives, despite the aversion to postmodernist standards in a section of Israeli society, successfully combine their policy with the

practical ability to act in a modern democratic state. In recent years, the polemic raised by post-Zionist and neoconservative authors has become less heated, and interest in their ideas has considerably weakened – just as the ideological component generally has weakened in political disagreements between Israel's major parties. A certain de-ideologization of Israel's main political parties can clearly be seen. In a certain sense, ideology has been replaced by the concept of security, and the radicalization of society.

Processes of Politicizing Religious Identity

Likud ideologists updated the main theses of the religious approach to state ideology. The religious-nationalist component in Zionism became especially important. The politicized role of religion and religious parties increased drastically. The connection between the religious camp and the state itself also changed. The borders since 1967, including Palestinian territories and the sites located on them that are sacred for Jews, (Jerusalem, the Caves of the Patriarchs in Hebron etc.) received a new theological interpretation. Settling the Land of Israel within its biblical borders has become a task that is most pleasing to God¹⁰. Religious parties began influencing both domestic and foreign policy. Additionally, Likud had to include ultra-orthodox parties in government coalitions, as it was unable to form a cabinet without them.

Until recently, Israeli religious parties were a third force on the political stage of the country actively utilizing their influence in both domestic and foreign policy domains. Their influence is channeled through legislation, representatives in the government and the Knesset, and the education and culture system. The rabbinate and rabbinic courts were asked to deal with issues determining Jewish blood, and the personal status of Israeli citizens – marriages, divorces etc. While the approaches of various ultra-orthodox parties may vary, they all emphasize the dogma of orthodox Judaism. The swift process of politicizing religious identity did not lead the ultra-orthodox camp to back down from its main doctrine based upon a skeptical attitude towards the state.

Ultra-orthodox parties played a special role in disseminating religious nationalism. Under Likud, these parties, Agudat Israel, Degel

HaTorah¹¹ and Shas, were given new important privileges; economic opportunities and exemption from military services were a factor that turned the ultra-orthodox community into a kind of autonomy within the state.

Gradually, all religious parties became involved in the political struggle for preserving territories. The term “*haredi-leumi*” – “religious nationalism” was once used to describe the ideas of the Gush Emunim settler movement¹². The hidden conflict between the concepts of “Jewishness” and “sovereignty” were based on the concept of “*kibbutz-galuyot*” – a gathering of “Jewish exiles” on the entire Land of Israel (i.e. within the biblical borders of Eretz Israel, including the West Bank – *author’s note*). A certain “nationalization” of the concept of “Eretz Israel” took place through selective interpretation of Sacred texts, through a purpose-driven interpretation of Jewish history. Eretz Israel became a symbol of the loyalty to the state of Israel, and to Judaism¹³. At the same time, a certain “nationalization” of Jewish traditions has taken place. According to Israeli author Dan Iosef, in many ways Zionism, as an ideology of Jewish nationalism, was integrated into the Jewish tradition and absorbed by it. The tradition received new, nationalist resonance¹⁴.

In present-day Israel, there is clearly a growing tendency to reconsider the mutual influence and rejection of the secular and religious part of society. At present, national-political identity in Israel is being tested by two mutually antagonistic alternatives: secular liberal, post-Zionist civil national identity, on the one hand, and ethnic, religious, narrowly nationalistic identity on the other¹⁵. There are increasing discrepancies between the national and democratic image of the country¹⁶.

Some Israeli specialists define different types of secular attitude to the religious heritage. There are secular, non-believing sections of the Israeli population which according to religious law should be declared non-Jews. For nationality and religious belief in Judaism are the same thing (i.e. non-believers are not considered Jews – *author’s note*). However, for a modern-minded, secular Israeli, there is a difference. To religious people, this “non-Jewish secularism” means that this person is completely separated from historical religious Judaism. Under the secular approach, the past of the Jewish people belongs to religion, but not the present. i.e. Zionism and Judaism are two completely different,

conflicting realms. For this reason, a certain radical section of secular Jewish society agrees that modern secular Israeli culture is in no way a continuation of the Jewish past.

Modern Israeli society also has certain transitional models from religious to secular identity – approaches which do not reject Judaism, but establish their link on a secular basis. They are based on a respect for the spiritual legacy of the Jewish people, on recognizing its mission to solve a wide range of universal problems both in the West and the East. Under this approach, Judaism is seen as a cultural legacy, as part of history, but not as a union of the people with God. This transitional belief is held by Israelis who live in accordance with traditions, but without focusing on religion. They feel themselves to be Israelis, but do not live under the laws of Halakha, which were adapted to the conditions of exile, and they see no need to observe them in modern life¹⁷. This transitional type, a sort of “Jewish secular modernism” insists on the historical continuity of Jewish traditions and customs, but consider it to be part of a new Israeli identity and a manifestation of patriotism. Adherents of this approach recognize that the Jewish past is religious, but that the present and future require different norms of existence – above all national-secular. Thus, being a Jew and part of Jewish culture does not necessarily require religious beliefs, and the new Israeli society, despite its attachment to its Jewish past, must be based on modern secular thinking and progress. This school became known as “new Israelism.”. The ideologist of revisionism, Zeev Jabotinsky, regarded Judaism and all religious aspects as serving the national idea of building the Jewish state. The “spiritualist Zionists”, the followers of Ahad Ha'am, saw Jewish culture as the creation of the Jewish genius, not part of Judaism, and considered the secular culture of Israel to be a continuation and development of historical “spiritual” Judaism¹⁸.

In recent decades, young people who constitute the group of so-called “Jewish Israelis” have begun to classify themselves as followers of “Jewish secularism”. They adhere to Jewish traditions and national values. They observe Jewish traditions and rituals, go to the synagogue, their children serve in the army, they raise the Israeli flag on Independence Day and celebrate Bar Mitzvah. They regard traditions as part of state culture, emphasizing a combination of

certain foundations of ancient Jewish culture and modern nationalist trends.

All political parties to be successful must offer its voters the Israeli patriotism with a Jewish flavor. The left-centrist parties – “Avoda”, “Yesh Atid” and “Kulanu” aspire to do so. In foreign policy, this group shares the position of the right center, for example, the position that peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved in the near future, and that a settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is impossible at present¹⁹.

Jewish traditional nationalism has an impact on state decisions. An example is the law on the Jewish nature of the State of Israel passed by Netanyahu’s government in 2018. The justification for this law was the idea of ending the dispersion of Jews and bringing them back to their own state that they lost 2,000 years ago.

This law was intended to assert the status of Israel as the state of the Jewish people, and the Jews as the only people with an exclusive right to this state with “united and undivided” Jerusalem as its capital.

The Politicization of Ethnic and Sub-Ethnic Communities

Ethnocentrism, deep-rooted in Israeli society, is an important element of political culture. At the same time, the ethnic barriers that divide society into Jews and Arabs also exist between the Jews themselves, where Jews are ranked by their country of origin. Political parties and movements seeking ethnic unification usually fight not to overcome ethnic stratification, but for a higher ranking of their own ethnic group on this scale²⁰.

The Israeli political spectrum includes a number of sub-ethnic parties which represent the interests of certain groups of the Jewish population. They include the ultra-Orthodox party Shas, which has the characteristics of a sub-ethnic party. Shas was founded in 1984 as a Sephardic party expressing the interests of the eastern Jewish community – citizens from Arab countries, pushed to the periphery of Israeli society. As self-awareness of the discriminated eastern community developed, the Sephardic party Shas became stronger. By the end of the 1990s, when it received 10 mandates (in 1996) and 17 (in 1999) at elections, it unexpectedly became an important force in

Israeli politics, the third party in the Knesset after Avoda and Likud²¹. It gradually lost its purely sub-ethnic overtones and came to resemble a religious party. Its leadership positions the party as an “ultra-Orthodox Haredi” party, not as sub-ethnic. In the 2020 elections, Shas received 9 mandates. There were also similar processes of gradual sub-ethnic blurring in the secular party of Moroccan Jews, “Gesher” (Bridge) founded in 1995. Its program paid particular attention to issues of ethnic equality and socio-economic problems. The community of Moroccan Jews was large and well-organized. It soon joined the political mainstream, took its place in the socio-economic structure of Israeli society and practically united with the ruling party Likud²².

The so-called “Russian” parties are also sub-ethnic – “Yisrael Ba-aliya” (leader N. Sharansky, founded in 1996), and “Yisrael Beitenu” (Israel Our Home, leader A. Lieberman, founded in 1998). The electoral basis of these parties is immigrants from the former USSR who became disappointed with the absorption policy of the main Israeli parties. The “Russian” secular parties insisted on the equal rights for new immigrants, and on the status quo in relations between religious and secular citizens of the country.

Gradually, the purely ethnic component in Yisrael Beitenu’s program weakened. It mainly continued its campaign against discrimination towards immigrants from the former USSR, but its platform has also included a project of reforms to transform Israel from an “asylum state for Jewish refugees” into a society with an attractive quality of life. Yisrael Beitenu and its leader Lieberman play an active role in Israeli politics. In the Likud government of 2013-2015, Lieberman was the minister of foreign affairs, and from 2015 – 2018, the defense minister.

The task of the Yisrael Beitenu leadership was to transform the party from a sub-ethnic “Russian” party into a general Israeli party. In his party program, Lieberman emphasized the painful issue of the generally accepted standards of relations between the state and religion, and led a public discussion on how the infamous status quo agreement of 1947 applied to the contemporary realities of democratic Israeli society. Key issues at the parliamentary elections in 2019 included disagreements between religious and secular parties on the

law on exemption from army service for students of religious schools, yeshivas, which Lieberman opposed. His refusal to compromise with the religious parties, and his departure from the Likud coalition, not only provoked a government crisis in April 2019, but also practically led to two snap elections in September 2019 and March 2020. On the whole, one may say that the two main Jewish sub-ethnic parties, Shas and Yisrael Beiteinu, are ceasing to be narrowly oriented and joining the main political current.

As the political self-awareness of the Arab minority developed, there was a growth in Arab parties, expressing the interests and will of this segment of Israeli society. The leaders of the Arab parties promoted the social, economic and civic interests of Israeli Arabs. These parties included the communist Hadash (which despite its proclaimed internationalism is practically an Arab nationalist group), the Islamist bloc Raam-Ta'al and the radical anti-Zionist movement "Palestinians of 1948" (as its leaders call the Israeli Arabs). The factor of radicalization and intensification of nationalist Islamic elements in Arab society was supported by the Balad and "Islamic Movement" parties. They were usually represented in the Knesset by 3-4 mandate groups. The existence of political and ideological differences between Arab parties (the wide spectrum of programs from the left-wing Hadash to the radical Islamist "Islamic Movement"), and also rivalry between Arab communities/clans and religious groups politically represented by the above parties, long prevented them from uniting into a single electoral bloc. But eventually the prospect of the Arab elites losing all levers of political influence and access to financial resources forced the parties to make a compromise.

The first attempt at unification was made in 1996 before the elections to the 14th Knesset – the Joint Arab List was created (Raam). At the elections, Raam, forming a single electoral bloc with the Arab Democratic Party (Mada) and several representatives of the Israeli Islamic Movement, took the name Mada-Raam, and gained 4th place in the Knesset. The unifying ideological element of these Arab parties was the demand to create an independent Palestinian state with the capital in Jerusalem, and equal rights for Israeli Arabs, which would allow them to express the interests of left-wing Arab youth, Arab nationalists and religious Arabs. In 2015, the Joint List of the main

Arab parties of Israel - Hadash, Balad, Taal and Raam - was formed for the first time. According to Israeli expert Z. Khanin, despite the political and ideological differences among these parties and the competition between the Arab communal-clan and religious groups that formed their electoral base, they had two reasons for cooperation. Firstly, this was a good chance to overcome the electoral barrier which was raised in 2014 from 2.5% to 3.25%, forcing them to go to elections in 2015 on a single list, to stop Israeli Arab elites losing influence²³. The second unifying factor was the common denominator, despite all disagreements, in their views on the domestic and foreign policy of the Israeli leadership. The Joint List favored abolishing the law on the Jewish nature of the State of Israel, and on preferential employment in the state sector for citizens who had served in IDF (to which most Arabs are not recruited). But most important was the focus on foreign policy. According to Khanin, the Arab parties today do not so much represent the Arab-speaking cultural minority of Israeli citizens as an opposition outside the system, focused on external ties²⁴.

The Joint List favors resuming the peace process with the PNA on the basis of an agreement with preliminary requirements (before negotiations start) of Ramallah on the creation of a Palestinian state within the borders of 1967, with the capital in Jerusalem and Israel's recognition of its responsibility for creating and solving the problem of the so-called Palestinian refugees.

Thanks to its unifying ideological platform, at the 2019 elections the Arab parties received a record number of deputy mandates – 13. In September 2019, the Joint List once more received 13 mandates. In the March 2020 elections, the Arab parties increased their representation to 15 mandates, becoming the third largest parliamentary group. In an unprecedented move, the Islamist Raam party became a part of the coalition government in 2021.

The united Arab parties face a difficult alternative: further prospects of a struggle for national equal rights on the basis of integration into Israeli society, or a radicalization of their political position, and activating the battle with the Jewish state. The coronavirus pandemic showed that there are humanitarian unifying elements which break down national and sub-ethnic barriers. The selfless struggle against

the epidemic by Jewish and Arab doctors and medical staff exemplified this possibility.

Israel is characterized by a complex mixture of secular ideologies and traditional identities (religious, ethnic and sub-ethnic), which in the politicization process gave rise to influential parties and gained wide support in society. With the crisis of socialist ideas, right-wing and right centrist parties have strengthened, and Orthodox religious parties and institutions have gained an increasing influence on society and the system of rule. The formally democratic political system may prevent the further politicization of identities, but with the preservation of the archaic ethnocentrist model of state organization, this process has acquired its own logic and dynamics.

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Chapter 13

Ibragim Ibragimov

Lebanon: A Fractured Sectarianism

Lebanon is a country that embodies such rare principles for the Arab world as multiculturalism, poly-sectarianism and a specific democratic system, with a particular diversity of political identities. As the renowned Arab poet Khalil Gibran wrote, “every Lebanese person has his/her own Lebanon”¹.

The Lebanese model is distinguished by a politicization of traditional identities (ethnic, sectarian). It is formed by a complex combination of conflicts of values and conflicts of interests. Inter-sectarian disagreements and rivalry are not limited by internal boundaries – the external factor also provides an influence through the transfer of regional political tendencies².

It is hard to make a precise division between “ethnic” and “sectarian”, because of the closed nature and cultural features of individual religious and sectarian communities. They may be defined (using the terminology of L.N. Gumilyov) as “sub-ethnoses/subgroups”³, although this definition may seem debatable. The hierarchy of these “sub-ethnoses/subgroups” determines the roles assigned to groups and their members within Lebanese society.

The Sources of Ethno-Sectarianism

The heterogeneous nature of society in the ethno-sectarian sense, along with other features, makes the identity factor in politics extremely important. One feature of the Lebanese political system is that the state provides a rare example for the Middle East of a democratic system, but also a clear illustration of the politicization of identities. Despite the elements of clannishness and oligarchy that undermine Lebanese democracy, the system still gives different political forces room for considerably free competition. Sectarian communities, subjects of the Lebanese political landscape, advance

competing projects of political development. However, the Lebanese nation is undergoing the process of establishment, and has not formed completely. The ongoing protests since late 2019 show that society is tired of the fragmentation, clannishness and instability of the political system. At the same time, Lebanon's example shows how viable the democratic system can be during the process of nation-building and in a large-scale crisis caused by a combination of internal and external factors.

Sectarianism permeates all spheres of the country's life. Article 9 of the Constitution guarantees absolute freedom of conscience, and claims that "the state respects all religions and sects and undertakes to protect them as long as they do not violate public order"⁴. The Republic of Lebanon is the only country in the Middle East where 18 religious communities are officially recognized (12 Christian, 5 Muslim and 1 Jewish). As no official censuses have been held since 1932, censuses are carried out by independent private and international organizations to determine the sectarian structure. According to the latest estimates, in 2017 almost 60% of the country's population were Muslim (28.7% Sunni, 28.4%, Shia, the rest Alawi and Ismaili), over 30% Christian, around 5% Druze⁵. This data is confirmed by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems: it analyzed the Election Law of 2017, which was the founding document of parliamentary elections in Lebanon in 2018. According to this study, the number of registered voters was 57% Muslim, 35% Christian, 5.2% Druze⁶. Thus, Muslims account for two thirds of the population, and Christians for one third.

Throughout its existence, Lebanon has been a magnet for various persecuted religious sects and ethnic groups. From the 7th century, it was a refuge for Syrian Maronites, Shias, Egyptian Ismailis, adepts of ad-Duruzi, who subsequently founded the community of the Druze there. Over the last century, Lebanon has experienced three waves of migration: Armenians fleeing the Ottoman genocide of 1915 - 1916, Palestinians fleeing the Arab-Israeli wars, and at present Syrians who have found refuge there from the civil war.

In the Ottoman period, the population of Lebanon finally formed into a community of weakly-linked ethno-sectarian groups. These groups had their own laws and often lived compactly in certain territories. Essentially, each group constituted its own small world, and these

worlds came into contact, but did not mix. The groups felt mistrustful and wary of one another⁷. One of the reasons for this was that the Ottoman authorities divided the population into *millet*s (religious communities) with cultural autonomy. This inevitably influenced the self-identification of the contemporary Lebanese.

Unlike many other Arab countries, the tribal factor in Lebanon does not play a significant role. The Shia of South Lebanon and Beqaa, who still remember their tribal roots, are a certain exception. For the Lebanese, three levels of identity are definitive: the family, the religious community and territorial solidarity⁸. Solidarity is in the first place, based on the blood and kinship factor (*asabiyyah*).

Lebanon's regions are arbitrarily divided according to ethno-sectarian principles. Mount Lebanon is the home of the Maronites, Southern Lebanon is Shia, Northern Lebanon is predominantly Sunni, and the Beqaa valley is divided between the Shia and Sunni, with Christian enclaves. Most minorities in large cities retain ties with their homelands. One feature of political culture is that the Lebanese nation was never created in the European sense⁹ of this concept, although recently there have been some indirect signs that many Lebanese are starting to feel themselves part of a united community. However, Lebanese politics continues to be a process of interaction between different religious communities, where the elites of these socio-political formations still play the main role.

Christians had lost their status as the dominant majority in Lebanon by the end of the 20th century, mainly through emigration, but remain one of the key religious communities in the country. The most politically active sectarian group, the Maronites, keeps a stable position thanks to close connections with the Maronite diaspora and Maronite church abroad. In the early 20th century, Maronite intellectuals in search of their non-Arab identity, wishing to find ideological grounds for the special path of Lebanon in the Middle East, developed the concept of Phoenicianism. According to this theory, the Maronites of Lebanon were not Arabs who converted to Christianity, but descendants of the ancient pre-Arab population of the Levant, the Phoenicians, whose civilization differed greatly from the surrounding population¹⁰.

In the pre-war years, Maronites began to feel anxious about the future of the Christian community. But not all of them felt the same way.

Some took a realistic view of the situation and understood the need for consensus with the Muslim community. They mainly perceived Phoenician identity in the cultural sense¹¹. Politically, the group was interested in developing a common Lebanese nationalism. The search for a Maronite identity goes back to the pre-Islamic era, which means defending the autochthony of their community in Lebanon. This argument was addressed to the Muslims of Lebanon, as the majority of Maronites saw Islam and Muslims as a threat to Christian interests in the country¹². Their goal was to reduce the percentage of Muslims in the Lebanese economy and politics. This political position laid the foundation for the future civil war.

As for the Orthodox Christian community of Lebanon, it never doubted its Arab identity¹³. Its members got on equally well with the Maronites and the Sunnis. However, the politicization of the Orthodox community was not about protecting Lebanon and the rights of the Christian community: the Orthodox rather sympathized with Arab nationalist projects, especially the project of “Greater Syria”, because of the close ties between them and the Orthodox of Syria¹⁴.

The position of the small Greek Catholic community in Lebanon concerning the future of Lebanon and its political development drew them both to the Maronites and the Orthodox Christians¹⁵. Traditionally, diplomacy and banking were the political and economic spheres of activity of the Greek Catholic community.

The Muslim community of Lebanon is represented by Shia and Sunni adherents, and their communities emerged in regions next to Mount Lebanon, during the period of the Arab conquests. When the modern borders of Lebanon formed (with French involvement), many of these communities – in the Beqaa Valley, the districts of Tripoli and Sura – were artificially included in the young state.

The political practice of all Sunni leaders in Lebanon in the pre-war period showed a certain duality. On the one hand, they insisted on strengthening the role of the Sunni community in Lebanese politics and economy. On the other, out of their personal interests, they understood the need to form a bloc with Maronite *zaims*¹⁶. Therefore, their radicalism manifested itself in speeches rather than actions.

The Shia community of Lebanon has a remarkable history. Historians and researchers debate when Shiism first entered Lebanon, but the

prevailing opinion is that it came to this part of the Islamic Caliphate in the 7th century¹⁷. This process coincided with the general Islamization process in the Levant.

By the commencement of the French mandate and the creation of Greater Lebanon (1920), the Shia held one of the lowest ranks in Lebanese society¹⁸. They were not included in trade and economic activity, and were mainly involved in intermediary operations, which from the early 20th century became the main source of income for other communities, and the way that many Sunni and Maronite families made their fortunes.

The majority of Shia in Lebanon were peasants with a low level of literacy and income. The dominance of the zaims was felt most strongly among the Shia. The traditional leaders were also major landholders, on whom the Shia peasants strongly depended both politically and economically¹⁹. Thus, the Shia community was divided into two unequal parts: poor and illiterate peasants and clans of important landowners.

The Druze are an ethno-confessional group of Arabs who follow Druzism²⁰ and have a closed social organization. Druze form an independent sect who define themselves as Muslims, but the majority of Sunni and Shia theologians do not consider them to be so. The Druze community ruled Mount Lebanon for many centuries. To hold on to power, they made unions with various outside forces, including Great Britain²¹. By the 20th century, the political importance of their community decreased, but like the Maronites, the Druze played an important role in forming the sectarian system of power in Lebanon.

Features of Political Representation

With the proclamation of independence in 1943, Lebanese religious communities reached a compromise and signed a “National pact”, agreeing on the foundations and principles of state organization that became the cornerstone of political life in Lebanon. According to this pact, Christians would not seek the intervention of external forces to run the state and would recognize Lebanon as an Arab country, while in exchange the Muslims would recognize Lebanon’s independence not only from France, but also from Syria²². As for the political organization of Lebanon itself, it is based on the proportional

representation of recognized religious communities in power structures. This principle may be characterized as confessionalism.

State positions were allocated according to a special rule: the President of the country had to be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of Parliament a Shia Muslim. On the whole, despite the compromise achieved between different communities, the priority was given to the Maronite Christians. This factor, given the growth in the size of Muslim communities and the decrease in the number of Christians in the country, prevented the formation of a single Lebanese nation and increased tensions between communities and different regions. This eventually led to the Civil War which lasted 15 years – from 1975 to 1989 - 1990.

There is a developed party system in Lebanon, which reflects the entire ethno-sectarian diversity of the country. The Lebanese Christians are represented by a large number of political parties, the largest being Marada (Frangieh), Lebanese Forces (Gemayel/Geagea), the Free Patriotic Movement (Aoun/Bassil), the Movement for Independence (M. Moavad), the National Liberal Party (Shamoun). The Sunni Muslims are represented by the Mustakbal Movement (Hariri), the Azm Movement, the Party of National Dialogue, the National Nasserist Organization, the Unionist Party, and the Arab Liberal Party (“Dignity Movement”). The largest Shia parties are Amal and Hezbollah. The Druze are represented by the Progressive Socialist Party (Jumblatt) and the Lebanese Democratic Party (Arslan). The Armenian community is represented by several parties, the largest being the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Tashnagtsutjun).

Many parties are secular, with ideologies ranging from extreme left-wing to ultra-right-wing. One of the largest completely secular parties with representation in parliament is the SSNP (Syrian Social Nationalist Party) and the Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party in Lebanon.

Many of these parties reflect the interests of either a separate community as a whole or different groups within each community. The political life of the sectarian communities is controlled by traditional family clans. Over decades, there has been a kind of monopoly on parliamentary representation in Lebanon, remaining the

prerogative of a restricted group of families.

As a result, beside conflicts between sectarian groups, several opposing factions have formed inside almost all of them. These factions often rely on external patronage to increase their influence.

The end of the Civil War reduced the influence of traditional clans, including the Shia. This allowed the previously marginal Shia community to take a leading position in Lebanese politics²³.

The first Shia political party without feudal clans was the Amal party. It was founded as a response to the unequal distribution of power and influence in the country. Amal considered its support base to be the Shia community (which was traditionally not represented politically and was economically disadvantaged), but positioned itself as an organization fighting for social justice for all disadvantaged Lebanese²⁴.

The second Shia organization was Hezbollah, originating with “ad-Dauva” (“The Call”), from a more radical Shia wing, and several radical groups which split off from Amal. At the early stages, Hezbollah was based in the Beqaa Valley. It later began to gather new members in traditional zones of influence of the Amal party. The junior command of the armed wing of Amal also did not turn down the proposal to hold high-ranking positions in the new movement. With its social programs financed by Iran, providing work and medical equipment, Hezbollah also attracted many tens of thousands of poor Shia refugees from the south of the country, who were disappointed in the ability of Amal to protect their interests.

The primary members of the party are Lebanese Shia, but recruiting is carried out at both regional and global level. Israeli Arabs living abroad and Palestinians are also recruited²⁵.

At the present stage of development, Hezbollah is an Islamist political party of the new type, remarkable for its ability to concentrate considerable resources and capabilities in its hands. Its popularity stems, to a large degree, from its strong system of social support, which is not restricted solely to the Shia community²⁶. With representation in the government and Parliament of the country, and as part of the power system, Hezbollah guaranteed itself legitimacy in Lebanon. Continuing to defend the interests of the Shia community, Hezbollah uses broad national and general Arab rhetoric²⁷.

The role of the Lebanese elite in socio-economic and political processes in the country in the late 20th-early 21st century is extremely high. In such a small country as Lebanon, which is also distinguished by its highly passionary and large political class, the role of political leaders in forming the country's policy is no less important, and sometimes even more important than the role of socio-political institutions.

Thus, the Lebanese political elite consisted mainly of leaders of separate sectarian groups by the start of the Civil War. It was not, with rare exception (Kamal Jumblatt) ideologically motivated and did not have a general project of a future for Lebanon. Most members did not think about the future at all, were only interested in protecting their fellow believers and personal benefit. The political consensus was ensured by back-stage agreements between various leaders. All of this made the national unity of Lebanon dubious and undermined political stability.

The Transformation of Political Identity

Thanks to social mobility and the shift of the population to cities, communities are gradually becoming mixed, which positively influences the creation of a common Lebanese identity. In Lebanese society, there is a rift between generations. Present-day youth do not wish to live within the confines that previous generations experienced. As the Lebanese themselves say, the youth have no future under the current leadership and established confessional system²⁸. In 2017, the Tabah Foundation surveyed young people in Arab countries. The respondents were asked to rank four sources of identity: national, religious, Arab, and tribal kinship. More than half of young Lebanese defined themselves as citizens of their country (50%) or Arabs (28%). Considerably fewer saw themselves as Muslims (18%) and only 3% mentioned tribal kinship identity²⁹.

Lebanese youth want to live in a modern state and are unhappy with the old political system created by inefficient rule. In autumn 2019, in the new wave of protests in Lebanon, protestors set aside sectarian differences – the protest united all the Lebanese. Tellingly, the demonstrators did not carry political party flags, only the Lebanese flag – the main attribute of the protest. To summarize, we may say

that the Lebanese protests were caused by a growth of secular nationalism and the formation of a common Lebanese identity aimed at overcoming ethnic and religious differences. The autumn-winter political crisis of 2019-2020 caused S. Hariri's government to resign. The new government of technocrats led by Hasan Diab was unable to improve the economic situation in a short time period and announced a default³⁰.

A major manmade disaster took place in the port of Beirut in early August 2020 – almost 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrate exploded, causing massive damage and killing over 170 people. Under pressure from Lebanese society that blamed the incident on corrupt elites in the country's leadership, the government that had formed just half a year before resigned. The cabinet led by Hasan Diab had not justified Lebanese hopes.

The protests beginning in autumn 2019 showed that the Lebanese, especially young people, were unhappy with the present situation, as they called for reforms to the outdated political system³¹. After the tragedy in the Beirut port, the "Lebanese street" realized once and for all that the system had failed. At the same time, one should distinguish between society which does not want to live under the present system, and the elites which still live within the boundaries of sectarianism.

This tragedy did not lead to consolidation in society. Once more, internal disagreements increased, and a section of the Christian and Sunni communities hold Hezbollah responsible for the worsening situation and for the tragedy itself³².

In Lebanese society, identity has turned into a means and a tool of political struggle. At present, it seems that the sectarian system is not being dismantled, but modernized. We may agree with Russian researcher A.V. Sarabiev that "so far this system is working, and we cannot observe signs of its imminent evolutionary change (or revolutionary breakdown)"³³. Indeed, there will be no changes in the near future. As there are no political forces that are not connected with leaders of traditional communities, the Lebanese system is not capable of changing from within. Additionally, the unstable connections and agreements between communities preserve a certain balance of forces on the political stage. It is unlikely that the existing system can be

changed painlessly. Religious communities will continue to hold influence for a long time to come, and the civil identity of the Lebanese will take place in parallel to the preservation and continuing politicization of sectarian identity.

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Section V. IDENTITY AND THE ECONOMY

The Islamic economic model is a special and much-disputed phenomenon. The economics of identity is not a totally new concept, however, and is used to conceptualize the influence of identity on the economic activity. The economics of identity “organizes the development, sale and consumption of goods, services and technologies which support lifestyle and behavioral characteristic for bearers of collective and group identities”¹. The Islamic economy is an important cultural phenomenon, and study of this economic model provides a deeper insight into how ideas (in this case religious ideas) influence all aspects of social life, including attempts to adjust or change the classic laws of economics to make them comply with certain requirements and notions.

Chapter 14

Stanislav Lazovskii

The Islamic Economic Model

Islamic economics was first mentioned in the book “Islamic Economics”, written in 1947 by the Indian Islamic scholar Sayyid Manazir Ahsan Gilani². The author described an ideal economic system based on Islam. Around 20 years passed before the first Islamic financial institutions appeared – Islamic banks. They became an important part of the Islamic economy. The actual concept of the “Islamic economics” was widely recognized only in the 1970s³.

Specialists still argue about the nature of the Islamic economic model and its influence on the economic and legal activity of business subjects, but the concept itself is not new. Despite the ideological and theoretical justifications of the Islamic economic model, and the mechanisms of the financial industry and regulative environment that focus particularly on taxation and risk management issues, the very existence of a special economy is often called into question. In the Arab-Islamic world, production is not regulated directly by Islamic standards, which makes the Islamic economic model clearly incomplete, and even arbitrary. Even in the Islamic states of Iran, Sudan and Pakistan, there are no signs that Islamic norms are used in production and distribution, or in exchange and consumption.

The Creation of the Islamic Economic System

According to the Institute for the Study of Developing Markets at Skolkovo Business School, the “phenomenon of the ‘Islamic economics’ has become global. If it were represented as one country, it would be about the 8th largest in the world”⁴. This is because there are around 1 billion Muslims in the world, potential consumers of products of the Islamic economics. “Potential consumers”, of course, is a relative concept. These people simply live in areas where the Islamic economic model might dominate under certain circumstances.

The Islamic economic system was created for Muslims willing to adhere to religious and ethical principles. Although many researchers claim that an economy cannot be religious, an economic model obeying fixed economic laws may have ideological overtones to some extent. This economic model undoubtedly differs from the socialist and capitalist one, but also includes elements of them.

According to Russian scholar R.I. Bekkin, the Islamic economic model may be examined and defined as an economic system “functioning in accordance with the standards and principles of Muslim law”⁵. Another Russian scholar, A.Yu. Zhuravlev, also makes an important distinction: “Islamic economy is the system of Muslims’ views on the principles and mechanisms for organizing the economic life of society”⁶. We may give a more generalized definition of the Islamic economic model – this model is based on the classic economic theory, but it also incorporates Islamic principles.

Islamic economics follows the principles of Sharia and Islamic laws in distributing limited resources for the sake of achieving individually and collectively spiritual, moral and material prosperity. In accordance with the Islamic worldview, based on divine revelations and human reasoning, Islamic economics puts the collective prosperity of society above personal profits. It stipulates an economic system which protects property, requires participation and ensures justice in all economic operations⁷.

Mechanisms which regulate Islamic financial institutions are based on Islamic law. While classical law means standards that are established by the state, the most important characteristic of Islamic law is the fact that it is a non-state law, the law comes from fundamental Islamic religious principles.

In Islam, independent legal experts develop and further implement the law, without any government intervention. In all individual cases, the legal experts interpret the law, finding or developing provisions applicable to the specific situation and problem, thus not only solving the problem, but also expanding the law⁸. The main sources of legislation are:

- The Koran – the sacred book of Islam, the revelations given to the Prophet;
- Sunna – the words and deeds of the Prophet;

- Ijma – the unanimous opinion of the group of Muslim scholars and theologians concerning the legal standards for each practical issue.

- Believers are guided by the words and deeds of the Prophet⁹. Obviously, sources from the 7th century (ijma is an exception in this case), cannot provide a basis for explaining the regulating mechanisms of Islamic financial institutions. For this reason, Islamic scholars adapted these sources using more contemporary economic theory¹⁰.

In order to clarify the basis of Islamic value judgements, the following fundamental aspects must be noted.¹¹

— Islam is the philosophy of “law”. Initially it determines what is “right”, and then allows people to choose the most rational path of actions available within institutional restrictions that gradually change and reflect Islamic ideals.

This philosophy of “law” is best laid out in three ethical categories¹²: *Tawhid* (unity), *Al’adl wal ihsan* (balance); *Ihtiar* (free will); and the concept of *Fardh* (social responsibility). Unity means that a person’s economic activity should be based on an ethical vision. It is from free will (*Ihtiar*) that individual freedom can fully flourish. This allows maximum room for economic and social activity, and raises humanity over other Allah’s creations. This takes place when people feel their responsibility (*Fardh*) to society, especially to the least fortunate. Unlike the neo-classical economic theory, which takes egoism and personal prosperity as the rational sides of the individual, in the Islamic economy relations are dictated by obligation. Hence, the rational decisions are those which also improve the well-being of others.

According to the Koran, it is irrational for people to be satisfied only with material prosperity¹³, ideal economic behavior in Islamic society has one distinguishing feature: economically rational actions in it are accompanied with morally motivated behavior¹⁴.

Requirements of effectiveness and growth must comply with requirements of fairness. Effectiveness of the rule of choice, for example Pareto optimality, should be replaced or at least supplemented with a rule that clearly takes into account the interests of Islam¹⁵. Pareto optimality states that “the welfare of one economic agent cannot be improved without worsening the welfare of at least

one other agent”. Islam rejects this principle because it is incompatible with Islamic values. The idea that the state of the economy is “unimprovable” if it is in competitive balance contradicts the concept of a fair society. In the Islamic model, welfare of every individual has equal social value, and therefore – taking into account the diminishing marginal utility of income – the marginal cost of additional revenue is greater for the poor than for the rich.

The possibility of social choice in the Islamic economy involves complex economic and philosophical issues. Formally, they contradict Arrow’s impossibility theorem (1964)¹⁶, which states that it is impossible to derive a social choice from an individual one. Theoretically, in the context of the Islamic economy, social and moral aspects come to the fore, overturning seemingly unshakable economic theories. R.I. Bekkin cites the renowned Indian specialist on the Islamic economy Muhammad Nejatullah Siddiqi, who states that the main tasks of the Islamic economy are the following:

1. Satisfying the basic needs for food, clothing, housing, medical care and education for all people.
2. Ensuring equal opportunities for all without exception.
3. Prevention of concentration of wealth and eliminating inequality in the distribution of income and wealth.
4. Providing everyone with opportunities for spiritual self-improvement.
5. Ensuring stability and economic growth for the realization of the above-mentioned goals¹⁷.

He also claims that “in determining the tasks of the Islamic economy, the most important thing is realization of Islamic spiritual and moral values, which have a universal, human nature. In the Islamic economy, attention is given both to economic and ethical problems”¹⁸.

The Soviet economic model also took ethical problems into account, involving the “fair” distribution of its achievements between all participants of economic activity, and also in realizing the moral postulates of communist ideology. As the Islamic economic model contains elements of both capitalist and socialist economy, it is based on the laws of classic economic theory.

Islamic Finances

The laws of the Islamic economy find practical application in Islamic finances. The Islamic financial system is based on the complete rejection of interest rates and on using partner contracts for financial transactions (the Mudharaba, Musharakah and Murabaha contracts). Accordingly, loans issued by banks must be in bonds. Islamic finances are a large segment of the world financial system. Some studies, backed up by theoretical and empirical results, show the positive role of Islamic finances in ensuring financial stability and economic development.

Islamic finances are still at the stage of finding solutions for their own problems, which include a lack of standardization, insufficient human capital, and also a weak basis for eliminating risks unique to the Islamic system¹⁹.

Islamic banks are less efficient than traditional commercial banks not only because they charge no interest, but also because of the speed of transactions. But they do have high potential. Islamic banks display very high growth rates – up to 15% a year. There are already over 200 of them operating in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, with a total capital valued at around \$166 billion. 77% of this capital is concentrated in the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, which have also brought about a fast growth in Islamic financial operations²⁰.

Islamic banking has the same goal as ordinary banking, but acts in accordance with Sharia. Finance is free from ambiguity (*gharar*), gambling (*maisir*) and corruption (*rishwah*)²¹. All transactions with some or all of the following components are prohibited:

1. Any return of money that is predetermined in amount (or percentage) and includes interest (*riba*).
2. Uncertainty (*gharar*) in contracts, which means prohibition on the sale of items whose existence or characteristics are not certain and which are ambiguous on contractual terms. In economic theory, the concept of “asymmetry of information” exists, but in the capitalist economic system, there are no bans for such transactions.
3. Gambling (*maisir*) – applies to the dealings in futures and options to their speculative level.
4. Activities relating to the trade of commodities prohibited (*haram*) by Islamic law: activities relating to the provision of pork, alcohol and gambling.

To replace interest, the ideal mode of financing in the Islamic banking system is financing based on profit and loss sharing²². However, if in any country the Islamic system of *Zakat* is established and the Islamic treasury starts to function, the requirements of *Qard Al-Hasan* will primarily be met by the treasury. *Qard Al-Hasan* is a form of interest-free loan, in which the borrower must return the creditor only the main sum of the debt²³.

The Conceptual and Practical Element of Islamic Banking

The main concept of early Islamic banking was *mudharaba*²⁴. This is a social contract whereby a person gives his property to another in order to do business, and profit should be divided between them by shares, for example one half or one third. Here a parallel may be made with a “trust partnership”, where one partner provides capital, and the other knowledge and skills.

The concept of *mudharaba* is a simple system of partnership, which works by the distribution of half yearly profits to the account holders who are in fact the shareholders to the bank. The bank accepts deposits both for safekeeping and for distributing profit. Islamic banks, by providing interest-free loans, ultimately perform the same functions as commercial banks. Through partnership, banks are able to influence business strategy and the progress of work, and to reduce risks.

The profit-sharing principle stimulates investors to invest in more projects. Partners in these banks should have mutual gain and mutual losses, while in modern banking the losses are borne by the borrowers alone, and the lender always stands to gain. Financial relations under the *mudharaba* model are fairer than the creditor-debtor relationship: *Firstly*, both parties agree on the ratio by which profits will be shared between them. *Secondly*, they bear equal losses, so if the provider of capital faces a reduction of his investment, the manager is deprived of a reward for his labor and time. *Thirdly*, both sides are treated equally if the agreement is violated. If the manager violates any of the stipulated conditions, or if he does not work, or causes losses to the business by carelessness or poor management, he must bear responsibility for the return of the entire sum. If, on the other hand, the provider of the capital violates any of the stipulated conditions, for

example by withdrawing his funds before the stipulated time, or by not providing part or full funds at the promised time, he must pay the manager a reward equivalent to what he would have earned for similar work.

Mudharaba works in two stages. At the first stage, investors put their money into the bank's investment account and agree to share profits with it. In this case, the depositors are the providers of capital, and the bank manages the funds. At the second stage, entrepreneurs seek bank funds for their own business, on the condition that the profit will be shared between them and the bank in a settled proportion, but only the bank will bear any losses. In this case, the bank functions as the provider of capital, and the entrepreneur functions as the manager (fig. 14.1).²⁵

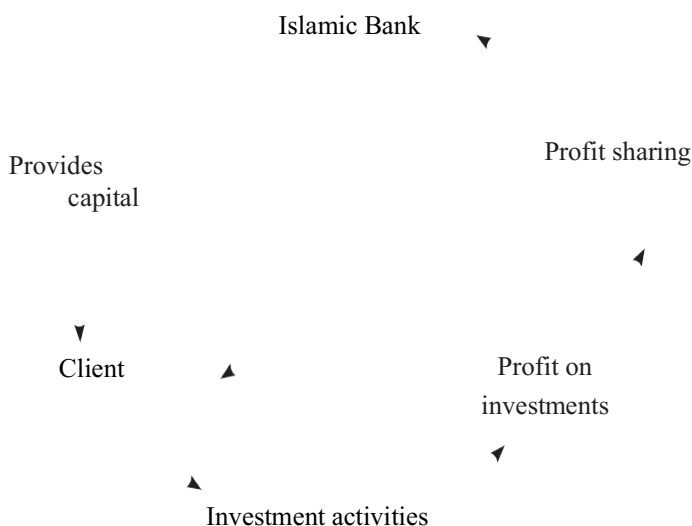


Fig. 14.1. Diagram of a mudharaba agreement²⁶

Mudharaba is a risky proposal, as the partner may cause the bank various forms of losses. He may sell any goods or personal items of the firm; he may purchase at the firm's expense any goods of any kind necessary for its business. He may borrow money on the firm's credit, and for this purpose he may pledge any goods or personal items belonging to the firm.

Owing to the risk of mudharaba transactions and the inability of this financing method to satisfy the requirements of modern complex organizational structures, there are also other interest-free Islamic mechanisms such as *murabaha* and *musharakah*.

Murabaha was initially a special form of simple sale, and had no relevance to a financial transaction. Owing to difficulties and risks in adopting Islamic banking systems, for practical purposes murabaha has recently been transformed from a sale and purchase transaction into a mode of financing.

In this system, at the request of its client, the bank purchases the specified goods from a third party for a certain fee. The bank sells these goods to the client at prime cost, plus an agreed profit margin. The client then takes physical possession of the goods and undertakes to pay the bank their price either in installment, or in a lump, at an agreed later date. In many cases bank clients themselves buy goods as agents of the bank, and then repurchase the same article from the bank for a cost-plus profit to be paid at a mutually agreed later date. This resembles a "forward payment", but it is not the same.

An Islamic bank, in addition to its ordinary banking activity, might create a special division, which purchases various types of goods and then offers them for sale to prospective buyers.

Musharakah involves financing on a profit and loss sharing basis. It is a real alternative to interest rates, ensuring a shift from debt-based transaction to investment-based funding. It is believed that financing on the profit and loss sharing basis or the equity-participation system of Islamic banking not only ensures a healthier investment portfolio, but also results in higher rates of return and optimum allocation of resources for overall economic growth and welfare of society.

Profit and loss sharing or equity-participation systems were proposed during economic crises in the United States and Latin America. The

most prominent supporter of these was the American economist Henry Simons (1899 - 1946) who in the 1930s claimed that the traditional banking system was inherently unstable, and should be replaced by two types financial institutions²⁷. Firstly, deposit banks, which would maintain 100% of reserves. They could not fail depositors and could not create or destroy effective money. They simply accepted deposits. Secondly, investment trusts, which would perform the lending functions of existing banks. These companies would obtain funds for lending by selling their own stock.

Taking into account the risks involved in PLS transactions, it seems obvious that in developing an alternative to an interest-based system of banking, the large-scale use of the Islamic banking system could pose serious risks, because of widespread methods of accounting aimed at concealing true profit, tax evasion and even a high level of incompetence.

Loans are prohibited in Islamic law, but this does not mean that they do not exist. The first thing that can be done to receive loans for use is to make a pledge. The next possible form of activity is leasing. The legal agreement of leasing is not the sale of an object, but the sale of the right to use an object during a certain period of time. The use of this right is permissible in Islam. Financial institutions must ensure that the agreement observes all the restrictions in Sharia: for example, sub-leasing requires the permission of the lessor, and fines for late payment must be introduced very carefully, to avoid *riba*. Recently, Muslim lawyers presented an Islamic alternative to conventional leasing-purchase agreements. The lease agreement includes an additional promise by the lessor that he will agree to sell the leased object at the end of the lease at a predetermined residual value. The promise is only binding on the lessor, and the lessee has the option of purchasing the item at the end of the lease, or returning it to the lessor²⁸. Mortgages are impossible under Islamic law.

Islamic forwards are agreements on purchase or sale of goods, currency, bonds at a fixed price for a future date. Usually, the sale of a non-existent object is prohibited. However, to facilitate certain types of business, exceptions have been made. Based on the analogy (*qiyas*) and preference (*istihsan*) for the permissibility of *salam*, many legal experts argue for the permissibility of *istisna*, which in simple terms means “commission for manufacture”. In this type of contract, the

price is paid in installments as work progresses in manufacturing or building of a non-existent object.²⁹

The latest development in Islamic investment products is *sukuk* certificates which represent holders' proportional ownership of the underlying asset. Sukuk represents proportional ownership in an asset and may be described as an Islamic bond which is backed by assets, distinguishing it from a conventional bond³⁰. There may be many different kinds of sukuk, but the main ones are *ijara sukuk*, *mudharaba sukuk* and *musharakah sukuk*.

One of the main goals of banking is partnership, in which two or more people take part in a business, and each one of them is the agent for the other. Capital should not necessarily be distributed equally, and profit should be distributed in accordance with the conditions agreed between them. Islamic bank will perform all the necessary banking operations that traditional banks do, but Sharia laws will always be taken into account. The bank will develop risky but competitive products for investments, where investors are given a guarantee of high return, and also protection of their funds. The bank will also develop innovative and competitive financing products that are not only compatible with Sharia, but also meet the needs of entrepreneurs.³¹

As the Russian scholar A. Filonik notes, "Islamic banks with all their specific features are merely an enclave in the market economy, where added value is created in the same way as it does in other systems. Islamic banking is one of the elements of a much larger organism, all the parts of which are identically important for production, exchange and distribution. But here Islamic banking capital has still not reached full maturity and has not replaced conventional banks, which are still the only worthy player in the field"³².

The Islamic economy was formed by the ethical philosophy of Islamic law. This philosophy is based on unity, equality, free will and social responsibility. Muslim scholars developed a special model in which economic processes are subordinate to Sharia laws.

The social orientation of the economic principles of Islam demands for a fairer distribution of riches between different parts of the

population and a more honest and stable development of free enterprise, which may cause a decrease in corruption. However, these principles must not contradict the classical principle of Pareto's optimality, and in any type of distribution, one of the subjects of economic relations will bear losses. The Islamic model must exist in the paradigm of the market economy system and obey its primary laws. We must also not forget about the negative external factors and asymmetry of information which also cause market collapses, and Islamic principles of fairness cannot influence these phenomena.

There remains a question concerning the possibility of the Islamic economic model transforming into a fully functional economic system. There is a system and rules for regulating financial activity in the Islamic economy, but there is nothing for production.

Many studies show the positive influence of Islamic finances on financial openness, transparency of transactions, stability and even economic growth. But other studies show the inefficient use of Islamic finances. However, it is unclear whether Islamic finances will seriously be able to compete with traditional types of financing. It remains to be seen if Islamic financing, influenced by competition and synthesis, will be able to maintain its differences from traditional financing. Islamic finances still face many problems which slow down development. They include the lack of precise standardization, insufficient volumes of both financial and human capital, and difficulties in risk sharing and tracking losses on these risks.

Notes

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Section VI. SELF- POSITIONING OF STATES: REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ASPECTS

Identity is a key feature of social relations that also influences the foreign policy behavior of different actors in international relations. Nations' foreign policy strategies and their search for allies and partners often involves the use of identity as a political tool. In the words of Christina Couch, who represented the American Marshall Foundation in Germany, "political elites all over the world use the growing attractiveness of identity policy, appealing to specific groups..."¹. Self-positioning of states on the international stage is always linked with individuals and societies' concepts about themselves, their uniqueness and difference from "others", which allows them to look especially remarkable and important.

The leading states of the Middle East are still forming their foreign policy image in the system of international relations. Their influence on events in the region and outside it will evidently depend both on their resources, and how the rest of the world perceives their foreign policy. This perception is not necessarily objective. It is influenced by ideological, political and propaganda factors. It may be colored by old prejudice, or by a readiness to close one's eyes to acts that complicate partner relations.

In any case, it is important that the ideas held by elites and societies about the foreign policy role of their nations, do not come into conflict with realistic assessments of their own capabilities and influence.

Chapter 15

Irina Svistunova

Turkey: The Influence of Political Identity on Foreign Policy

Both West and East

Turkey's foreign policy has traditionally been pragmatic, defending its national interests and aspiring for a balance in relations with opposing world forces. Ankara's foreign policy stance and self-positioning are determined by the country's geography at the meeting point of civilizations and continents, and Turkey's imperial past that has formed a certain mindset among the Turks.

In the cold-war era of bipolarity, Ankara was part of the western bloc of countries, ensuring a dominating tendency for westernization in all spheres of Turkish life. The foreign policy self-positioning of Ankara had a pronounced Western-centric nature. Turkey saw itself as an important member of NATO, on the line of resistance between the alliance and the USSR, and aspired to position itself in the Middle East as a representative of the Western world.

The clashes between the Greek and Turkish communities on Cyprus, that intensified in the 1960s, showed the limits of Ankara's readiness to make concessions to the West on issues of Turkey's national priorities. Neither direct threats and sanctions from the USA, nor a cooling in relations with Europe stopped Ankara from using force on Cyprus, and to this day the island remains a zone of international conflict. The military operation by the Turkish army on Cyprus in 1974 ended in the occupation of the northern part of the island and the subsequent declaration of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, that is not recognized by the international community, and is politically, economically and militarily independent from Ankara. At the same time, Turkey portrays this operation as a "peace-keeping" mission and its fighters as heroes.

After the Cold war ended, Turkey's foreign policy gradually became

diversified that was organic for the national mindset of the Turks, who preserve the memory of their imperial past. Foreign policy horizons expanded, while the country maintained close military-political ties with the USA and NATO, and continued negotiations to join the EU.

In the 1990s, Ankara paid special attention to former Ottoman regions – the Middle East and the Balkans, and also the “Turkic world”, including Azerbaijan and the Turkic republics of Central Asia, and also numerous Turkic peoples living in various countries. The Turkish President S. Demirel (1993 - 2000) claimed that Turkey, located in the very center of Europe and with a unique culture and history, could play an active role in forming a new identity of countries of the region and help them to become integrated in world politics².

“Ottomanism” and the Special Mission

After the pro-Islamic Party of Justice and Development (AKP) came to power in late 2002, emphasis on the “Ottoman heritage” was increased, leading to a growth in regional activity and Islamic solidarity, and the attempt to become a global player on the world stage. Conservative religious circles focused their attention on the Islamic world, previously regarded by secular political elites as a “source of chaos and instability”³. The new Turkish elites attach great significance to the imperial historical past, and are convinced that Turkey is destined to fulfill a special mission at regional and international levels.

“Ottoman motifs” became emphasized in Ankara’s foreign policy strategy after the presidential elections in 2007, won by Abdullah Gül – one of the leading functionaries of the AKP. Since then, an appeal to the Ottoman past has become a leitmotif in speeches by Turkish politicians⁶. Prime Minister R.T. Erdoğan has called to revive the Ottoman mindset by “using the heritage of the Ottoman state, which ruled the world for 600 years”⁷. A feeling of greatness and self-confidence allows Turkey to use its economic, political and humanitarian resources more effectively in “post-Ottoman” regions, expanding ties with countries there.

The government’s appeal to the Ottoman past led to a surge in popularity for Ottoman history and symbols among the Turkish people. The Turkish authorities’ decision to convert the Byzantine

cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul into a mosque in July 2020 was accompanied with a rise in pro-Ottoman sentiments in Turkish society, reflecting the policy the ruling party has followed for many years. The Turkish leadership transformed this inter-political issue into foreign policy, harshly reacting to calls from the international community not to change the museum status of a world cultural heritage site. The ceremony of changing the status of Hagia Sophia, a symbol of the Christian world, became a show in the Ottoman style where leaders of other countries were invited, showing the intention to emphasize the imperial and Islamic factors in the foreign policy identity of modern-day Turkey.

Turkey's actions against the separatist aspirations of Iraqi Kurds have also been carried out in the spirit of neo-Ottoman ideology, allowing Ankara to "regulate" the situation in neighboring countries. If necessary, the Turkish leadership is prepared to act as a common front with its regional rival Teheran, as happened in 2017, when Turkey and Iran put joint pressure on the Kurds after the referendum for the independence of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Turkish "neo-Ottomanism" is also manifested in Turkey's paternalist approach to neighboring regions. O. Sanberk states that the basis of Ankara's regional policy is assisting neighboring countries to protect their independence and sovereignty, and also to raise their level of prosperity⁸. This means that Turkey sees itself as a country capable of providing patronage and support to its neighbors. We may also mention Ankara's attempts to offer the Turkish model of modernization and democratization as a model for Muslim countries.

The Turkish leadership is especially proud of the fact that the country is highly active diplomatically and holds fifth place in the world by its number of embassies and consulates (246 foreign representative offices at the end of 2019)⁹. In foreign policy, Ankara has used the mechanism of High Level Cooperation Councils, with joint meetings between cabinets of Turkey and other countries to solve a wide range of issues in bilateral relations. At the beginning of 2020, Ankara had made agreements on creating High Level Cooperation Councils with 25 countries.

The activist policy is accompanied by pretentious statements by the Turkish leadership: Turkey is Africa's voice on the world stage;

Turkey plays a vitally important role for European and world transit of energy resources; Turkey will achieve the reform of the UN Security Council (Erdoğan's phrase "A world greater than five" is popular among the Turks); Turkish foreign policy not only pursues national interests, but also seeks to achieve goals for all humanity etc¹⁰.

The main tool of international positioning of Ankara is trilateral platforms, where Turkey can act as an intermediary in regulating conflict relations for other countries, or form a system of special ties with regional neighbors. Under the AKP, the following trilateral formats have been created: Turkey – Afghanistan – Pakistan, Turkey – Bosnia and Herzegovina – Serbia, Turkey – Bosnia and Herzegovina – Croatia, Turkey – Azerbaijan – Iran, Turkey – Azerbaijan – Turkmenistan, Turkey – Azerbaijan – Georgia, Turkey – Azerbaijan – Pakistan.

Turkey uses its geopolitical position at the meeting point of different regions (Europe, Asia, Black Sea – Caspian and Mediterranean basins, the Middle East and Africa) to establish special relations with each of them, and has a separate strategy for each region. The key principles of these strategies have been preserved for decades, and depend little on the change in political leadership in Turkey. At the same time, developments in domestic policy and the international situation often lead to certain components of Turkish identity influencing foreign policy.

Instrumentalization of Identities

This primarily concerns the ethnic factor, which is instrumentalized by the Turkish leadership to mobilize society and solve specific foreign policy tasks. This exclusively concerns Turkish ethnic identities, as minorities are not large or organized enough to influence the country's foreign policy. U. Uzer, author of "Identity and Foreign Policy of Turkey", states that the issue is which components of Turkish identity come to the fore at certain period. For example, pro-Western secular features of Turkish national identity made the country aspire to join the European Union. Periods of intensification of ethnic nationalism lead to increased attention towards Turkic countries and peoples¹⁸. Examples include the military operation of Turkey on Cyprus in 1974, Ankara's policy towards the post-Soviet Transcaucasia and Central

Asia in the 1990s, the position in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, attention to the position of Turkish minorities in Greece, Bulgaria and other Balkan countries, and also Turkic peoples living in other countries (Uighurs in China, Turkmans in Iraq and Syria, Tatars in the Crimea etc.). In this spirit, a strategy of close ties with countries of the Turkic world is developed.

In recent years, Ankara has frequently positioned itself as a champion of various common Islamic issues. The AKP has defended the rights of the Palestinians in the conflict with Israel, called to fight against Islamophobia in Europe¹⁹, provided humanitarian aid to Muslim Rohingya in Myanmar, broadened contacts with Muslims in the Balkans and Central Asia, and restored mosques and organized charitable iftars in African countries.

In its foreign policy activity, the Turkish leadership often combines Turkic and Islamic factors as well as Ottoman and Islamic. This could be clearly seen at a meeting Erdoğan held with the Turkish community and representatives of Muslims communities from 20 countries in December 2019 in London, where he was attending a NATO summit. The meetings with the Turkish diaspora abroad are usual practice for Turkish heads of state. Inviting Muslims of other nationalities to this format is linked with Ankara's aspiration to act as the patron of Islam all over the world.

At the meeting in London, President Erdoğan made interesting statements reflecting Ankara's view of its role on the world stage. Under the AKP's rule, he said, the country has become so strong that now no one can manipulate it from the outside, and Turkey itself determines and changes the course of events in the region. "Turkey is independent in its foreign policy and may conduct military operations to protect its security, without asking permission from anyone". Erdoğan stated that Ankara "is taking decisive steps to guarantee the future of the region". "Thanks to Turkey's efforts, a new world is being built, in which armed conflicts will be replaced by solidarity, oppression by justice, and conflicts with peace," he said²⁰.

The Turkish expert community often gives high evaluations of Ankara's foreign policy achievements. "In the AKP period, Turkey became an influential political and economic actor in the Middle East"²¹. "In 2018, Turkish diplomacy advanced initiatives at regional

and global levels, took a leading role on the international stage, and pursued an independent and assertive policy on most issues”²². “Recently, thanks to its active foreign policy, Turkey has transformed into a regional and even global player”²³.

Turkish analysts pay considerable attention to the arrangement of forces in the world and Turkey’s position on the international stage. As an example, we may quote a columnist from the pro-governmental newspaper “Sabah”, the political analyst Burhanettin Duran, who in July 2020 published an article entitled “A powerful ideological campaign”²⁴, reacting to criticism of Turkish foreign policy in the media by a number of Middle East and Western countries. “Turning Turkey into a regional-global power under Erdoğan’s leadership may change the arrangement of forces, and this causes concern among some countries”. “Ankara’s effective efforts at filling the growing power vacuum in neighboring regions ruins many countries’ plans,” he writes. Duran admits that “the activism of Turkey in foreign policy often leads to tension. But this is unavoidable, when the formation of a new balance of forces takes place in an international atmosphere of increasing chaos”. He believes that the regional influence of Turkey involves a change in the arrangement of forces, which global powers such as the USA and Russia will accept. But this is a serious problem for countries such as France or Israel, whose regional hegemony has been shaken²⁵.

Turkish society, divided ideologically, has differing assessments of the world situation and Turkey’s position. Prominent member of the republican opposition, politician Ahmed Ünal Çeviköz, notes that Turkey is searching for new foreign policy vectors in the new world order that is forming. He says that this new order will either take the form of multipolarity, in which the poles (inequal by their force, but influential in a certain part of the world) will be the USA, the EU, Russia and China, or this will become a flexible bipolarity with the blocs of USA-EU and Russia-China²⁶. Ankara’s cooling relations with Euro-Atlantic allies have led to the idea of searching for alternatives, such as the Eurasian direction, and connections with Russia and Asian countries, and also a foreign policy “conditioned by geography”, involving greater activity of neighboring regions²⁷.

Foreign Policy: The View from Inside

Interesting data about Turks' perception of the country's foreign policy and its place in the world community, is provided by public opinion surveys which have been conducted over several years by experts at the Kadir Has University in Istanbul. In June 2020, the results of the latest study of residents from 26 Turkish provinces were published. 1,000 people aged over 18 with different social-economic status took part in the survey.

To the question about what characteristic of Turkey is a priority on the international stage, 27.4% replied "a country with unique characteristics" (28.4% in 2019), 22.4% "a Muslim country" (32.9% in 2019), 21.5% "a European country" (17.6% in 2019), 16.1% "a Middle Eastern country" (16.3% in 2019). Other answers received few votes: "a Caucasian country" – 2.7%, a "Black Sea country" – 1.3%, a "Balkan country" – 1%²⁹.

An analysis of respondents' sympathies for Turkish political parties determined that for supporters of the pro-Islamic AKP party, "a Muslim country" is the most popular answer, for the republican NRP party electorate, "a European country", while for respondents supporting the nationalist or pro-Kurdish party, the reply "a county with unique characteristics" was the most popular.

The question about what country is Turkey's "closest friend" on the international stage had Azerbaijan in first place, 65.2%. It was followed by the unrecognized Turkish Republic of North Cyprus – 51.4%, Uzbekistan, 34.6%, Pakistan, 27.4%, Qatar, 24.6%, Georgia, 24.3%, Ukraine, 14.8%, Russia, 12.3%, India, 12%, Germany 11.9%³⁰ (the only EU country which featured on the list of Turkey's ten closest friends).

The survey results show the skeptical attitude taken by Turkish society to Ankara's European prospects. Only 53% of responded wanted to see Turkey in the EU. 66.6% of respondents believe that this will never happen. The main obstacle for Turkey joining the EU is "differences in religion and identity" – 48.2%. Only 11.5% believe that the obstacles are connected with Turkey's economic problems. 23.2% of respondents believe that an alternative to Turkish membership in the EU is the creation of a "Turkic Union", 14.8% believe in developing cooperation with NATO and the USA, 14.2% in

strategic cooperation with Russia, 12.3% in increasing Turkey's role in the Islamic Cooperation Organization, and 7.4% in joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)³². As for Ankara's membership in NATO, 55.2% of respondents support it, while 18.8% believe that Turkey should leave NATO, and 28% that cooperation with NATO should be suspended³³.

When asked who Ankara should cooperate with on foreign policy, 30.2% replied Turkic republics, 27.7% the USA, 24.8% Muslim countries, 21.3% Russia and 21.3% the EU³⁴. Characterizing Turkey's position in the Middle East, 44.8% of respondents called it a "regional power", and 19.5% a "regional leader". 63.4% believe that Turkey may become a "model" for Muslim countries³⁵.

It is clear that respondents have a high assessment of Turkey's foreign policy potential, and consider it an independent player on the world stage. A large percentage of respondents believe that the country does not need the EU or NATO. At the same time, Turkish society is divided over the foreign policy identity of the country. Approximately equal numbers of respondents see Turkey as a Muslim and a European nation. The idea of Turkey's "special features" is popular (i.e. a special identity that cannot be reduced to being one of the countries in the region). All of this reflects the media's influence and Turkish politicians' debates, and also shows that Turkey has a complex foreign policy identity which is in a process of constant development.

The revival of imperial thinking in Turkish society undoubtedly influences politicians' and citizens' ideas that Turkey has a special calling in the modern world. The glorious past that descendants always mythologize is translated into a readiness to achieve realization of national interests with greater persistence and confidence, to develop independent approaches to international affairs and to become a "model" for other nations.

The profound concepts and images that determine Turkey's foreign policy identity remain unchanged regardless of the political regime. Turkey's main tool for self-positioning on the world stage is ideology that determines Ankara's aspiration to increase its global influence.

The Kemalists' orientation towards the West and the wish to become part of the Western world was in many ways owing to these countries' strong international position. At the present stage of the transition to multipolarity, a neo-Ottoman multi-vector position is more suitable for Turkey, with according self-positioning in place. In certain areas, the role of ethnic factors prevails in the form of "Turkic solidarity", inherited by the AKP from previous regimes. A new aspect under this pro-Islamic government was the instrumentalization of the religious factor, allowing Turkey to develop ties not only with the Muslims of the Balkans, Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa, but also over a wider territory.

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Chapter 16

Nikolay Surkov

Saudi Arabia: The Mantra of Exceptionality

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of the leading nations of the Arab world. It dominates the Arabian Peninsula and has a great influence on processes throughout the entire Middle East. We may better understand Riyadh's foreign policy if we analyze its self-positioning based on a national identity that combines modern and archaic elements.

Saudi foreign policy identity was heavily influenced by Islamic tradition, as up until the 20th century Arabia developed in isolation from the non-Islamic world. The Islamic (and to a considerable degree Saudi) vision of the world is bipolar: one pole is Dar al-Islam, inhabited by Muslims and followers of other Abrahamic religions, and the other pole is Dar al-Harb, inhabited by pagans and atheists. Thus, there exists a clear mental distinction between "us" and "them". Furthermore, for the Saudis, the real "us" is even more narrow, solely comprising of Sunni countries, while all the rest, including Shia Iran, are alien and potentially hostile. This vision of the world is projected on international relations. The Saudis feel wary of "strangers", but if necessary, they cooperate with them, sign agreements, buy weapons from them or send students to study in their countries. Members of the ruling class or the technocrats who were educated in the West may be more open to the outside world, but, in general, even Arabs complain about the Saudis' disdainful and arrogant attitude.

The feeling of an external threat is enhanced by the historical circumstances. Throughout history, the Al Saud had to fight for survival, and the state they created was destroyed twice by outside aggression and internal rivalry. Furthermore, present-day Saudi Arabia exists in a region of permanent instability, and new conflicts and security threats regularly arise. As a result of all these circumstances, Riyadh has taken considerable efforts to prevent the rise of regional hegemons, and behaved in its foreign policy as a

“status-quo power”¹.

This led to clashes with regimes with regional ambitions – Egypt under Gamal Nasser, Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, and especially revolutionary Iran. Iran poses the greatest threat, not only because of its military capabilities, but also because it casts doubt on Saudi leadership in the Muslim world.

Special Features of Foreign Policy Behavior

Saudi self-positioning is characterized by a sense of exceptionality, which to a considerable degree has predetermined its leadership ambitions in the Muslim world.

This is primarily connected with religion. The Saudis practice a conservative, purist version of Sunni Islam, based on the ideas of Muhammed abd al-Wahhab. Their belief that this version is the most righteous, creates a feeling of moral superiority. Moreover, the Kingdom controls the main holy sites of Islam, and regards itself as the natural leader of the Muslim world. However, the Saudi leadership is conservative and does not challenge the existing world order but rather strives to improve Muslims’ standing in the world within the current international system².

This feeling of exceptionality is also fostered by the fact that Saudi Arabia is one of the very few Arab countries which never experienced European colonialism. As a result, its population and elite do not have a feeling of inferiority towards the West that is often found in former colonies. Saudis largely believe in their cultural superiority over the West. They recognize the technological superiority of Western countries and their industrial power, but when cultural or civilizational differences are concerned, the West is regarded as decadent and morally corrupt.

The oil factor also has strong influence on Saudi self-perception and self-positioning. Besides the obvious financial opportunities provided by the export of hydrocarbons, there is an important image element. The Saudis position their country as a guarantor of stability on the world energy market³. Additionally, the country’s leadership regards possession of the largest oil supplies in the world as a divine blessing, another confirmation of Saudi Arabia’s special position, which also enhances its confidence in its own exceptionality.

In order to understand how Saudi Arabia positions itself on the international stage, it is necessary to examine the specifics of Saudi foreign policy thinking. Saudi Arabia's political culture has a number of characteristic features⁴. *Firstly*, it is the fatalism, that allows Muslims to reconcile with unfavorable circumstances brought upon them by the divine powers, and to make difficult decisions. During the first Gulf crisis of 1990 - 1991 when the Iraqi troops seized neighboring Kuwait and posed a threat to Saudi Arabia, King Fahd, realizing the military weakness of the Kingdom, took the bold decision to station American troops in the "land of Islam", despite the indignation of Muslim Orthodoxy.

Secondly, Saudi foreign policy depends on context. This means that Riyadh's reaction to similar events is situational, which leads to alleged unpredictability and inconsistency in foreign policy behavior. After 2011, Saudi Arabia, that traditionally tries to maintain the status quo in the region, supported regime change in Syria and provided assistance to the armed opposition, as it was more important to counter the growing Iranian influence on Damascus. Later, the Saudis supported the Egyptian military against the Islamist President Muhammed Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood, but at the same time they used Islamists from the Islah party to fight the Houthis in Yemen⁵. After 2005, because of growing tensions with Iran, Saudi Arabia has begun to actively develop informal ties and cooperation with Israel, despite its oppressive policy towards the Palestinians and the increase in settler activity.

Thirdly, personal ties and contacts, especially between leaders, play very important role, thus partners acting against Riyadh's interests may be regarded as traitors. The changing dynamic of Saudi-American relations is a good example. They became notably cooler when Barak Obama became President, as he favored dialogue and intended to gradually normalize relations with Iran⁶. No public criticism was voiced, but King Salman refrained from meeting the American leader personally at the airport during his visit to Saudi Arabia⁷. This was regarded as a sign of discontent because Bedouin traditions attribute great importance to hospitality. But relations warmed after Donald Trump became President, who gave great attention to establishing personal contacts, and supported the policy of maximum pressure on Teheran, denouncing the nuclear deal signed by

his predecessor⁸.

Fourthly, traditional concepts of honor (personal and family) are important for the Saudi monarchs as descendants of tribal chiefs. The ruling families of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait belong to the nomadic Anazzah tribe, while the ruling dynasties of the UAE and Qatar are descendants of the settled (and less noble) Banu Tamim tribe. They are all linked by marriage ties, which in a tribal society is a symbol of allied relations. Some scholars believe that Saudi Arabia's rulers see themselves as heads of a great Arabian family (any disagreements within the GCC are perceived to be an internal family matter). Riyadh believes it has the right to treat some countries of the Arabian Peninsula as junior partners, who need protection and patronage, and at the same time demands obedience from them. As the experience of the Qatar crisis in 2017 showed, this sometimes leads to tensions with partners⁹. Another example is the campaign against the Houthis in Yemen, which began in response to the alleged attempt by Iran to spread its influence on to the Arabian Peninsula, which Saudi monarchs consider to be part of Saudi Arabia's natural sphere of influence.

Fifthly, national pride forces Saudi Arabi to display independence on the international and especially on regional stages, sometimes at the expense of the country's interests. For example, during the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, the Saudis showed solidarity with the rest of the Arabs and announced an oil embargo against the USA and other partners of Israel. In the political sense this step could harm relations with Washington, which by that time had become the main ally and guarantor of Saudi Arabia's security. From the economic point, the Kingdom also had to deal with serious costs – although the embargo allowed it to drastically raise oil prices, in the long-term this encouraged the importers to develop energy-saving technologies and look for alternative suppliers¹⁰.

Saudi Arabian foreign policy identity acquired its contemporary features in the 1970s - 1980s under King Fahd (who ascended to the throne in 1982, but ruled de facto since 1975). During this period growing oil revenues allowed Saudi Arabia to start pursuing a policy based on generous charity¹¹. The Kingdom faced threats and challenges which still determine its behavior on the regional stage. The main goals of Saudi foreign policy were set: preservation of the

ruling regime; resistance to external threats; protection of Islam and the Islamic way of life within the country and abroad; and development of favorable conditions for economic development¹².

After the revolution in Iran in 1979, there was a surge of political activity by the Shia in the Middle East. The era of containment of Iran began, requiring the Kingdom to rethink its role in the region and in the Islamic world. Saudi Arabia became the main ally of the USA in the Persian Gulf, and at the same time the Kingdom was forced to defend its leading position in the Muslim world. The country intensively built up its military power. It also took steps to counter the Shia expansion and increase the prestige of Saudi Arabia through charitable activities, and by sponsoring jihad against the communists in Afghanistan. The Saudi leadership took steps to turn Saudi Arabia into a stabilizing oil producer with excessive production capacities, which gave Riyadh an additional lever and raised the importance of the Kingdom for its allies.

By the late 1980s, Saudi Arabia assumed four foreign policy roles: regional heavyweight, leader of the Muslim world, fighter against Iranian expansion, partner of the West in preserving stable oil prices. Fahd's successor, King Abdullah (on the throne from 2005 to 2015, but de facto ruled from 1996) continued this policy.

In the 2000s, Saudi Arabia faced a number of new challenges: terrorist activity by radical Islamists, cooling-down of relationships with the US after 9/11 attacks. However, the main problem, from Riyadh's standpoint, was the growing Iranian pressure, which from 2005 increased its influence in Iraq and developed its nuclear program. As a result, by the end of King Abdullah's reign, anti-Iranian motives became dominant for the Saudi self-positioning.

In 2013, Prince Turki al-Feisal bin Abdel Aziz al Saud, who was head of the Saudi intelligence for 24 years, gave a good description of the Kingdom's self-positioning. He stressed the fact that Saudi Arabia was the leader of the Muslim world and the top oil exporter, on whom the prosperity of the world economy depended¹³. He also reiterated that Iran constantly challenged Saudi leading status. In response to this aggressive behavior by Iran, Saudi Arabia pursued a policy of containment. Prince Turki emphasized the role of Saudi Arabia as the protector of the Arab world from Iranian expansion.

After 2015, young and energetic crown prince Muhammed bin Salman became de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia and changed foreign policy self-positioning, which was reflected in the program “Vision-2030”. The “first pillar of our vision is our status as the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds. We recognize that Allah the Almighty has bestowed on our lands a gift more valuable than oil. Our Kingdom is the Land of the Two Holy Mosques, the most sacred sites on Earth, and the direction of the Kaaba (Qibla) to which more than a billion Muslims turn at prayer,” the Crown Prince writes in message that precedes the main text.

From this statement, we may see that religion, at least at rhetorical level, remains one of the pillars of foreign policy identity, but his calling Saudi Arabia the “heart of the Arab and Islamic world” is no less important. This means that Saudi Arabia now sees itself not only as the leader of the Muslim world but also as the de facto leader of the Middle East. Since 2015, striking changes have been seen in Riyadh’s behavior on the regional stage. Previously, Saudi Arabia avoided direct military interventions, relying on other instruments (negotiations, financial aid, use of proxies), but in 2015 the Kingdom began a full-scale war in neighboring Yemen. Simultaneously, the Kingdom made considerable efforts to create a regional anti-Iranian bloc. All of this may be interpreted as a demonstration of leadership ambitions.

If “Vision-2030” is realized, serious changes may also take place in the economic component of foreign policy self-positioning. Earlier Saudi Arabia presented itself as an oil superpower with all the due privileges and obligations, but Prince Muhammed initiated a policy of turning the Kingdom into a major investor and a center of transit trade between Europe and Asia. He proposed to create the largest sovereign investment fund in the world, which will finance the diversification of the Saudi economy and development of new strategic industries¹⁵ (tourism, gas production, oil processing, defense industry), it will also invest in international companies and new cutting-edge technologies.

There are also plans to create the country’s own defense industry, capable of manufacturing not only basic products (spare parts, ammunition, firearms and light armored vehicles), but also such complex systems, as fighter jets. These measures are supposed to reduce dependence on imports, and also stimulate growth of related

industries such as machine building, communications and IT¹⁶. In essence, this is a major step to ensure the country's sovereignty and raise its prestige. Another important element of the new economic strategy is creating a plan to build modern digital infrastructure¹⁷, which should ensure access to broadband Internet and help to digitalize country's economy.

Thus, the current Saudi leadership expects that by 2030 the country will be the leader of the Middle East and the Muslim world, supported by religious authority, its own defense industry and a powerful diversified economy. Consequently, the Saudis are likely to gain an even greater sense of their own exceptionality if they manage to transform the country into a center of high-tech and digital technology economy. However, the external shocks of 2020 – the drop in oil prices and the economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic – have posed a serious challenge to these ambitious plans¹⁸.

We may expect that in the medium-term Saudi Arabia will maintain its foreign policy identity based on the idea of national exceptionality. However, the Kingdom's foreign policy self-positioning will change. Primarily, its status of a religious leader will be augmented by leadership within the Arab world. Under favorable circumstances, new non-energy-based components of economic power may also appear, allowing Riyadh to position itself as an even more influential player within the world economy.

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Chapter 17

Nikolay Kozhanov

Iran: Quest for Foreign Policy Identity

The starting point in the search for the modern Iranian foreign policy identity can be defined as the first two decades of the XXth century, when the country was divided between the Russian and British empires into spheres of influence, having lost, in many respects, national sovereignty and the right to determine its domestic and foreign policy. As a result, by the 1900s, the idea of Iran's difficult fate and the need to fight for independence and historical justice came to the fore in the narratives of Iranian foreign policy identity. At the same time, the idea of how to achieve freedom and independence for different groups of the Iranian elite was different. This was reflected in the emergence of new elements of national identity that found their expression in various symbols.

Iran Finds Its Own Path

In the 1920s and 1930s, the main hopes of Iran in the struggle for independence and quest for identity were associated with the personality of Reza Shah (1925 - 1944), the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty (1925 - 1979), who considered his primary task to modernize the country and ensure its independence from external forces. During this period, the Iranian foreign policy identity was based on the idea of a resurgent ancient power, which, maneuvering between the UK, USSR, USA and Germany, was supposed to claim the role of an independent regional force. Unfortunately, Reza Shah was never able to achieve his goal. His attempt to increase control over the country's oil resources led to the fact that, in August 1941, Soviet and British troops occupied the country, and the Shah himself was forced to abdicate in favor of the heir - Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979). The subsequent occupation and attempt by the USSR to establish independent Kurdish and Azerbaijani republics on the territory of Iran exemplified the failure of the policy of neutrality, forcing Tehran to

choose between the Soviet and Western blocs in the following years.

Initially, the choice was made in favor of the United States. This made Tehran a loyal ally of the Americans in the Middle East and increased Iranian ambitions for regional leadership based on American support. During this period, the main goal of the Iranian elite in the search for a foreign policy identity was to reconcile Tehran's vision of itself as an independent regional leader with the need to maneuver between superpowers, adapting to their requirements, or de facto depend on one of them. An important element of the doctrine of national independence of Iran and its claims to regional leadership was the actively promoted idea of the ancient roots of Iranian civilization, which should justify many of the country's steps in the foreign policy arena.

At the same time, the growing dependence on the outside world and the Shah's obvious miscalculations in the due course of the country's modernization, in accordance with the Western economic models, gave rise to an alternative concept of the foreign policy identity: so called concept of "intoxication with Western values" ("gharbzadegi") that was calling upon the Iranians to find their own, independent path of development based on traditional, including religious, values. This, in turn, resulted in the emergence of the concept of a "third way" as an alternative to the models of communism and the capitalist world. According to Iranian thinkers, the new society was to be built on a mixture of socialist (sometimes Marxist), anti-imperialist, traditional and pan-Islamic ideas.¹ This doctrine was largely the starting point for the Islamic foreign policy concepts that emerged in Iran before and immediately after the 1979 Islamic revolution.²

In large part, the idea of a new Iran as the vanguard of the struggle against colonialism and foreign dependence was borrowed and repeated by the founder of the Islamic Republic, Ruhollah Khomeini (1902-1989) in his key work *Velayat-e Faqih*. For example, the idea articulated by the first Supreme Leader of Iran that "nations" and "borders" in their current definition are the invention of the colonialists directly reflects the Marxist ideas on of the "capitalist" nature of the concepts of "nation" and "state". At the same time, for obvious reasons, Khomeini placed more importance on emphasizing the role of Islam in the development of a "third way" for his country and future anti-colonial struggle that was aimed at the establishment

of a new, 'just' world order in the Muslim world. In particular, he postulated that the colonialists and opponents of Islam imposed on Iran their laws, which are not approved by Allah, and forcibly spread their culture poisonous for Muslims values. As a result, the key task for ensuring the survival of the Iranian nation, according to Khomeini, was to "fight against any evil, corruption and delusions" imposed from outside, which makes Iran a revolutionary outpost of the struggle for the "purity" of the Muslim world".³

From the Revolutionary Romance of the 1980s to the Pragmatism of the 2000s

As a result, the idea of a "third way" based on Islamic principles became another variation of the Iranian foreign policy identity that dominated Iran's foreign policy during the 1980s. An element of this identity was the famous revolutionary principle "neither Western, nor Eastern, but Islamic Republic". To implement this principle of an alternative path, Tehran had to reduce or even end relations with the Soviet and American camps, focusing on the development of its own self-sufficient economy and getting more active in the promotion of ties with the developing countries and countries of the Muslim world, which were often classified by the Iranian decision-makers of that time as a "world of oppressed" by "colonial" states. These ideas were actively developed in the works of the ideological founders of the Islamic Republic of Iran such as Khomeini himself, Morteza Motahhari (1919-79), Mohammad Beheshti (1928-81), and Mahmoud Taleghani (1911-79) as well as in the books by the Iranian intellectuals such as Ali Shariati (1933-77) and Jalal Al-e-Ahmad (1923-69).

Iranian revolutionaries of the 1980s believed in the need to create a new ideal society built on revolutionary ideas that would be a model for other Muslim countries and unite the Islamic world on the principles of social security, justice, stability and equality, guaranteeing an end to internal Muslim wars and conflicts. The new system was meant not merely as a stage in the transformation of Muslim society, but an act of purification and deliverance from problems created by outside forces⁴. Disseminating new ideas outside Iran became an obligatory element of the Islamic revolution. The

infamous thesis on the need to export the Islamic ideas is frequently distorted by researchers. It was, indeed, part of Iranian foreign policy identity, and to a certain extent remains so. However, criticism of the IRI often focuses solely on one method of promoting the Islamic revolution – by force, while the original idea stated that there was always a choice between force and persuasion. Since the mid-1990s, the latter method has been preferred⁵. Furthermore, from the late 1980s, aggressive Messianic policy was consistently rejected.

The gradual de-radicalization of the Iranian revolutionary identity can be explained by natural processes. The most radical and aggressive representatives of Iranian society and the political elite were physically eliminated in the battle for power and in the Iranian-Iraqi conflict. Useful at the beginning of the revolution, by the end of the 1980s, they were eliminated by the new regime when they became uncontrollable and extremely dangerous (for example, Mehdi Hashemi (1946 – 1987)).

Thus by the 1990s, pragmatic realists who played the dominant role on the country's political stage, preferred to concentrate attention on running Iran itself rather than realizing utopian dreams to spread the model of the “Islamic society” outside its borders. A sobering moment came from the large human losses in the war with Iraq in 1980 - 1988, which essentially signified the failure of the open armed export of revolutionary ideas⁶. In this situation, it was quite logical that from the end of the 1980s, Iran began to spread Islamic ideas through the using of “soft force” and the “exporting” of Islamic culture⁷.

At the end of the 1980s, two more important changes took place which predetermined the subsequent course of forming Iranian foreign policy identity – the constitutional reform of 1989, which strengthened the role and influence of the President's position on the country's situation and foreign policy. Presidents elected in Iran after 1989 had their own foreign policy agenda, which played an important role in the forming Iranian perception of their position in the region. S.A. Khamenei replaced R. Khomeini in 1989, and differed greatly from his predecessor. Believing in the ideas of the Islamic revolution, he had much less charisma and was more focused on ensuring the survival of the Islamic regime itself within its Iranian borders than on external expansion.

The first half of the 1990s in Iranian foreign policy was still marked by attempts to support Islamist movements in Algeria, Bosnia, Tunisia, Sudan and Tajikistan. However, these were essentially signs of the dying inertia of the aggressive romanticism of the 1980s. By the second half of the 1990s, Iran was attempting to escape from political isolation, to guarantee itself economic survival. It sought to establish equal relations with the main players on the international stage, without annoying them with radical rhetoric. There was even a certain warming in Iran's dialogue with the USA in the late 1990s – early 2000s.

As a result, the slogan “neither Western, nor Eastern, but Islamic republic” came under review, and no longer meant an alternative to the Marxist system (this was no longer relevant since the collapse of the USSR in 1991) or the Western system. Instead, it meant the readiness to hold dialogue with all participants of international relations that recognized Iran's right to uniqueness and independence. In 1997 - 2005, the President of Iran was M. Khatami, who formulated the concept of a “dialogue of civilizations”, showing the country was prepared for active cultural-civilizational dialogue both with Islamic and non-Islamic countries, based on recognizing cultural diversity, equality and mutual co-existence⁸.

This foreign policy doctrine and self-perception impressed many forces outside Iran. To a certain extent, they also reconciled other Iranian identities, showing both independence and fairness, and the possibility to spread Islamic ideas based on the rich Iranian history and culture. At the same time, this foreign policy vision could only exist and dominate other Iranian foreign policy identities in a relatively secure external situation and with a strong position from the liberal reformer wing of the Iranian elite to resist conservative views influencing foreign policy.

However, foreign policy pressure on Iran increased in the early 2000s, when it was discovered that Teheran had a nuclear research program with a possible military component, and the neo-conservative M. Ahmadinejad became President in 2004, once more changing the country's self-positioning on the international stage. *Firstly*, Iran returned to the traditional self-description of itself as a nation which stands up for its freedom and independence, and a symbol of this became the right to the unquestioned possession of nuclear

technology, allowing it to establish a complete fuel cycle.

Secondly, the American invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq seriously destabilized the balance of forces in the region that formed after the Iran-Iraq war. The “Arab spring” of 2010-2011 and the subsequent conflict between Saudi Arabia, its allies and Iran once more brought a whole range of old identities to life. On the one hand, the Iran elite once more discussed its claims to regional leadership, and also the need to fight for the protection of oppressed Muslims, including Shia, and the situation in the region gave numerous possibilities for both the former and the latter. On the other hand, the need to fight for independence and security of Iran itself also gained new life, as Iran now defined its regional policy as a defense response to threats, i.e. as exclusively defensive.

Ahmadinejad, who was President from 2005 - 2013, considered himself a faithful follower of R. Khomeini’s ideas. However, this did not mean a complete revival of foreign policy concepts from the 1980s, but rather reviewing them at the new historical stage, leading to eclecticism in determining foreign policy identity. The idea from the early 1980s that Iran followed a certain “third path”, was formulated in a somewhat different way: instead of interaction with developing Islamic countries, there was a more global approach, involving cooperation with any developing countries criticizing the USA, or confronting it (such as Venezuela, Cuba, and other Latin American countries where left-wing and socialist governments came to power at the end of the 2000s). Ties were developed with the Non-Aligned Movement, regional and international structures that Iran perceived as being independent from the West.

The idea of fighting for independence also led to active confrontation with the USA and aggressive anti-Israeli rhetoric, while the attempt to strengthen Teheran as a leader of the Islamic world saw Iran taking more active participation in the OIC, and multi-lateral formats for meetings in the Muslim world. The principles of Ahmadinejad’s predecessors were also not completely rejected. Despite his rather severe methods, Ahmadinejad still built his foreign policy doctrine on the principle of “constructive interaction” (*taamol-e sazande*), aimed at active creative dialogue with members of the international community, and guaranteeing Iran’s right to defend itself, its interests and independence⁹.

Eclectic Pan-Iranism

Since Ahmadinejad's times, pan-Iranism became an important element of Iranian foreign policy identity, based on Iran's self-perception as an ancient cultural civilization, which is sometimes mistakenly replaced with the concept of "Iranian nationalism". Indeed, the basis of pan-Iranism is Iranian national pride, born by a feeling of belonging to a civilization older than Islam, and that gave the world many scientific and cultural achievements. This feeling determines Teheran's feeling of inner superiority over "younger" countries (Arab monarchies of the Persian Gulf, Russia or the USA), and a vision of the country's boundaries that the IRI classifies as the zone of their historical influence. At the same time, pan-Iranism is a concept of identity that is only based on racial principles to an insignificant degree: it is physically impossible to use these racial principles in a country with a complex ethnic situation, where the choice of the titular nation is not just a dangerous issue, but a confused one. In the creation of modern Iran, an important role was played not only by the Persian-speaking population, but also Turks living on its territories. Instead, "Iranians" are understood to be a community of people living in the country who are united by a cultural-historical heritage, and not by blood or even by religion.

In this case, Iranian pan-Iranism goes outside national borders and includes the zone of Iranian interests and the sphere of possible influence on an extensive region, encompassing Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, part of India, Transcaucasia and part of the Middle East (essentially the maximum borders of the spread of influence of pre-Islamic Iran). The countries that were part of the Iranian world may also be included in it based on the principle of linguistic, cultural, historical and/or religious communities¹⁰. At the same time, to belong to the "Islamic world" it is not necessary to have all of these attributes. As Iranian researchers say, Turkmenistan, for example, does not have a common linguistic heritage with Iran, but has stable cultural ties, the historical homeland of the Turkmen language is allegedly northern Iran, and "the most popular Turkmen poet, Magtymguly, was born in Iran and is buried there"¹¹.

As noted above, Islam does not contradict the idea of pan-Iranism. Furthermore, some researchers consider the religious factor to be an

important aspect of pan-Iranian identity, making it possible to move away from narrow national interests¹². However, in this world view, Islam is given a far from exclusive role. Pan-Iranism takes the position that Islam was not the only religious tradition that contributed to the development of Iranian civilization. This perception of religion and the place of Islam has an ambiguous significance for the elite of the country and its positioning on the foreign policy stage.

On the one hand, the Islamic element in pan-Iranian identity allows the religious corporation to use nationalistic sentiments in informing the population about the logic of decisions, although the leader of the Islamic revolution, R. Khomeini, contrasted nationalism and Islam, believing the national idea and the division of the Muslim world into different nations to be the result of actions by the imperialist West¹³. Despite Khomeini's claims that the monarchy in Iran was overthrown in the name of Islamic, but definitely not nationalist, ideas, the country's leadership has often appealed to national feelings throughout the history of the Islamic republic, when ideas of Islamic interventionism were ineffective¹⁴. In the late 1980s, Khomeini equated the national duty in protecting the integrity of the state with the fulfillment of religious obligations¹⁵. Furthermore, ever since 1979, Iranian politicians have stated with increasing clarity that the interests of the global Muslim community, although they are one of the priorities for the country's foreign policy, should not come into clear conflict with Iran's interests.

On the other hand, the lack of a strict tie to Islam has made it possible for Pan-Iranian identity to become even more flexible in establishing relations with certain countries which are not Shia or Muslim, but which Teheran perceives as part of the global "Iranian world" united by a common past and cultural roots (such as Armenia, for example).

So Who Are We Then?

Since President Rouhani came to power in 2013, a very specific situation has formed in Iran concerning foreign policy self-identity. The Iranian political establishment is unable of giving a single answer to the question "Who are we?": depending on the situation, Iran may be defined as a national state, a revolutionary society, the leader of the Islamic world, a leading Shia power and a fighter for building a new

just world order. These different interpretations are caused by the fact that in the process of forming its own foreign political identity, at different periods, Iranians gave different definitions of their own identity in relation to others. At the same time, as one historical period ended and another began, there was not a complete rejection of previous foreign policy identity, but it was rather expressed in a new way to fit the new situation. In extreme cases, elements of previous Iranian foreign policy identity continued to coexist with the new definition. In this sense, it is hard to disagree with Khamenei, who in September 2014 explained that the power of Iran's religious policy came from Islam, the Persian language and Ja'fari tradition. He stated that these three elements ensure the "strategic depth of Iranian regional positions"¹⁶.

Variations in Iranian self-identification is a source both of Iranian problems and of Iranian power. In particular, the roles of "defender of the Muslim community", "protector of the Shias", or fighter against ideological enemies sometimes force Iran to act against its own national interests. Teheran was could not avoid reacting to the execution of the Shia religious figure Nimr an-Nimr in Saudi Arabia in 2015, although this caused a serious worsening in relations with countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council. In other cases, Teheran may be exclusively pragmatic, such as its contacts with Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan – to avoid clashes with members of these groups and causing problems for Americans, the Iranian leadership maintained a certain level of contact with them in the late 2000s - early 2010s¹⁷.

Having several identities by no means leads to "foreign policy schizophrenia". The Iranian elite is able to combine these identities and use them when necessary. Religious rhetoric and ideas of pan-Shia unity have allowed the country's leadership to mobilize the forces of Iranian, Afghan, Lebanese and Pakistan Shia to defend Iran's interests in the current civil war in Syria, sending Shia "volunteer" divisions there from all over the region. For the Iranians themselves, the country's leadership has proposed a different narrative, explaining that involvement in the Syrian war is necessary to defend national security, incorporating it into the so-called theory of the "chain of resistance" (*selesel-ye mukavemat*) that stipulates an Iranian presence

in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq as a response to threats to Iran's national security in outlying regions bordered by these countries. In this sense, several foreign policy identities are even a source of strength for Iran, when they are used correctly.

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Chapter 18

Liudmila Samarskaia

Israel: Foreign Policy and Ethno-Religious Factor

Israel's self-perception in the region is based on several fundamental and undisputed dogmata: the historical right to the land of Palestine, the existentiality of existing threats and the right to use any means to ward them off, the special modernizing status in the Middle East ("a villa in the jungle"). On the one hand, security problems for Israel remain especially significant, and the image of a "besieged fortress" is not just a metaphor. However, the nature of the "besiegers" has changed, while the focus shifted from the Arab states to Iran and its proxies. On the other hand, Israel strives for integration in the region on its own terms (while maintaining control over Palestinian territories), and it has partially succeeded in this.

In Israeli policy towards the regional actors, the ethno-religious component used to dominate for a long time: as Israel's relations with Arab nations were tense, its foreign policy priorities were establishing contacts with Muslim non-Arab nations. An example is the so-called "Alliance of the Periphery" founded in the 1950s – an unofficial partnership between Israel, Turkey, Iran, and Ethiopia¹, and also special relations with non-Muslim and/or non-Arab communities – Maronites, Kurds, Circassians (in Israel itself).

Ethnic identity continues to play an instrumental role in ensuring support for Israel abroad (ties with the diaspora). A serious factor determining Israeli foreign policy contacts is the attitude that the potential partner state takes on the issue of Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The modern example of the Gulf monarchies is illustrative: as resolving Israeli-Palestinian tensions became less important for them, and containment of Iran turned into a growing priority, their unofficial and semi-official relations with Israel have improved considerably. Furthermore, the "Abraham Accords" have been signed, bringing the process of normalizing relations with the Jewish state to a new level (in the case of the UAE and Bahrain)².

The Religious Factor

The politicization of ideological, religious and ethnic identities has strengthened the religious factor in Israel's foreign policy. Religious settlers gradually came to play a special role in the political activation of the religious component. During the first intifada (1987 - 1994), settlers constantly took part in skirmishes with the Palestinians. They became the main force demanding that the government suppress the Palestinian uprising immediately. Their position on the peace process remains especially harsh and uncompromising. At present, the settlers have become the bearers of nationalist anti-Palestinian moods, taking a position similar to religious nationalists³.

Religious Zionists and secular right-wingers believe that the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are an integral part of the Jewish state. They support building settlements on Palestinian territories, thus increasing tension in relations with their Arab neighbors and making it even more difficult to solve the issue of borders between the two nations. In this sense, there is an obvious connection between stagnation in Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the popularity of right-wing and religious parties in Israel.

The mass support for the Jewish Nation-State Law (Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People, passed in 2018), the status of Jerusalem and the strict position of the government on the Palestinian issue show that there has been a radicalization of views among a large number of Israeli Jews ³. This process is also affecting parties which were traditionally part of the left-wing opposition. The leadership of the opposition left-wing party the Zionist Union (Avi Gabbay) supported Trump's statement and claimed that recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel was more important than a peace agreement with the Palestinians⁵. Not one Jewish left-wing party spoke against Trump's definition of the status of Jerusalem and the decision to move the US embassy there⁶.

The rise in anti-Palestinian moods fits in with the core idea of consolidating national forces in the battle for the security of the country and protection from the Palestinian terror. Its supporters believe that the Jewish state is not dealing with a national movement that fights with whatever methods it can, but with enemies who can

only be identified as terrorists⁷.

Israelis today, as never before, are united in their nationalist convictions and in their insistence on traditional claims to their “native land” – Palestine, and this directly affects foreign policy⁸. The symbolic significance of the land for each of the warring peoples in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is sanctified by their religious traditions, and this makes the conflict especially acute⁹.

Relations with the Diaspora

The relations with the Jewish diaspora are a special field of foreign policy strategy for the state with its ethno-religious basis. The largest communities live in the USA, France, Canada, the UK, Russia, Argentina, Germany and Brazil. In Israel, they have always been regarded both as a source of immigration and as a powerful tool of lobbyism. Before the State of Israel was created, the Jewish community in the USA played a special role, and this tendency is preserved to this day. The relationships with the USA, along with American-Israeli ties in general, are described as “a central pillar of Israel’s national security”. It is stressed that “Israel must increase its efforts to support and strengthen ties with world Jewry as a component of its national security”¹⁰. In this case, the Jewish diaspora in the USA is regarded as an internal political ally united with Israel by a common national identity.

The importance of contacts with the Jewish diaspora in the USA is even emphasized in the electoral programs of Israeli political parties. The centrist bloc Blue and White’s program has stated that relations with the Jewish community of the USA and Jews worldwide are part of Israel’s national security¹¹. The socialist Labor’s program also states the need to increase and strengthen ties with the American Jewish community (and also with other Jewish communities around the world, but the American community is mentioned separately)¹².

The Occupied Territories

On the whole, the problem of Palestinian territories and refugees, whose treatment often complicates relations with the international community, remains the most painful issue for Israel. The right-wing

tendency of the current Israeli leadership, which maintains a harsh policy in negotiations concerning occupied territories, is reflected in how attempts at resolving the conflict initiated by the EU or the USA are perceived. For example, US President Barack Obama, attempting to achieve progress in this process through pressure and attempts at “peace enforcement”, set both the Israeli leaders and the Israeli population against him. The EU position remains similar in many ways, and so is perceived negatively in Israel, although this does not hinder their socio-economic relations. US President Donald Trump, on the contrary, pursued a policy that was close to the position of Israeli right-wing parties (see table).

Table Actions of the US Presidents B. Obama and D. Trump directly concerning Israel, and reactions to them by Israeli government circles and society

Actor Event	Government / ruling party (Likud) / Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu	Society
Obama		
UN Security Council resolution №2334, USA refrained from voting (23.12.2016)	Against ¹³	62% against stopping building settlements, 29% for ¹⁴
Trump		
Recognizing Jerusalem as the capital (06.12.2017)	For ¹⁵	85% for, 7% against
Recognition of Golan heights (25.03.2019)	For ¹⁷	88% for, 5% against ¹⁸
Recognition of West Bank settlements (18.11.2019)	For ¹⁸	No position
Deal of the Century (28.01.2020)	For ²⁰	32.2%–50% for annexation, 41.7%–30% against

Sources: AJC, Prime Minister’s Office, The Israel Democracy Institute, The JerusalemPost, The Times of Israel

As'ad Ghanem, professor of political studies at Haifa University, states that Trump's actions legitimized an extremely right-wing messianic agenda, putting into political circulation the ultra-nationalists' traditional argument about the eternal, single and undivided capital of Jerusalem²².

At the same time, certain aspects of the "deal of the century" proved more complex and disputed, despite its clearly pro-Israeli tone²³. On the one hand, there are Israelis who consider the annexation of the section of West Bank territory envisaged in the plan to be risky from the security standpoint (and even capable of provoking a third intifada), as the Palestinian side does not agree with this step (this was the opinion of 58.3% of respondents in a survey by the Israeli Democracy Institute, while 28.1% disagreed²⁴). On the other hand, some leaders of the settlement movement ideologically associated with religious Zionism consider Trump's plan to be unacceptable, as it will mean recognizing the Palestinian state's right to existence and Israel officially relinquishing most of the West Bank territory²⁵.

Both in the historical retrospective and at the present stage, the features of Israeli foreign policy identity are reflected most clearly in the attitude towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While the conflict remains a key aspect in Israeli foreign policy, it is increasingly seen as an internal problem, especially as it has become part of the ideological-religious discourse. The conflict with Iran and its allies has given Israel the opportunity to set aside contradictions with the Palestinians, but not to replace them with a new agenda.

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Section VII. IDENTITY IN REGIONAL CONFLICTS

Chapter 19

Irina Zvyagelskaya

The Dynamics of Middle East Conflicts

In the Middle East, there are numerous conflicts with inter-sectarian or ethno-religious dimensions. The analysis of conflict dynamics, of the actions and positions of the main opposing sides shows that cultural differences could become the drivers of a conflict only in the process of their politicization. They can transform conflicts of interests into conflicts of values, making them almost intractable.

Current conflicts in the Middle East are largely asymmetrical, they take place on the territory of one or more states, have a diverse range of participants and to varying degrees involve the external intervention of regional and/or global powers. In these types of conflicts, politicized identity becomes both a driver of conflicts (in the opposition of “us and them”) and an important tool in the hands of opponents. Numerous proxy wars or their elements (Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Libya) have given examples of regional forces forming ties with allies based on common identity (sectarian, ethnic, tribal). Identity issues have been also defining the intensity of conflicts between states (Iran – Saudi Arabia, Iran – Israel, Saudi Arabia – Qatar).

Conflict Transformation

The move from regional inter-state conflicts to internal ones was, to a certain degree, connected with the end of the Cold War. At the time the two global rivals - the USA and the USSR - each had their own allies in the region. When the USSR collapsed, ideological ties between Moscow and the so-called progressive anti-imperialist regimes were lost. Anti-imperialism ceased to be a source of support from socialist states as they left the stage, and the orientation changed as global ideologies weakened. And although in the first decades of the 21st century, rivalry between global powers once more became a feature of the times, it did not lead to the strict division of local players into “friends and enemies”, especially as the players

themselves tried to maintain a maximum freedom of action and diversify their ties, even when they depended on a global patron.

New national elites emerging on the political stage, the battle for territory and resources, the aspiration to self-determination through creating statehood – all of these elements of conflict make regions in the modern world more fragmented, despite globalization processes. Usually, conflicts where identity plays a prominent role arise on the ruins of empires and multiethnic states and/or after a weakening of central power that cannot exercise strict control over national regions. Activization of local elites and ethnic and sectarian mobilization, as the result of weakening power, causes state institutions to weaken further. Military groups led by field commanders try to take matters into their own hands and refuse to obey political leaders. In this situation, terrorism becomes widespread, as well as a rise in crime.

This essentially means that the state loses its sovereignty, and no longer has a monopoly on the legitimate use of military force. During a conflict, role functions change – independent and illegal military groups may become part of the police and armed forces, and then once more break away from official structures. Ethnic cleansing and refugees also result from these conflicts. A high level of violence becomes psychologically acceptable to society, leading to further aggression.

Conflicts, where the involvement at least of one opposing side is caused by ethnic (or linguistic, or confessional and religious) differences, may be latent for a long time. The latent form of the conflict involves serious tensions, which are not manifested openly, because they lack sufficient framing, the sides have little opportunity to mobilize, or because of the restraining influence of the environment. The trigger role may be played by external intervention, causing the conflict to shift to a crisis stage.

In conflicts in the Middle East, we may increasingly observe participants appealing to sectarian and religious identity, while also maintaining the ethnic dimension of a number of problems (the Palestinians and Kurds). The dominance of the sectarian component (Sunni – Shia) does not mean that the Middle East is creating a kind of “new Middle Ages”¹. Things that may look archaic from the outside are actually a modern means of mobilization, manipulation or self-

positioning. As Academic Vitaly Naumkin justly noted, “Islamic traditional symbols, based on a “myth” (in the terminological sense) that everything Islamic is better, may not necessarily be used to preserve certain outdated standards,... but to make Islamic ethics and morality ‘fit’ into modern life”².

Sectarianism in the post-modernist era increasingly becomes part of symbolic politics. At the same time, disagreements between different sects and religions do indeed exist on a doctrinal and historical basis, and so the conflict situation is preserved.

The emphasis on religious and confessional identity manifested in conflicts is quite organic for the Middle East. Religion has always played a special role in the countries here, and it is not surprising that it has begun to manifest itself in international relations as well. As lecturer at Warsaw University Anna Solarz writes, “Religion is a constant presence in domestic and foreign policy in the Middle East, since, from the moment that the region’s modern states took shape, it was an inseparable element of their identity, even as this initially went almost unnoticed by IR studies. The prevalence of the “Westphalian presumption” required that religion be treated as an aspect of (matter for) domestic policy, with this factor not needing to be exposed where foreign policy was concerned. The fact that this presence sooner or later made itself felt in the Middle East only attests to the way in which there was never any full implementation of the Westphalian synthesis in this region”³.

The role of cultural factors, that influence the causes, process and possibility of conflict settlement, requires a special acknowledgement and understanding. We may find such an understanding in the works of Academic Yevgeny Primakov, a politician and brilliant scholar specializing in the Middle East. As he put it in a book published at IMEMO under his supervision, “conflicts in the regions and even wars between different nations have their roots in history, and in the current situation in these countries and regions. It is incorrect and even dangerous to portray the matter as if all these elements of conflict were the result of rivalry between East and West”⁴. Primakov defended this approach at a time when political concepts and perceptions were undoubtedly dominated by superpowers' rivalry, overshadowing domestic and regional developments.

The actual types of conflicts show that they not only contain contradictory, but also mutually exclusive interests among the sides. Ethno-national and sectarian dimensions give the conflict an especially strong emotional coloring, reducing the possibility of compromise even further. As the American conflict expert O. Nudler notes: “Modern conflicts usually include several definite levels, from the personal or psychological level to the micro-social or group, and then to the macrosocial level, each of which has various dimensions. In addition to this diversity, all of these levels and dimensions are often intertwined in such a way that it is difficult to determine where one should start, or if there is even one point that is more suitable than others”⁵.

As many modern conflicts are (or have been) internal, they often acquire a form similar to a civil war taking into account side by side living, mixed marriages etc. This is the harshest and most uncompromising version of conflict, with destructive national consequences. Examples are the Syrian, Lebanese, Libyan and Yemeni conflicts.

Group Identity as a Factor of Mobilization

Modern conflicts have emphasized the special significance of group solidarity according to ethnic, confessional, religious and tribal lines. All of these identities are collective, they unite and bond separate groups, making it possible to examine them as similar phenomena. As renowned Western sociologist Lewis Coser writes, “the distinction between ‘ourselves, the we-group, or in-group, and everybody else, or the others-groups, out-groups’ is established in and through conflicts. This is not confined to conflicts between classes, although class conflicts have appeared as the most convenient illustration to many observers. Nationality and ethnic conflicts, political conflicts, or conflicts between various strata in bureaucratic structures afford equally relevant examples to us”⁶. Furthermore, “conflict serves to establish and maintain identity and boundary lines of societies and groups. Conflict with other groups contributes to the establishment and reaffirmation of the identity of the group and maintains its boundaries against the surrounding social world”⁷.

To this we may add that emphasis on group identity creates motivation

for participants that otherwise can hardly be inspired by such prosaic tasks as access to resources and markets, or a struggle for higher positions within the elite. It is the battle for survival and protecting sacred civilizational symbols that makes people prepared for self-sacrifice and fierce resistance.

In the segregated societies of the Middle East, where people are excluded from the political system, regardless of whether power belongs to an ethnic or sectarian minority or whether the majority rules, the rest of the population feels unjustly persecuted, and in this deprived situation finds social protection within its own sectarian, religious, ethnic or tribal community. Increased antagonism between this group and the ruling class leads to the battle for rights, and even for survival as a special group. In these cases, safety has not only a physical, but also a cultural side.

Unfortunately, scholarly studies clearly lack sufficient explanations about how mobilization takes place. As the Russian researcher Anastasia Voronkova writes, neither the primordialist nor the social-constructivist approaches directly address the problem of ethnic or sectarianism antagonism shifting to political mobilization or violence. “On the one hand, for primordialists, interethnic violence flows naturally out of the intensity of cultural allegiance to a given community. On the other hand, constructivism... would assume that support for violence moves exactly hand in hand with elite discourses emphasizing antagonism towards the opponent, so that it is difficult to demonstrate a causal link between the content of these identities and violence”⁸.

It is more likely that the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Cultural and social deprivation is sufficient for mobilization, and the policy of counter-elites that strive for power and access to resources makes this process more organized and heightens antagonisms that divide society. Sectarianism and/or ethnic identity determines a much higher level of solidarity than any ideological allegiance. The threat perception becomes particularly significant here; if interpreted as a menace to the group cultural uniqueness, it dictates the most violent response. The American specialist D. Horowitz, analyzing the transformation of ethnic groups into conflicting parties, wrote: “Ethnic conflict arises from the common evaluative significance accorded by the groups to acknowledged group difference and then played out in

public rituals of affirmation or contradiction”⁹. This conclusion also applies to conflicts colored with sectarian differences.

In general, in identity conflict parties are rarely inclined to compromises, because this may involve serious challenges, and because the cultural elements create high demands. For example, the Saudi-Iranian conflict, which in principle has prospects for political settlement, is becoming insuperable because of how the parties involved perceive it. In 2020, Saudi Arabia, unlike other Gulf nations, even refused to provide humanitarian aid to Iran during the pandemic, even though it had indirect contacts with Iran in 2019. There is no doubt that Riyadh itself needed funds to combat COVID-19, but it did not even make a symbolic gesture. This uncompromising stance arises from seeing the conflict as a zero-sum game. “Players on both sides of the Gulf should admit that, on the whole, their perception of each other is a mirror reflection: all participants see each other as an existential threat”¹⁰. These conflicts may be analyzed within the theory proposed by American conflict specialist John Burton. Taking the example of Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs¹¹, Burton made his own groups of key needs which lead to conflict when they are not satisfied. According to Burton’s theory, the most significant needs for understanding destructive social conflicts are the need for uniqueness, recognition, safety and personal development. Over time, however, Burton claimed that the inability of modern state systems to satisfy the need for uniqueness is the main cause of modern conflicts¹².

These needs include basic factors necessary for survival of the group – certain natural conditions, water and food etc. Needs essentially do not change. Interests relate to the social, political and economic aspiration of individual people or groups. Interests change depending on the change in the situation, and may be artificially compensated for, created, or lose their former significance. If needs generally exclude any compromises, as issues of survival cannot be relinquished, and achieving compromises on issues of values is extremely difficult, then the interests of opposing sides may be combined. They may solve border issues, agree to station additional troops, monitor the situation, develop measures of trust, and sign peace treaties.

Values are traditions, customs and other cultural characteristics which may change over time, but are fundamental for any ethnic group and

distinguish it from other groups and peoples. They are part of the fabric of the conflict of identities, predetermining their intensity and the difficulty of finding a compromise. "In conditions of oppression, discrimination, underprivilege and isolation, the defense of values is important to the needs of personal security and identity. In this sense they impinge on needs and can be confused with them. Preservation of values is a reason for defensive and aggressive behaviors. ...It is values that have divided Lebanon, Northern Ireland and many other multi-ethnic and multi-communal societies"¹³.

At the same time, "culture" and "values" are not necessarily recognized by the actual participants of the conflict as such. According to Russian ethnologist V.A. Shnirelman, they rather serve as a marker "allowing to distinguish easily between "friends" and "strangers" and to unite against the latter. Culture serves as a convenient explanatory matrix, making it possible to "discover meaning" in events, and partially to explain a conflict, which in this situation inevitably acquires "ethnic overtones". This also applies to religion, if it is perceived primarily as cultural identity, and not faith. In this case, its function comes down to establishing boundaries of identities, and has nothing to do with morality or values"¹⁴.

Within one conflict, there may be disagreements both on interests and values. One illustration of this is the "battle for Jerusalem", the cradle of three religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is sacred for all followers of these religions, but its symbolic significance is used by the sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the battle for leadership and spheres of influence. Jerusalem's transformation into the stage for a political conflict has become particularly noticeable as Turkey has become active in East Jerusalem, claiming for a leading role in the Muslim world. The Turkish company TIKA increasingly provides support to local residents and small businesses, not to mention Ankara's activity on Temple Mount. These actions cause a rise in tension between Turkey and the Arab monarchies of the Gulf, and also put Jordan in a difficult position.

Turkey readily supports the Palestinians and takes an uncompromising stand towards the Israeli approach to the Palestinian problem. Jerusalem in the tense context of mutual claims and accusations has become a marker of new conflict divisions.

As James Dorsey writes: “Israel, with the backing of the Trump administration, may have full administrative control of Jerusalem but that has not shielded the city from becoming a fault line in one of the Middle East’s major divides that pits Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates against Turkey, with Jordan caught between a rock and a hard place. The rivalry has turned some of the city’s real estate, including a historic Muslim cemetery and the Jordanian-controlled religious endowment that administers Islam’s third most holy site, into battlefields”¹⁵. In this political framing, not only rivalry among Muslim leaders has turned Jerusalem into a battlefield, but the city itself with its religious significance has structured this rivalry to a degree, giving it a certain “spiritual dimension”. The later also includes the conflict among the Sunni themselves.

The identities issues are closely linked to myth-making. Group members regard these myths as a historical reality that leaves no room for doubt. These are myths about a glorious past (peoples without a glorious past simply do not exist), ancient traditions, divine revelation, and sworn enemies. The instrumental use of identities attests to the fact that only politicization makes these identities the drivers of the conflict. Accordingly, it is unproductive to try to explain the policy of international actors solely through the primordial conflict of identities. That said, the choice of allies and sympathizers can be often motivated by a common identity.

Identities in the Pragmatic Context

The Islamic revival and the growing influence of political Islam in conflicts have both general causes (geopolitical transformations) and specific ones depending on the dynamics of the conflict, the situation at state or regional levels, and local political culture. The crisis of global secular ideologies and regimes, has given rise to concepts based on an Islamic vision of statehood. The “Islamic project” was designed as an instrument to overcome socio-economic backwardness, and ensure justice for all citizens.

The revival of sectarianism was going hand in hand with this project. For example, Morten Valbjørn from Aarhus University in Denmark states that “while Shia/Sunni sectarianism had been debated in the decade before the Arab uprisings, the terms of the debate had changed.

Previous skeptics now acknowledged that sectarianism had become ‘a real factor in politics’, and instead of discussing whether sectarianism was a ‘myth or reality’, the debate on sectarian politics now largely revolved around questions about why sectarianism had (re)emerged and how it has impacted various dynamics of regional politics”¹⁶.

Confessionalism and religious identities, with all their functional similarity to other factors of collective identity, nevertheless retain their own special features. “Religion can define reality, constitute communities, nurture powerful emotions, generate commitment, resocialize and reorganize the self, radically devalue the existing order, impose obligations, offer rewards and sanctions, furnish justifications, and intensify threats and dangers. It links cognitive definitions of ultimate reality with structures of feeling and obligation. In so doing it can authorize, legitimate, enable and even require violent action in the face of urgent threats, profanations of sacred symbols, and extreme otherhood”¹⁷.

The use of religious and sectarian factors in conflicts reflects pragmatic tasks. While they are coloring a conflict in a certain way, they do not necessarily hinder the normalization and rapprochement of former opponents.

The conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia is not caused by doctrinal differences, and processes of radicalization cannot be considered to stem exclusively from religious ideas or ethnic culture. As Ana Belen Soage from Suffolk University writes, “some actors involved in the conflicts decided to include them in sectarian frames, to undermine their opponents and mobilize their fellow believers against the ‘common enemy’”. “Unfortunately, once invoked, sectarianism becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, and the dehumanization of the other exacerbates the scale and viciousness of the hostilities. Nevertheless, a full understanding of the situation requires revisiting the historical and geopolitical context that has led to an increase in sectarian strife over the last decade or so. Such an exercise reveals that sectarian narratives often conceal more prosaic motivations, and that the current cold war in the Middle East has more to do with ideological competition, regime survival and the regional balance of power than with the Saqifa gathering or the Battle of Karbala”¹⁸.

Existing cultural and sectarian disagreements were not an insuperable

obstacle in attempts to prevent an escalation of tensions between Teheran and Riyadh. The drastic rise in tension in the Gulf pushed Saudis and Iranians to establish contacts to avoid the risk of a major war. One of the channels through which messages were exchanged was Iraq. Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi announced in the Iraqi Parliament "I was supposed to meet with Suleimani in the morning on the day he was killed. He came to give me a letter from Iran in response to the message that we delivered from Saudi Arabia to Iran" ¹⁹. After Suleimani's murder, contacts ceased and were resumed much later.

Pragmatic motives inspired Iran not to emphasize the Shia nature of its revolution during the "Arab spring". For Iran, it became clear that sectarianism was hindering the export of the Iranian revolution, as social protests in Arab states grew. During the "Arab spring", Teheran portrayed its Islamic revolution not as Shia, but as a model for the entire Muslim world. At the same time, in the conflict with Saudi Arabia, or in its policy in Syria and Iraq, the sectarian (Shia) factor played an important role in ensuring Iran's interests, both in supporting the regime, and relying on allies (Hezbollah, the Shia militias).

For Saudi Arabia, the Wahhabi version of Sunnism as a model of Islamic purity strengthens its claim to be the leader of the entire Muslim world, and also creates additional possibilities of mobilization to contain Iran, which might influence Shia communities in various Arab nations. Additionally, Teheran's rhetoric in opposing Israel and the USA resonates with the moods of the Arab and Muslim street, and undermines the image of Riyadh, which is developing relations with the USA and showing readiness to gradually normalize relations with Israel²⁰.

In the Syrian conflict, sectarian identity is also used by both Assad and the Iranian leadership. The basis of the Iranian-Syrian alliance was first and foremost pragmatic and not sectarian. Pragmatic considerations were behind the bilateral cooperation during the Iran-Iraq war in 1980 - 1988. Iran's support was the natural choice for Hafez Assad in his rivalry with Saddam Hussein given ideological differences between the two branches of Ba'athism.

At the same time, Hafez Assad, who represented the Alawi

community, tried quite deliberately to gain official recognition from Shia. Alawism was founded in the 9th century, and for a long time the Alawi were not even considered Muslims. They only gained this recognition in 1936 by a fetwa from the mufti of Palestine, Amin al-Hussein. But under both the Turks and the French, multi-sectarian and multi-ethnic Syria generally remained a country of religious tolerance, and although frictions existed and conflicts arose between different communities, inter-religious hostility was far from dominating the domestic scene. The Assad family relied on the Sunni bourgeoisie, and on other religious and ethnic communities. Their individual members had been integrated into the local elite. In 1973, at Hafez Assad's request, the Imam of Lebanon Musa Sadr recognized the Nusayris as member of the Shia community, while Syria continued to be a secular nation²¹.

Leaving theological problems aside, it was definitely a clearly prescribed sectarian identity that allowed Assad to solve a number of practical political tasks: integration into a wider Muslim society, legitimization as the ruling elite within Syria, and the search for allies. The rapport with Iran provided additional military and economic advantages for the Syrian regime, as well as new opportunities for the Iranian ayatollahs.

Inter-ethnic antagonisms are also manifested in the Syrian civil war. The Kurds' battle for autonomy, which has a political basis, becomes more acute and uncompromising under the influence of identity. It must be admitted that the Kurds' fears about preserving their uniqueness in the Syrian state that is now swept by war have justification. This not only involves clashes with the regular Syrian army, but also the military opposition of Turkey in the operations "Shield of Euphrates" and "Olive Branch". For historical reasons, the Kurds have often been used by external forces in their own interests, and then left to the whims of fate. The Syrian Kurds, who are represented by the military divisions of the YPG²² once more encountered this, when the USA which had previously supported them did not defend the Kurds during the Turkish military operation in Syria. Historical and recent experience in this case only strengthens the Kurds' resolve to defend their rights to the end with all available means.

Lebanon is also an example of how the sectarian factor is used in

conflicts. Lebanon is the stage for the political rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran (and partially sectarian Sunni-Shia rivalry). Qatar joined the battle for Lebanon, as it has claims to the position in the Lebanese political field.

The Syrian crisis inevitably affected the domestic political situation in Lebanon. The “8th of March” bloc, which united around the Hezbollah movement and its leader, Sheikh Hasan Nasrallah, is on the side of Bashar Assad’s regime. The Sunni-Christian coalition, led by former Prime Minister Saad Hariri, was categorically against direct relations with Syria and its allies in the region, primarily Iran. But Hezbollah, which controls the government, has managed to penetrate the Lebanese society and create a situation where Lebanese political, economic and military systems are unable to function without it. Protests against Hezbollah will hardly be able to change the existing balance of forces.

In Iraq, sectarian differences have long been politicized, and identity has been a tool for consolidating the regime. Saddam Hussein, who belonged to a sectarian minority in Iraq (the Sunni), created his support base by relying on traditional loyalty. Leading US specialist on Gulf countries Judith Yaphe has classified several areas of this activity. Hussein, who came from a province where tribal, clan and family ties were very strong, actively used traditional structures, combining them with military organization and security services. Members of his tribe gained the main positions not only in the guard service of the President and his family, but also in the security of key facilities and programs. Finally, members of his family – cousins and half-brothers, and later his sons, received all the important positions in the security sphere, and also in industrial development²³. The Shia, who make up the majority, were deprived of access to the exclusive system of rule that Hussein created.

After the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 and attempts to create a new political system, sectarianism swiftly became more politicized. Local institutions created with outside assistance could only be based upon sectarianism (with the Shia domination). As such, they proved incapable of providing security and sustainable development. A result was the formation of ISIS by the marginalized Sunni (former officers, bureaucrats and Ba’athists), and the activation of a number of other Jihad groups.

Sectarian differences are overcome when common goals arise. The protests in Iraq in the autumn of 2019 against Iranian dominance united Sunni and Shia²⁴.

The conflict in Yemen also has identity elements – it is multi-levelled and complex, with tribal and territorial as well as sectarian elements. These identities are used pragmatically by internal and external players, turning the conflict in Yemen into a sort of proxy war, reflecting the Iranian-Saudi conflict.

The Palestinian conflict has both ethnic and religious components. The 1967 war ultimately led to gradual radicalization of Israelis and Palestinians on a religious platform. In the Palestinian milieu, it was a reaction to the occupation and disappointment in the policy of secular leaders, who were incapable of reclaiming territories and providing social support to the poorest groups of the population.

The main Palestinian radical Islamist organizations on occupied territories – “Islamic Jihad” and Hamas – were formed in the 1970s and 1980s respectively. US researcher Glenn Robinson notes: “Islamism, including the Hamas version, is an essentially modern phenomenon. It is strongly urban in its physical orientation; it is led by Western-educated cadres with little clerical involvement, and it is at ease using modern technology to advance its cause”²⁵.

It is possible that the modernized nature of HAMAS, and also the experience of its performance in Gaza that turned the movement into a kind of quasi-state structure, could have assisted it in showing greater flexibility in foreign policy. The HAMAS movement, which has always rejected the existence of Israel, nevertheless made changes to its charter in 2017. “HAMAS supports the liberation of all Palestine, but we are ready to recognize the state within the borders of 1967, without recognizing Israel or conceding any rights... We do not wish to back down from our principles, but we must be open. We hope that this document will lay the beginning for a change in relations towards us from European nations,” the leader of the organization Haled Mashal announced, presenting the new Charter²⁶. In other words, allegiance to ideological principles does not close the door for tactical maneuvers, if they are necessary to achieve practical results.

In Israel, on the contrary, the possibilities for finding compromises in

the Palestinian conflict were further restricted as fundamentalists supported settling the West Bank and Gaza, and bringing in people and resources. The policy of the religious settlers, although it is carried out as part of state programs for developing occupied territories, was motivated by the religious and historical connection with the conquered lands. They were not guided by state interests and political strategies, but specifically interpreted values that reject a territorial compromise. As Israeli journalist Dov Kontorer wrote: “For this camp, which is the most active in the settlement of recent decades, *religiously motivated* self-identification with the Zionist project, involvement in its realization and practical solidarity with the state of Israel founded in 1948 is their central point of existence and doctrine. It is the determining “identity point”, in which religious Zionists distance themselves both from the ultra-orthodox, who are ideologically opposed to Zionism, and from secular Jewish nationalism”²⁷.

After the “deal of the century” was proposed, Israeli leadership tried to use religious “justification” of annexation. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu even appealed to the Evangelical American group “Christians United for Israel” (CUFI) to lobby in the USA for the annexation of territories on the West Bank. In a speech at a virtual conference, Netanyahu noted that Trump’s plan would give Israel the chance to annex the Jewish settlements of Beit-El and Shiloh, which are mentioned in the Bible as places of worship and religious miracles. “These places are an integral part of the historical homeland of the Jews... but also an integral part of Christian identity. They are part of our heritage. Part of our common civilization, and under Israeli sovereignty our common heritage will always be protected,” Netanyahu said²⁸.

Despite the growing role of the religious factor in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, inter-ethnic antagonisms lie at its base. The Jews have proclaimed their goal to create a national, ethnic state. The Palestinians also want an ethnic state. In fact, the opportunities dwindle to realize the principle of “two states for two peoples”.

At the same time, conflicting identities seem to be less of an obstacle in reformatting inter-regional relations. Although it is early to speak of new alliances yet, normalization processes between old opponents are certainly increasing. Israel’s relations with the Gulf monarchies

improved because of the desire to contain Iran, and the interest in business and technology cooperation. This rapprochement was marked by important symbolic gestures – Israeli sports teams participated in competitions in the Gulf, Netanyahu visited Oman and even an Etihad Airlines (UAE) plane landed at Ben Gurion airport (for the first time in history), carrying humanitarian cargo for the Palestinians.

On 13 August 2020, Israel and the UAE passed a resolution on the full normalization of relations. In exchange for opening embassies, signing bilateral agreements on capital investments and cooperation, Israel undertook to delay declaring sovereignty over part of the Jordan valley, and to focus on expanding ties with other countries of the Arab and Islamic world²⁹. In September 2020, Bahrein followed the UAE's example. We should note that critics of the agreement, and its supporters, played the religious card – they appealed to Islamic law and cited the Koran to back up their arguments and condemn their opponents. On the whole, religious identity dictated its own (mutually exclusive) rules of foreign policy activity in rejecting or legitimizing the agreement³⁰.

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and the head of Mossad Y. Cohen secretly visited Saudi Arabia on 22 November 2020 and met with the Crown Prince. The Gulf countries were not an exceptional case, as Sudan also joined the normalization process in October 2020. Haftar's allies in Libya requested assistance from Israel in a difficult military situation. The deputy Prime Minister Abdel Salam al-Badri, whose ally is Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar of the Libyan National Army, announced in an interview in June 2020: "We never had and will never have enemies in Tel Aviv. We hope that you support us". He stressed that Libya had a long history of relations with Israel, and that the nations had never been enemies³¹.

Rapprochement with the Arab nations took place against the background of the unsettled Palestinian problem, but precluded provocative unilateral actions by Israel. Although formally the Israeli government did not reject annexation, normalization of relations with the Arab world did not allow it to proceed with this plan.

A study of conflict situations in the Middle East shows that cultural differences in themselves are not drivers of conflict, but the cultural component (religious, sectarian, ethnic, tribal) becomes the marker of friends and foes. The nature of these differences is easily replaced by mythology. Identity conflicts do not exclude pragmatic behavior dictated by direct interests – rapprochement with opponents, normalization elements and symbolic reconciliatory gestures.

Notes

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Chapter 20

Vladimir Morozov

Non-State Armed Actors in Conflicts in the Middle East

The 21st century saw a drastic rise in the role of armed non-state actors capable not only of destabilizing the situation in a specific country, but also of creating quasi-state formations. The Middle East provides an example of numerous non-state armed actors with different agendas fighting not only against states, but also among one another.

The identity factor plays a major role in the formation and consolidation of these organizations. Solidarity based on allegiance to sectarian, religious, ethnic or ideologically united groups not only ensures survival and safety for individuals (especially in a conflict), but also draws them into a political struggle, and puts them under the control of the leaders, who use the identity factor as a mobilizing tool in the battle for controlling resources and territories.

The Main Types of Non-State Armed Actors

The genesis of radical organizations, their role in conflict situations, and their place in the socio-political structure of countries where they are active is often the result of a conflict and the following weakening of the state.

Main groups of non-state armed actors may be classified into two types:

1. Movements and organizations which form and consolidate when the state is too weak to ensure the safety of its citizens and fulfill social obligations to them, or when the state collapses.
2. Organizations and groups which take on individual state functions in the absence of a state.

The first group includes the Iraqi Shia militias, the Libyan National

Army (LNA) of field marshal Khalifa Haftar, the “Jabhat an-Nusra” (Al-Nusra Front) movement, and the Syrian Free Army. All of these movements emerged at times when there was a severe weakening in state power. Jabhat an-Nusra and the Syrian Free Army (like the Syrian Democratic Forces and the Syrian National Army) were armed opponents of the Syrian government and had support within the region and outside it. Haftar’s army is also the consequence of the inter-political struggle in Libya during the chaos that followed the overthrow of Gaddafi’s regime. The state practically disintegrated into several parts, with each one attempting to establish supreme power over the entire country.

The second group primarily includes Hamas, and also ISIS, with some reservations.

In the Middle East, despite the large number of armed groups, ISIS, HAMAS and the Lebanese Hezbollah should be particularly singled out. The common feature of all three organizations is their religious or sectarian identity. ISIS began by mobilizing Iraqi Sunni who had lost privileged status in the de-Ba’athification process and the dissolution of the army, and were subsequently oppressed by the Shia majority. HAMAS was the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, but subsequently became independent. Hezbollah represents the Lebanese Shia. These organizations have completely different functions and different goals. ISIS wishes to create a “truly Islamic state”, globalizing its project and appealing to all Muslims¹. HAMAS and Hezbollah have a religious agenda, but their strategies are more limited. HAMAS carries out state functions in the Gaza Strip, creating its own quasi-state there, while Hezbollah has become part of the political and economic system of Lebanon, with its own professional army.

The “Islamic State”: From Sectarianism to Common Muslim Ideology

There are several reasons behind the transformation of the group that was part of Al-Qaeda into the mass radical Salafi Jihad movement. The Sunni began to mobilize after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the destruction of the military-political structure created by Saddam Hussein, that was dominated by the Sunni, although Iraqi Shia

accounted for 60% of the country's population². The shift in the sectarian-political balance created a large group of discontented people, and a close ally of Osama Bin Laden and the spiritual leader of Al-Qaeda Abu Musab al-Zarqawi had the idea of uniting scattered cells of the organization into a whole under the aegis of opposing the Shia and another "invasion by western crusaders"³. In 2005, al-Zarqawi united a large group of Sunni armed groups in Iraq, forming the Mujaheddin Shura Council. He called on his fighters to start a jihad against the Shia in Iraq⁴.

Many Iraqi Sunni did indeed believe that the Shia in their country played the role of a "fifth column", which after the Iranian revolution of 1979 was used by Teheran to spread its influence. Iraqi Sunni thus actively joined the resistance, which adhered to the concept that anyone who did not support the Salafi interpretation of Islam was either an apostate (*murtad*) or unbeliever (*kafir*)⁶. Zarqawi's announcements were perceived as a call to free Muslim territories from hostile agents and their accomplices, not only in Iraq itself, but throughout Mesopotamia as far as the Levant.

The greatest threat for global international security is still the symbolic myth created by this group, manipulating Islamic symbolism, about an ideal state for all Muslims, which Prof. Vitaly Naumkin discusses in detail in the introduction to this book. Its concepts are popular for a number of reasons. The "Arab spring" exacerbated existing traditional problems: corruption, social injustice, inter-sectarian conflicts, lack of resources, high level of poverty and unemployment, lack of food and water⁷. Additionally, Muslims from countries of the Middle East and North Africa have a feeling of cultural subordination to the West, and are concerned that the Western lifestyle will be forced on them⁸. They see Western culture as a fatal temptation that threatens to poison and destroy the Islamic world⁹.

The ideology of the "Islamic State" is the quintessence of the "*al-hakimiya*" principle (following Sharia law) and radical Wahabism¹⁰. Formally, it looks to the past and appeals to the restoration of the caliphate as it was during the time of the Prophet Mohammad and the righteous Caliphs. According to Salafi Jihad beliefs, "true" Muslims must strive to spread and apply Islam in all spheres of life by liberating the lands of Islam from other cultures (especially western cultures) through *jihad* (holy war), and see it as the duty (*fardain*) of

every Muslim.

In other words, Muslims must actively oppose the enemies of Islam through an uncompromising armed struggle. However, in the modern world, the call to restore the caliphate had been interpreted as the creation of a just society and rule. Joining ISIS was portrayed as a way to find brotherly love, defense and support. This was the main reason that made ISIS ideology attractive, allowing the group to mobilize combat battalions and gain worldwide support.

The first program of ISIS was formulated in 2006 - 2007, and was probably written by Abu Omar al-Baghdadi (1959 - 2010), who was preacher and head of the Mujahideen Shura Council in Iraq, as the Islamic content and style of the document are similar to his speeches¹¹.

ISIS's main aim is to wage jihad on all unbelievers, as the will of Allah. The minimum program is to rid the ummah of all groups, jamaats, katibs, divisions, organizations, fronts, movements, coalitions, parties etc. This mission is clearly stated in the organization's manifesto:

"Know that the reason for delayed victory is the existence of these organizations, as they cause disagreement, division and dispersion of efforts"¹². The maximum program is completely ridding the Muslim world of kafirs (unbelievers), whom ISIS defines as all non-Muslims. For this reason, ISIS fighters exercise equally harsh treatment against unbelievers and Muslims who disagree with them¹³.

ISIS is openly hostile to the USA, Israel, western countries and Russia. Its members feel particular hatred towards such concepts as democracy, pluralism, personal freedom, freedom of religious belief, equal rights for women etc.

The ISIS manifesto emphasizes that only the laws and living standards existing under Muhammed and the righteous caliphs ensured the prosperity and greatness of the ummah, and "the dream that lives in the soul of every Muslim and believer, the hope that moves the hearts of mujahideen and fellow believers, is the caliphate!"¹⁴ Under the restored caliphate, *jizyah* (a per capita tax from non-Muslims) and *fa'i* (other types of taxes from non-Muslims) should be levied, *zakat* should be collected, and property captured in war should be divided according to *khums* rules¹⁵. Sharia courts should be established to

resolve disputes and eliminate injustice, and items and goods rejected in the Koran should be abolished or destroyed.

ISIS offered its supporters not only a war against unbelievers or the dominance of western culture. It offered more – creating a new identity based exclusively on Islam, and in an extremely conservative and archaic interpretation. This identity put religion to the fore, uniting people regardless of race, ethnicity or class. A characteristic feature of the identity developed by ISIS was the prominent opposition of “us and them”, the Salafi Jihadist framing, and also extreme aggression against all those who thought differently.

Unlike HAMAS and Hezbollah, ISIS never gave necessary attention to the social sphere: the lion’s share of revenue from the movement was spent on military needs and the punitive system, and not institutions of health care, education and assistance for the poor. The power of ISIS on captured territories was built mainly on intimidation and cruelty towards any manifestations of disobedience, which ultimately led to disappointment among a section of followers. According to a public opinion survey conducted in May 2014 by *Opinion Research Business International (ORB International)*, part of *WIN and Gallup International (WINGIA)*, ISIS had the support of not more than 4% of the population in Syria, although over 20% still believed that on the whole ISIS played a positive role¹⁶.

The formation of a self-proclaimed caliphate was also a sign of weakness of regimes in countries where ISIS tried to put down roots. The state stability of Iraq was undermined by events in 2003, while Syria went into decline in 2011 because of the taxing civil war. ISIS was able to unite around 80,000 fighters under its flag by 2015, occupy a huge territory and become a threat to the entire world¹⁷.

Despite its military defeats, ISIS resolved to continue the struggle, although on a smaller scale, as it needed to demonstrate its validity at any price and confirm its status as a “global caliphate”¹⁸. According to the assessment of the UN, by early 2019 the number of fighters in ISIS was from 14,000 to 18,000¹⁹. However, the main challenge comes not so much from these fighters, but rather from the extremist ideological identity created by ISIS, which remains attractive.

A Quasi-State Actor

Hamas, the Islamic resistance movement (“Ḥarakat al-Muqāwamah al-’Islāmiyyah”) had passed three stages in its development. 1973-1987 was the period of preparations for the creation of an anti-Israeli military-political organization of a new type; 1987-2005 saw active involvement in the first and second intifadas (Palestinian uprisings) until the withdraw of the Israeli army and settlements from the Gaza Strip; and the third stage was HAMAS’ victory at the second elections to the Legislative Assembly in Palestine in January 2006, and subsequently seizing power in Gaza.

HAMAS is practically the legal successor of the religious and charitable foundation “Islamic Center” (al-Mujamaa al-Islamiyah)²⁰ founded by Sheikh Ahmed Ismail Yasin in 1973 under the influence of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood²¹.

The Muslim Brotherhood was the most influential religious and political movement in Egypt, where Yasin studied at Ayn-Shams University. One of the main reasons that Ahmed Yasin became a follower of the Brotherhood was that it organized a major campaign to support the Palestinian uprising in 1936-1939. While still a schoolboy, he attended all the lectures and seminars held by the Muslim Brotherhood in mosques²². Thanks to his high intelligence, rhetorical abilities and ambition, in 1969 Yasin became the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip. He read sermons in the main mosque of Gaza and at his home. A huge number of people gathered to hear him: when he was carried out of his house, crowds of parishioners moved out of his way to show their respect.

After the Islamic charitable society “al-Mujamaa al-Islamiyah” was founded in Gaza, Yasin gained control over all Islamic institutions in the sector, including the single Palestinian University that existed at the time. Al-Mujamaa al-Islamiyah provided medical, social and educational services in the poorest districts of Gaza.

Although al-Mujamaa al-Islamiyah became the main proselytizer of the Muslim Brotherhood’s ideology in Gaza, Yasin’s charitable activity was initially financed by the Israeli military command, as it sought to split the ranks of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) using concepts that provided an alternative to pan-Arabism and separatist movements in the sector²³.

Yasin’s supporters (like the HAMAS movement itself later on) were

convinced that the PLO leadership was “poisoned” by various secular and pro-western concepts and opinions, preventing the organization from waging an uncompromising and successful struggle to “take back the native land, so that muezzins would announce the creation of an Islamic state from the minarets of all mosques”²⁴.

The catalyst of an “Islamic boom” in Palestine was the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. The “Muslim Association” led by Yasin shifted from charity to politics. The organization proclaimed its new goal to be waging internal jihad, which meant restoring in Palestine “standards of religious life that have fallen into oblivion, leading to a Jewish state arising on its territory”²⁵.

In 1983, Yasin created two semi-military brigades: the first had the aim of finding and punishing drug-dealers, prostitutes and collaborationists providing information to Israel. The second was formed from a group of fighters who organized attacks on key sites in Israel. But the actions of these brigades were curtailed by the Israeli special services, and Yasin himself was sentenced to 13 years in prison when his connection with these brigades was established. But he only spent 10 months in jail: in May 1985 Israel and the People’s Front for the Liberation of Palestine exchanged political prisoner, and Yasin was freed²⁶.

In December 1987 the first intifada began, often known as the “intifada of stones”, as the cobblestone became the Palestinians’ main weapon. Leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood met in Ahmed Yasin’s home in Gaza to discuss all possible forms and methods of anti-Israeli campaigns to support the intifada. Sheikh Yasin believed that the uprising should fight under the banner of Islamic values, and that a new military and political organization was required for this. Thus, the “Islamic resistance movement” (Hamas) was formed. HAMAS decisively rejected the concept of peace with Israel and wished to fight a holy war to return Palestine to a restored Islamic world.

During the second “al-Aqsa intifada”, HAMAS saw its peak of activity in the spring of 2002, when 130 Israelis were killed in terrorist acts. The Israeli government attempted to destabilize HAMAS by arresting rebels, deporting leaders of the movement outside Gaza and liquidating their key figures. Ahmed Yasin became the main target. The first attempt to kill him was in an air strike on 6 September 2003,

but he escaped with minor injuries. On 22 March 2004 an Israeli helicopter launched missiles at a group of people leaving a mosque on the Gaza Strip, and Yasin was killed²⁷.

In 2005, on Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's initiative, Israel carried out unilateral withdrawal from Gaza – it sent troops in and evacuated settlements. HAMAS and its supporters saw the realization of the Israeli plan as their own victory, and the movement's authority strengthened considerably. In many ways, this was possible thanks to the skillful combination of social activity, based on a network of charitable institutions, and a powerful Islamist component. As a result, it was HAMAS, and not the PLO-Fatah that became the power in the eyes of the poor population of Gaza. It fought stubbornly not only against the occupation, but against corruption and other abuses, and also took care of ordinary Palestinians and their families in accordance with Islamic justice.

Social programs have allowed the movement to attract a large number of volunteers and gain support from all groups of Palestinian society. Even the leadership of Fatah was forced to admit in 2006 that HAMAS had won the battle for the hearts and minds of the Palestinians, and remarkably enough not only among marginalized groups, but also among the middle class, youth and the intelligentsia.

A Symbiosis of State and Non-State Functions

Hezbollah (the Party of Allah) is a Shia organization that emerged in Lebanon in 1982. At the initial stage of its existence, Hezbollah was relatively small and did not have significant political weight. It had the task of resisting an armed invasion by Israel²⁸, but then became the main defender of Shia community's interests in Lebanon. Shia identity later began to limit considerably the number of potential supporters, as the Shia are a minority in Lebanon, albeit a very large one. According to various sources, the Shia constitute from 25-30% of the population²⁹. Another problem was rivalry with another Shia party, Amal Movement. Soon, the Hezbollah leadership realized the need to attract members of other sectarian groups. The powerful rhetoric of resistance helped them in this – primarily resistance to Israeli aggression.

Although Iran supported Hezbollah, and continues to do so, the party

itself has remained Lebanese and is at present one of the most influential political forces in the country³⁰. Professionally trained (by instructors from the guard corps of the Islamic revolution) and equipped with modern weaponry, the Hezbollah division showed high combat skills during the conflict with Israel in 2006, and also played an important role in preserving Bashar Assad's regime in Syria.

Besides the rhetoric of resistance, Hezbollah's social policy has great importance, focusing on developing medicine, education and private business. All of this was vital in Lebanon in the 1990s, when the prolonged and destructive civil war came to an end. Hezbollah's social activity may be described as the classic patronage model: the movement helps to create real jobs, strengthening the interest (and dependence) of beneficiaries. This means that people wish to support the party, while its supporters believe that it is fulfilling an important spiritual, ethical, political and social mission.

Nevertheless, the Hezbollah leadership still consists of members of the Shia clergy, and the backbone of the armed divisions are Shia youth. Sectarian identity thus remains the foundation that ensures the durability of Hezbollah. At present it is fully integrated into the Lebanese political and economic system. Hezbollah also managed to diversify its flows of income to avoid being financially dependent on Iran. However, sectarian identity also has primary importance here. At present, a main source of revenue is cash donated to the Hezbollah foundation by Lebanese Shia mainly living abroad³¹.

However, the situation in Lebanon demands changes from Hezbollah. In the acute crisis of the sectarian system of state management, when Lebanon is a few steps away from a new civil war, Hezbollah faces the task of finding a compromise with non-Shia communities and with young people who are tired of sectarianism.

* * *

The examples examined show that influential state actors in the Middle East often exploit sectarian identities. Identity serves as a source of ideology and an important means of mobilizing the masses, including in an armed struggle. Each of the groups examined in this chapter pursue goals dictated by the use of sectarian identity: the struggle to build a caliphate (ISIS), the liberation of the sacred sites of Jerusalem (HAMAS) or protecting the Shia (Hezbollah). However, if

non-state actors are unable to be flexible, their success will prove fleeting, as a fixation on sectarian identity may become an obstacle for finding allies.

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Section VIII.

PROMOTING WESTERN POLITICAL MODELS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The formation of political identity in the Middle Eastern countries has always been under strong external influence from the part of Western states, that have had institutions, experience of ideological rivalry and a high level of socio-economic development. The fall of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century and the global system of colonialism in the mid-20th century started processes of national self-determination and a search for suitable models of social development for new independent nations. One of the key consequences of European influence was the spread of Western secular models of governance. This process was first observed in the second half of the 19th-early 20th century as civic institutions began to form, instead of the monarchic or religious institutions in Persia and the Ottoman Empire.

In the late 20th – early 21st centuries, the policy of Europe and the USA, besides military and political issues, was focused on a wide spectrum of problems of formation of political identity of Middle Eastern states. Transformations involving political modernization are seen in all nations of the Middle East, but they are not carried out in a linear way, rather reflecting a multitude of existing cultural paradigms. The Israeli sociologist S. Eisenstadt, who introduced the concept of “multiple modernities” stated that an important consequence is “that modernity and westernization are recognized as not being identical concepts, that western models of the modern are not the only ‘authentic’ ones, although they were the historical predecessors and still remain the basic starting point for others”¹.

Recent experience shows that elements of modern political systems promoted by the West (modern institutions, multi-party systems, changeability of power, independent courts etc.) as an alternative to

the political order in Middle Eastern countries, do not always find support from elites and societies living in a different cultural paradigm and/or are implemented in forms differing from the original.

Chapter 21

Alexey Davydov

The U.S. Policy of Democracy Promotion – Concept and Practice

An important component in interaction between the USA and Middle Eastern countries is the unilateral promotion and even obtrusion of specific features of western political model on these societies and nations. Countries that implement the policies of democracy promotion are often guided not so much by the interests of the object societies, but by creating favorable conditions for consolidating their own influence. This duality of goal-setting involves, on the one hand, ideological messianism aspired to spread more progressive social forms, and, on the other, to ensure one's own pragmatic interests. Such duality is often described by the researchers as the policy of "semi-realism"².

The Genesis of Democracy Promotion Policy

US policy of democracy promotion in Middle Eastern countries provides an illustration of how political identity is projected, and the limitations this process faces. In the USA, democracy is founded on a developed conceptual basis and a branched system of institutions³. Throughout most of the 20th century, the theme of promoting democracy in the Middle East was mainly peripheral for the USA, and rhetoric and practice in this field were marginal. The country's policy in the region was traditionally concentrated around a narrow range of specific pragmatic interests.

Supplies of energy resources had key importance for the USA. Under F.D. Roosevelt, the US began to increase its presence in Middle Eastern countries to gain more advantageous access to hydrocarbons. This led to developing relations with local elites, primarily with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and also to rivalry with the UK, whose influence significantly decreased after the Suez crisis in 1956⁴.

Another equally important interest for the United States was supporting their allies in the region. The most important of them was Israel, since their strategic relations were determined by deep bilateral military, political, economic, cultural and religious ties. The level of people-to-people relations has been so high that in the expert and political community they were often characterized as “special relationship” (just like the UK-US relationship)⁵. The United States systematically provided Israel with record amounts of economic and military aid⁶, vetoed all resolutions of the UN Security Council and General Assembly that were critical of Israel. Although US political discourse noted the democratic nature of the state of Israel, its domestic political organization was not the main reason for the “strategic partnership” and special relationship.

Most of US allies in the Middle East did not meet democratic standards. Washington built such relations with key regional powers (Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran under Shah, Egypt under Sadat) that would reach strategic foreign policy goals, and defend U.S. economic and military interests. For example, at that time Saudi Arabia was the main oil supplier to the United States, it presented great importance as the dominant country in OPEC. Moreover, the Kingdom could influence the dynamics of the Arab–Israeli conflict, including the negotiations between Egypt and Israel. Military relations with regional partners on bilateral level and with members of NATO and the Central Treaty Organization (countries of the so-called “Northern tier”) were designed to prevent the Soviet Union from expanding its influence to oil fields in the south, and ensure constant functioning of transport routes in the Suez Canal, the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. Allies permitted the US to station its military bases, and served as a gigantic weapons market for the American military-industrial complex⁸. The system of relations that the USA established in the region was partially undermined by the 1979 revolution in Iran, but nevertheless it continued to fulfill its function of deterring the USSR until the end of the Cold War.

Throughout this period, the United States didn’t care much whether the supported regimes respected human rights and had democratic institutions or not. At that time the American strategy in the Middle East was less value-oriented. Washington did not strive to project its identity and promote certain models of social development. On the

contrary, the U.S. pursued a realistic foreign policy approach in cooperating with authoritarian regimes⁹.

One of the most illustrative examples of the low importance of value-driven U.S. foreign policy agenda in the region is that right from the creation of the U.S. democracy promotion institutions, such as the National Endowment for Democracy founded in 1983 and its related organizations (the so-called NED family) were least active in the Middle Eastern and neighboring countries. From 1983 to 1990, there were only a number of NED projects designed to develop cooperation with trade union organizations of Jordan, Pakistan and Cyprus (including Turkish Cypriots). It supported programs for school education, health care, creating societies of intellectuals (writers, journalists, scholars in the country and in exile), and subscribing to periodicals. Financing was allocated to studying how Israel managed to maintain a democratic system when it constantly faced internal and external challenges to development. Finally, NED supported the magazine "Forum" in Turkey, that published essays of Turkish scholars about democracy, economics, international affairs, and also translated important Western journalism and "samizdat" literature from communist countries. It also held conferences in Turkey for readers of the magazine and promoted the Turkish experience of democracy among other Muslim countries¹⁰.

A fundamental shift took place with the end of the Cold War. While during the period of the bipolar system, promoting democracy was an instrument of containing Soviet influence around the world, in the early 1990s, it became a part of the new US strategy for global expansion of national influence and security¹¹.

The strategy also began to be put into practice in the Middle East. Convinced that there was a direct link between liberal democracy and capitalist relations, the Clinton administration focused on stimulating economic reforms in foreign countries, with the expectation that they would create favorable grounds for political reforms. During Clinton's term in office, US general regional foreign policy strategy in the Middle East was still mainly focused on preserving political stability in the region, with an emphasis on the key interests of security and energy. Good relations were maintained for this purpose with the monarchies of the Gulf countries and authoritarian Egypt¹². Washington primarily sought to promote the Arab-Israeli peace

process and liberalize trade relations, in particular with Israel, Egypt, Jordan and North African countries¹³.

One important reason for Clinton's restrained approach to democratic reformism in the Middle East was the unfortunate experience of the Algerian crisis faced by his predecessor George Bush. The socio-political crisis in Algeria in the late 1980s - early 1990s led to Islamist political forces gaining popularity, and eventually they received a majority at parliamentary elections in December 1991, provoking a harsh reaction from the Algerian military. The decision by the Bush administration not to interfere in the natural process drew a wave of criticism¹⁴.

At the same time, although the dominant approach in the White House was to stimulate democratic political reforms in the Middle East through indirect non-political methods, the practice of promoting democracy became increasingly noticeable. In particular, the provision of direct "political assistance" became a systematic practice. From 1991 to 2001, NED led 386 projects of a total sum of \$26.9 million, while the regional category "Middle East" was expanded to "Middle East and North Africa" and included Afghanistan (fig. 21.1). It is noteworthy that the largest number of projects were either carried out in relatively open countries with good relations with the USA (Jordan, Egypt, Turkey), or in neighboring Palestine and Lebanon, bordering Israel (fig. 21.2).

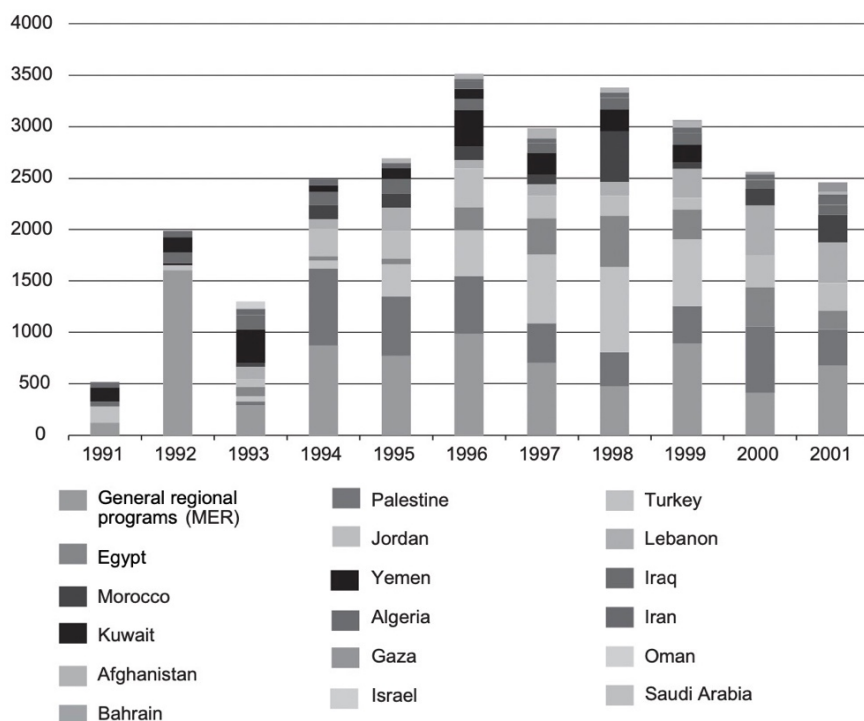


Fig. 21.1. Annual amounts of financing for countries of the Middle East and North Africa for NED projects from 1991 to 2001 in nominal U.S. dollars

Source: NED annual reports (ned.org).

Throughout time, the U.S. Middle Eastern policy developed a fully region-centric strategy for promoting democracy through direct means, and not intermediary ones. There were three fundamental trends that shifted the US policy in the Middle East to a fundamentally new level.

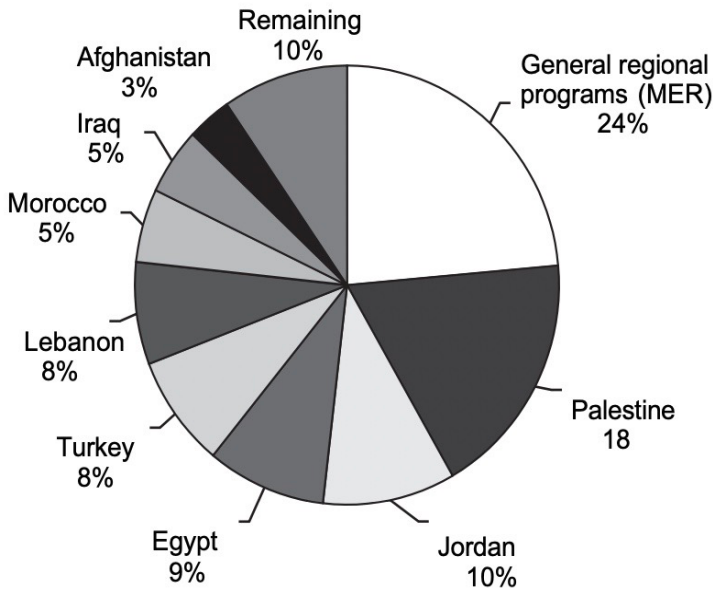


Fig. 21.2. Percentage of countries of the Middle East and North Africa from all NED programs in the region from 1991 to 2001

Source: NED annual reports (ned.org).

The first trend was the worsening in US-Iraqi relations. Initially after the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, the US supported Saddam Hussein's regime in its confrontation with the new anti- American authorities of Teheran in the Iraq-Iran war. The US even expressed certainty that Baghdad could serve as a conductor of its long-term interests in the region¹⁵. But the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait drastically changed the trajectory of these plans, and laid the foundation for further developments for promoting democracy initially in one country, and then in the entire region.

Throughout the 1990s, the US developed a series of measures against the Baghdad authorities, including economic sanctions for the genocide of the Kurds, putting Iraq back on the US list of countries that sponsored terrorism, supporting UN inspections of weapons of mass destruction, and bombing Iraqi military sites¹⁶.

In this period, Washington did not conceal its aspiration to support democratic forces in the country, openly admitting at official level that it wished to replace Saddam Hussein¹⁷. With the passing of the “dual containment” approach in relations with Iraq and Iran, the United States began to work with the Iraqi Kurds on a systematic basis. NED allocated \$1.16 million to popularize the concept of protecting human rights, ideas of liberal democracy, and supporting various non-governmental organizations, primarily in Iraqi Kurdistan¹⁸.

The culmination was the enactment of the 1998 act “On the Liberation of Iraq”, which set out as official goal of US policy in Iraq the removal of Saddam Hussein from power and provision of Iraq with assistance to build a new democratic state (this happened five years before the military operation)¹⁹. The United States provided opposition groups, composed mainly from Iraqi expatriates, with funds, that were used to ideologically influence different groups of Iraqi society, to provide humanitarian assistance and to support local political activism²⁰.

Under the Clinton administration, the United States thus formulated a bipartisan approach to justify the practice of overthrowing governments of foreign countries on the basis of their unilateral recognition as violators of international norms.

The second trend was the formulation of a new US approach towards political Islam. The revolution in Iran and the fall of the Shah’s regime seriously undermined the US positions in the region²¹. The fact that American diplomats in Iran were held hostage for almost two years while Washington was unable to do anything about it was an act of national humiliation. The longevity of captivity, powerlessness and failure to change the situation as fast as possible left a deep mark in the perception of the US political class not so much of the new Iranian Republic as of the threatening power of political Islam. After this initial shock, subsequent acts of terrorism, such as the explosions in New York in February 1993 and in Oklahoma in April 1995, became firmly associated not with the policy of specific nations or organizations, but with Islamic and even Middle Eastern political regimes in general. At that time public opinion surveys, the tone of politicians’ speeches and bills passed by the US Congress firmly reflected these notions²².

The third trend that seriously influenced American foreign policy line was the rise of international terrorism. The terrorist acts of 11

September 2001 in New York served as a catalyst to solidify a democracy promotion strategy for the Middle Eastern region. In just 2 years, the initial approach to preserve stability and balance between main powers in the region that had been the foundation of the U.S. strategy towards the Middle East for decades was almost completely abolished. The crisis completely transformed the U.S. approach towards not only Iraq, but to the whole region, and led to a creation of a new macro-regional strategy.

Thus, by the end of the 20th century, the dynamic in international relations created conditions for the US to intensify its policy of democracy promotion in the Middle East. The idea that democracy promotion policies helped Washington to undermine the socialist model of development and therefore brought about victory in the Cold War led to the conclusion that more active use of institutions and practices would reform societies in the Middle East. Deepening perception in the American society of the political and socio-economic roots of international terrorism, that combined with the constant worsening of relations with Iraq, created fertile grounds for a fundamentally new foreign policy strategy of promoting democracy in the Middle East, based primarily on projecting American influence and political identity.

The Rise and Fall of Democratization of the “Greater Middle East”

The new republican administration under George W. Bush undertook a fundamentally different approach to overthrow Saddam Hussein’s regime in 2002 - 2003. The White House began positioning the Iraqi campaign as a first step of a wider process for democratization of the “Greater Middle East”, that included countries of the Middle East, North Africa, Central and South Asia. Washington viewed Iraq as a testing ground, that had to become a shining example to ensure the arrival of a democratic revolution in the region.

In 2002, before invading Iraq the administration changed its narrative regarding the U.S. presence in Afghanistan. At the start of the military operation in October 2001, it claimed that American interests were concentrated primarily on eliminating the threat to national security from Al-Qaeda and the Taliban who were shielding it. But starting

from spring 2002, the Afghan campaign was portrayed as a successful example of liberating a nation from tyranny²³.

The new administration also moved away from a view that Middle Eastern regimes (predominantly with Arab population) are fundamentally alien to democracy. This view was widely held within the U.S. expert community, since the wave of democratization in the last quarter of the 20th century did not pass through this region²⁴. Even Turkey and Israel were not considered fully democratic because they suppressed the rights of ethnic minorities – Kurds in the former and Arabs in the latter country²⁵.

In this situation, the Republicans emphasized the universality of democratic standards and their applicability in any societies. The success stories of democratization in Japan and Germany were frequently used to reject the arguments about national specifics, and that the nature of local cultures, traditions, stratification of societies and political identity could be a stumbling block in building “the only stable model of national success”²⁶ – liberal democracy²⁷.

At the same time, the neoconservatives from the Bush Jr. administration argued in favor of the possibility for building democracy through a military overthrow of totalitarian regimes, which was not a traditional form of democracy promotion.

The administration assumed that democratic institutions were a natural state of things for all societies, and therefore they would emerge as soon as there were no obstacles put up by totalitarian regimes for that. The White House frequently appealed to the example of Afghanistan in order to justify the military means to replace authoritarian rulers in order to promote democracy²⁸. The common belief was that once dictators were removed and democracy was established, that would undermine the socio-economic and political prerequisites for the arising of radical-extremist ideologies of terrorist organizations.

Finally, the Republican administration continued the tradition of categorizing states into certain groups. Nevertheless, their worldview followed a black and white pattern. The first group included countries aspiring to the ideals of freedom and democracy. The second was composed of supporters of authoritarianism and dictatorship. The core of this group included countries of the so called “axis of evil”, four of which were from the “Greater Middle East” – Iraq, Iran, Libya and Syria²⁹. The new tactics not only determined the spirit of US policy in the Middle East for the following one and a half decades. It laid the

foundation for further institutionalization of democracy promotion policies – the administration launched programs to propagate this policy of political, economic, social and cultural reforms in foreign countries. The Middle East Partnership Initiative endorsed by the State Department in 2002 was designed to develop civil society in countries of the region, stimulate political involvement and activism of small private business, and promote the women's movement for equal rights. Another program was the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative, designed to coordinate international efforts of US allies in the G8, the EU, NATO, and Middle Eastern nations in stimulating and assisting reforms. This was the aim of "Democracy-Assistance Dialogue" and "Forum for the Future". The Bush administration also created the Millennium Challenge Corporation, that operated with the so-called conditional foreign aid: according to the MCC functions, it provided aid only when certain political reforms were carried out by the recipient government³⁰.

Thus, in the early 2000s, the United States, guided largely by its ideological imperatives, rejected the strategy of supporting the balance in the Middle East that had prevailed for decades, and developed a mechanism for exerting a forceful influence on the internal dynamics of foreign nations. Washington swiftly elaborated a macro-regional strategy, formulated a hierarchy of goals and priorities and adapted its democracy promotion institutions in order to achieve them.

Reality showed that implementing a democratization strategy for the "Greater Middle East" proved to be more complex than developing it. Even by analyzing the dynamics of U.S. efforts to democratize the region from 2000 to 2018, in rather general terms, one can observe a number of certain patterns. First, the U.S. democracy promotion policies showed little interest in the Persian Gulf monarchies. Despite ideological imperatives, the implemented democratization programs in these countries were of a highly formal nature. Washington avoided harming its energy interests and its positions in the weapon-supply market. In American foreign policy this is a classic case of conflict between value and interest imperatives. The rise of authoritarian tendencies in any of the regional states did not lead to the increasing interest on behalf of the United States (see table below)³¹.

At the same time, a more detailed examination of democracy promotion practices in specific countries of the region clearly shows their idealistic normative nature. Ignorance of existing sectarian and

elite balances was clearly shown during the Iraqi campaign. In the first half of 2003, after the invasion of U.S. armed forces, the White House, guided by the idea that democratic institutions could naturally come into existence by themselves if there were no tyrannies hindering them, showed a low degree of involvement in state building. Only under the pressure of the civil war, Washington began to develop a political transition framework for Iraq. The Sunni community, which included the entire military and political elite, found itself discriminated during the whole transition process. The Sunnis had little or no influence in the new political system, which only fueled radicalization and created fertile ground for the establishment of the “Islamic State” (ISIS)³².

On a lesser degree, democracy promotion practices in Egypt also presented a similar example of an idealistic imperative. After the establishment of allied relations with Cairo in 1979, the U.S. supported the authoritarian regime to pursue its own interests in the region. Even the escalation of strategic importance attached to stimulating democratization, after the end of the Cold War, did not change this practice. For instance, the United States mainly concentrated its efforts in Egypt only in the economic sphere in the hope that it would trigger political liberalization. The Bush administration redirected its attention in Egypt on political reforms, by increasing cooperation with the non-governmental sector through non-commercial organizations. But nevertheless, it did not put direct pressure on the Egyptian government at that time either³³.

Country	Relationship with USA as of 2000	Degree of US involvement*, %	Democracy level	Authoritarian level	Trend
Iraq	Enemy	44.7	0→6	9→0	Democratization / Statehood undermined
Afghanistan	Enemy	37.6	0→1	7→2	Democratization / Statehood undermined
Jordan	Ally	5.0	2→2	4→5	Stable authoritarianism
Palestine		4,8	n/d	n/d	n/d
Lebanon		2.1	0→6	0→0	Democratization
Egypt	Ally	1.9	0→0	6→4	Stable authoritarianism
Tunisia		1.2	1→7	4→0	Democratization
Yemen		0.8	1→0	3→0	Statehood undermined
Morocco		0.7	0→1	6→5	Stable authoritarianism
Libya	Enemy	0.5	0→0	7→0	State collapse
Syria		0.2	0→0	6→9	Consolidation of authoritarianism/ State collapse
Turkey	Ally	0.2	8→0	1→4	Consolidation of authoritarianism
Algeria		0.1	1→3	4→1	Democratization
Iran	Enemy	0.1	4→0	1→7	Consolidation of authoritarianism
Oman		0.1	0→0	9→9	Stable authoritarianism
Bahrain		0.0	0→0	9→10	Stable authoritarianism
Saudi Arabia	Ally	0.0	0→0	10→10	Stable authoritarianism
Israel	Ally	0.0	7→7	1→1	Stable democracy
Qatar	Ally	0.0	0→0	10→10	Stable authoritarianism
Kuwait		0.0	0→0	7→7	Stable authoritarianism

* Percentage of total US funds allocated as official foreign aid for “Government and civil society” to Middle Eastern countries by governmental and non-governmental channels.

Sources: US Agency for International Development, The Center for Systemic Peace.

The “Arab spring” posed a threat to Mubarak’s regime. Just like the Algerian case in the early 1990s, the United States faced a choice whether to support the government or to support the protestors backed by the Muslim Brotherhood. After some hesitation, the Obama administration decided to sacrifice its ally and support the protests. After the Brotherhood’s leader M. Mursi won the 2012 elections, the White House attempted to preserve the status of bilateral relations by helping the new authorities with sufficient aid and turning a blind eye on the increasing authoritarian tendencies in Egypt. Nevertheless, president Mursi’s policies presented a threat not only to the remains of democratic institutions in the country itself, but also to the bilateral ties with the U.S., and started affecting such sensitive areas as relations with Israel³⁴.

Finally, another example of the value-interest dichotomy in connection with democracy promotion can be illustrated by the U.S. policies towards Syria. Since the civil war began in 2011, the Obama administration almost immediately demanded President Assad to resign³⁵. But over the years, a new factor, step by step, started to determine the White House strategy towards Syria. By 2015, ISIS began to pose a new threat to the existence of the country itself. The Islamic State swiftly spread its influence into provinces in Western Iraq and Eastern Syria. The administration faced a choice: to change its former attitude to the country’s government, or to face the threat of a complete destabilization in the region. This time, the need to fight radical terrorists from ISIS prevailed over the official narrative of supporting the forces of the democratic Syrian opposition. The White House de-facto relinquished its demand for Assad’s resignation, who with Russia’s support was able to sustain the foundations of statehood³⁶.

The U.S. strategy in the Middle East began to use the mechanisms of democracy promotion not for ideological purposes of foreign societies transformation, but also in order to secure specific interests. This was the case of the Afghan campaign, which Washington portrayed as an act of liberation to justify the armed invasion of Iraq. The general rhetoric of the White House on democratization of the country was in practice accompanied by the unprecedented centralization of presidential powers and a weakening of the existing institutions of

self- administration inherent to traditional societies. Washington was no longer motivated by the long-term goals of developing the country, which traditionally lived under decentralized power. It saw strengthening the centralized model of rule in Afghanistan as a means to win the battle against the Taliban³⁷.

Subsequently, the tendency for democratization of the Greater Middle East was considerably marginalized. Both the rise of anti-American sentiments in the region and a strong association of the U.S. democracy promotion policies with the catastrophic consequences of the Iraq military campaign led to the overall decrease of democracy promotion imperatives in the U.S. strategic planning³⁸. The vast majority of cases that included the U.S. narrative of supporting human rights and freedoms was not so much about promoting democracy, but a way to put pressure on the governments of foreign countries to bear. For example, if we take the U.S. policies towards Iran and Turkey, the violation of human rights served as a justification to impose sanctions that pursued goals not linked directly to the problems of human rights³⁹.

The United States continues to have significant external influence on the political identity of Middle Eastern countries. The end of the Cold War gave the U.S. political establishment confidence in the absolute superiority of the American political and economic model of social development, and the effectiveness of political instruments for promoting democracy.

Throughout the first decades of the 21st century, the U.S. has justified its actions in the Middle East by imperatives of preserving the liberal world order in compliance with the U.S.-centric system of international relations. In many cases, the US support of any specific party to the internal conflict in the Middle East state was motivated by democratic ideals.

The practices of democracy promotion did not take into account local specifics, and was based on theoretical concepts or pure formalism. The U.S. policies in favor of democratization in the Middle East led to destabilization of the region, which caused the rise of new threats and intensification of the old ones. These unforeseen consequences have downgraded the democracy promotion imperatives of building liberal

international world order from a primal strategical priority to an instrumental level.

That said, the U.S. seems to be unable to abandon its messianic practices: otherwise, it would affect the foundations of its self-identification on the world stage, and therefore its internal and external self-perception. Thus, it is highly unlikely that the U.S. is to reconsider this policy. It may do so only if there is a fundamental transformation of motives for promoting democracy, or if there is a serious change in the system of international relations that would make these practices unacceptable.

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Chapter 22

Tatiana Tyukaeva

European Experience – EU Policy

The Arab countries of the Southern Mediterranean historically hold an important place in the foreign policy of European nations. The European cultural influence that began in the colonial period introduced new political models and nationalist ideas. This influence continued after the Arab nations gained independence, along with trade and economic ties that corresponded to the interests of the former colonial metropolises.

As the EU gradually expanded, and a common European identity formed, the principle of developing cooperation and mutual dependence in various fields as a means of ensuring security and socio-economic prosperity, on the basis of common European values, was applied with increasing consistency in common European foreign policy. Yet, since these values are not “common” for non-European neighbor states (and primarily Arab states), which this policy mainly addresses, disseminating these values – in political, socio-political and cultural spheres – became a separate foreign policy task. Implementation of this task vis-à-vis Arab countries of the Southern Mediterranean took shape of a more comprehensive and consistent strategy with the launch of the Barcelona process in 1995: from this moment on, EU policy acquired a pronounced value component.

Interests and Values in EU Foreign Policy

The key common values that form the basis of EU identity were formulated in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992. In accordance with Article 2, “The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities”. Article 3 (5) states that in conducting its foreign policy “the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests”, “contribute to

peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights”¹.

A wide set of common European values shaped the legal concept of *acquis communautaire*, or the Community acquis, which accumulates practices and experience of EU nations in various spheres: economics, law, finances, information, agriculture, transport, energy, foreign policy, science and education, etc. (a total of 35 sections)². For EU partner countries, compliance with these norms is not obligatory, but harmonizing local legislations and practices in various fields with the acquis is encouraged and reflected in cooperation agreements³. Thus, the acquis is, on the one hand, the accumulated common heritage of the EU, serving to preserve the identity of European integration, and on the other, a concept of “transformative engagement” with the goal of projecting EU standards outside the Union and promoting European interests in international interaction⁴.

Many studies⁵ analyze EU foreign policy in terms of “milieu goals” (directed to forming a favorable world order, especially in the closest neighborhood) and “possession goals” (for realizing one’s own interests, often at the expense of others), coined by A. Wolfers⁶. The EU may simultaneously realize its milieu and possession goals, and implementation one set of goals does not necessarily hinder the other, but may in fact help to achieve them.

Developing cooperation and continuous dialogue, primarily with neighboring countries, is both a value in itself and a way of achieving various milieu and possession goals, and also an instrument to communicate one’s own values and their interpretation to “the others”, and disseminate one’s own “accurate” picture of the world. This is one of the foundations of EU self-identification and self-positioning on the international stage. As T. Risse notes, “socially shared ideas – be it norms or social knowledge about cause-and-effect relationships – not only regulate behavior but also constitute the identity of actors”⁷.

The Arab countries of the Southern Mediterranean, historically linked by economic and political ties with European countries, present a source of potential and existing threats to the EU security, but also provide wide opportunities for European companies. They are a convenient market for European goods, and also an essential partner

in ensuring the energy security of European nations. Therefore, the strategic goal of constructing a “common Euro-Mediterranean identity” (which is essentially spreading European values and perceptions to the EU’s southern partners) is the main method of ensuring common European security. The course on promoting “its own values and interests” outside the EU proclaimed in the Maastricht Treaty led to the formulation of a comprehensive European policy towards its southern neighborhood in 1995 in the shape of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EUROMED), or the Barcelona process.

Besides promoting values, there is a number of practical short and medium-term goals of EU foreign policy towards countries of the Southern Mediterranean. Implementation of goals in various spheres relies on a number of tasks, including a significant value component. Dialogue is developed through existing institutions and forming new ones, as well as cooperation programs and dialogue platforms with significant, yet selective, financial stimulus.

Political dialogue and reform of local legislations towards democratization, and measures to support socio-economic stability of partner nations correspond to the EU’s interests in ensuring its own security. Partially implementing the economic standards of the *acquis* and measures for liberalizing Arab economies to support socio-economic stability assist the realization of European trade and economic interests. Joint technical, scientific and educational projects, programs for ensuring human rights and freedoms and promoting independent media may also serve the goals of political modernization, and as an indirect result may solve problems of migration and Islamist extremism.

Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and European Neighborhood Policy

Today, EU policy in the Southern Mediterranean is realized in two main formats – the Barcelona process (Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, since 2008 – the Union for the Mediterranean) and the European Neighborhood Policy. Both formats are directed at implementing tasks set out in Association Agreements signed with each country. However, while the former is oriented primarily towards organizing interaction and dialogue at the regional level, the latter

aims at realizing these tasks bilaterally – between the EU and individual partner countries.

The three goals of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership according to the Barcelona declaration⁸ – political stability, economic prosperity and social cooperation – are organized in three “baskets” of interaction – both at the regional and bilateral levels: **1)** Political and Security Partnership (conducting regular high-level political consultations and dialogue, disseminating standards of good governance, democratization of regimes and protection of human rights); **2)** Economic and Financial Partnership (gradual liberalization of the economies of partner countries with the goal of creating a free trade zone); **3)** Partnership in Social, Cultural and Human affairs (stimulating inter-cultural dialogue, raising the quality of human resources, with special emphasis on youth, increasing the role of the media, cooperation on migration, combatting drug and human trafficking). All of these issues are set out in detail in Association Agreements signed between the EU and Southern Mediterranean countries.

The main financial instrument for implementation of various EUROMED projects is the MEDA program, which is also covering the EU instrument for Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX). TAIEX works with representatives of state institutions (central administrations, legislative and judicial bodies) and trade unions of partner countries, to bring their legislation closer to European standards of the *acquis* through organizing seminars with experts from EU countries, expert missions for consultations on introducing standards of European legislation at the local level, and internships in EU countries for employees of state institutions. MEDA also finances various twinning projects, which are a separate instrument of EU policy for institutional cooperation between state management bodies of EU countries and respective bodies in partner countries. Twinning projects include technical and informational support by EU expert missions to specific institutions for a term of one to three years, and also holding seminars, training sessions, internships, etc.

The main form of interaction for Euro-Mediterranean countries within EUROMED is non-regular regional forums and meetings between ministers of partner countries in various spheres. Their strategic goal

is creation of common spaces (free trade zones, energy market, scientific and education space, etc.) by means of harmonizing norms and standards in the process of a comprehensive regional dialogue, developing ties between all EUROMED participants and realizing joint projects.

Furthermore, to bring the partnership beyond the limits of intergovernmental contacts, in 1998, a new platform for interparliamentary cooperation was introduced in the form of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum. In 2004, the name of the Forum was changed to the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly. It includes 240 representatives from parliaments of EU countries, Southern Mediterranean countries, and also the European Parliament. The managing body of the Assembly consists of two members from the Southern Mediterranean countries, one from national parliaments of EU nations, and another from the European Parliament. The Assembly consists of five committees: on politics, security and human rights; economic, financial, social and educational issues; quality of life and cultural exchange; women; energy, environment and water problems. Additional working groups may be created on other issues. The Assembly conducts interparliamentary discussions of relevant problems of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, resulting in recommendations and resolutions that are not legally binding for bodies and institutions of EUROMED, the European Commission or national governments of partner countries.

The goals and tasks of the third “basket”, which covers social, cultural and humanitarian issues, are implemented through a number of programs at the regional level, such as *Euromed Heritage* (developing cooperation between museums and cultural organizations and conducting joint projects to preserve cultural heritage), or *Euromed Youth* (youth exchanges and developing dialogue between youth organizations). In 1996, the Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission (EuroMeSCo) was founded as a network of study centers that has gradually expanded (at present it unites 104 institutions from 29 countries of the region), dealing with issues of politics and security. The Commission aims to form a Euro-Mediterranean research community by creating a common cooperation platform between respective organizations and institutions of countries in the region, and realizing joint education projects, seminars and training programs. In

2005, the Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Institutes of Economic Sciences (FEMISE) was established to become a platform for dialogue and cooperation between members of research centers specializing in economics. The Forum conducts research on economic cooperation of Mediterranean countries, organizes joint seminars and conferences, and formulates proposals for developing EU cooperation with Southern Mediterranean countries.

An effective instrument in realizing the tasks of the third “basket” is the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue Between Cultures, established in 2005. At present, the Foundation has formed a regional network bringing together over 3,000 civil society organizations. The work of the Foundation concentrates on three main areas: 1) expanding the rights and opportunities of youth (by organizing and financing projects for creating common regional platforms, for young people and youth associations, holding training programs and forums); 2) influencing political decisions (by preparing analyses and recommendations for local and national authorities, and EUROMED institutions); and 3) establishing dialogue and intercultural exchange for overcoming mutual mistrust (based on developing interaction between representatives of civil society, youth associations, educational centers, etc. through organizing joint events and providing grants for intercultural studies).

Generally, before 2005 EUROMED was mainly functioning at the intergovernmental level, and despite several programs and platforms of cooperation in the scientific, educational and cultural spheres, it concentrated on interactions with state institutions.

In 2004-2005, EUROMED added a fourth “basket” with the agenda of regulating migration flows, finding ways to stop the “brain drain”, and to return migrants to their own countries. The Euro-Med Migration program was launched, and its scope and scale are constantly broadening. Focus groups were created under this program, including representatives of EU members and Southern Mediterranean countries, to develop migration legislations of partner members. As this program continued, it began to organize conferences, study sessions at both regional and national level, technical support missions and various other projects in the sphere of migration and human rights issues.

In addition to EUROMED, in 2004 another format of interaction with countries of the Southern Mediterranean was launched within the scope of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). Unlike EUROMED, which aims to create a common platform for dialogue between all participants, the ENP primarily focuses on the EU's work with each individual partner country. This cooperation format involves Action Plans coordinated bilaterally on the basis of the previously signed Association Agreements. These plans determine the main areas of activity and the procedure for carrying out political and economic reforms in a short and medium perspective of 3 to 5 years. Implementation of these Action Plans are evaluated in regular Progress Reports. These documents are prepared on the basis of regular bilateral meetings of Association Councils. Financing of various activities in the new format was still provided by the MEDA program, which in 2007 was replaced with a new ENP instrument – the ENPI (European Neighborhood Policy Instrument). Additionally, some activities of the ENP are financed by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

Meanwhile, in realizing the proclaimed goal of increasing connectivity between countries of the Euro-Mediterranean and creating a “common space of co-prosperity”, the EU encouraged launching of integrational formats in the Southern Mediterranean region. This resulted, for example, in the Agadir Agreement between Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan on establishing a free trade area, signed in 2004 with EU financial support. The agreement aimed to assist integration and developing interaction between the four countries, strengthen inter-Arab cooperation to stimulate economic liberalization in the Mediterranean region and create a free trade area. The Agadir Agreement stipulated technical, administrative and financial assistance, in carrying out economic integration, studying possibilities for expanding interaction between participants of the Agreement and the EU, implementing business projects and encouraging investments. All Arab countries connected with the EU through an Association Agreement or a Free Trade Agreement could join the Agadir Agreement, and the EU encouraged them to do so.

The Union for the Mediterranean and Revision of the European Neighborhood Policy

With the increasing institutionalization and transformation of EU policy towards Southern Mediterranean countries with various additional platforms and programs, and expanding spheres and levels of contacts (from predominantly intergovernmental contacts to interacting with civil society), certain changes to existing forms of cooperation were due. In 2008, the Barcelona process was relaunched as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). The priority spheres of interaction in the new format were determined as: 1) business development; 2) higher education and research; 3) social and civil affairs; 4) water and environment; 5) transport and urban development; 6) energy and climate action. The UfM works with governments, local authorities, international and regional organizations, international financial institutions and donors, universities and research centers, representatives of civil society and the private sector. Although the new format was originally initiated by Nicolas Sarkozy as an instrument for realizing primarily French interests in the region and did not envisage non-Mediterranean European nations as members, it was ultimately organized on the basis of existing ENP and EUROMED mechanisms, and gave them a more consolidated form. In particular, EU policy towards Southern Mediterranean countries gained a pronounced institutional structure. The UfM Secretariat was founded as a platform for implementing participant's decisions through organizing ministerial meetings, developing regional platforms for dialogue and conducting strategic regional projects¹⁰.

Furthermore, in addition to the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, which was transformed into the UfM Parliamentary Assembly in 2010, the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly was founded. This new discussion platform was created to involve regional and municipal authorities from EU and Southern Mediterranean nations in direct dialogue, to realize ENP and UfM projects and monitor results. Delegations of member countries hold regular meetings, make reports and recommendations for necessary measures in the sphere of urban development, effective management of water resources, combatting desertification, job creation, improving conditions for SMEs, developing trade and economic cooperation, etc.

One of the organizational innovations is holding regular meetings (unlike previous irregular ministerial conferences), bringing together foreign ministers of all UfM members, representatives of EU institutions and the Arab League, to determine relevant areas of developing interaction (on the basis of which meetings are held at the level of various ministries of member nations), approve the budget of the Secretariat and its work program, and also coordinate various joint projects. In accordance with the six priority spheres of the UfM, dialogue platforms are organized to formulate initiatives that are realized through joint projects.

For example, on the platform for business development, the inter-sector initiative Med4Jobs is realized, designed to increase employment among women and young people, reduce the rift between demand and supply on the labor market, stimulate the culture of entrepreneurship and strengthen the private sector. As part of this initiative, in cooperation with international organizations, a series of projects are carried out, including: INCORPORA program for job creation for the most vulnerable groups of the population (by organizing networks of social services for job creation, offering training courses for the unemployed and working with local companies and organizations, determining the demands of the labor market and offering recommendations in the sphere of their staff policy); the CEED GROW project for working with small and medium business companies (to develop skills and entrepreneurial culture and increase the number of women entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs and scale companies, through organizing training programs and courses, joint conferences and attracting entrepreneurs to take part in regional projects); a work group on the digital economy with representatives of respective ministries; etc. Activities of the other five dialogue platforms are organized in a similar way.

New financial instruments were established within the ENP. In addition to the ENPI, which in 2014 was transformed into the European Neighborhood Instrument – ENI, and also the EIB and EBRD, which finance various regional projects, a new mechanism was launched in 2008 in the shape of the Neighborhood Investment Platform. The goal of the platform is to attract funds for financing capital-intensive infrastructural projects in partner countries in such spheres as transport, energy, the environment and social development.

The new mechanism focuses on supporting the private sector and SMEs.

Apart from that, in its policy towards Southern Mediterranean countries, the EU began shifting its focus to engaging civil society. To finance various events and projects in this sphere, the Civil Society Facility was created in 2008. The main task of this instrument is supporting various civil society organizations in the region, developing people-to-people contacts by visiting European institutions, holding seminars and training courses, exchanging experience between representatives of local civil societies, the EU bodies and member nations, and also involving them in dialogue with local governments in achieving goals formulated in bilateral Action Plans.

In reaction to the Arab Spring, the EU started to revise the principles of the ENP towards Arab countries, which resulted in the strategic document “A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity” in March 2011. Ideologically, the new strategy brought nothing new to the declared values and principles of EUROMED. The document proclaimed the need to support the wish of southern neighbors “to enjoy the same freedoms that [EU citizens] take as [their] right”¹¹, that should be realized through measures for democratic transformation of state institutions, legislation reforms, combatting corruption, supporting civil society organizations, developing people-to-people contacts, ensuring sustainable economic development through supporting SMEs, establishing a system of professional and technical training, improving quality of health care and education.

The immediate EU response to the destabilization, primarily in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, included humanitarian aid (30 million euros) in medicine and food, and also measures to improve living conditions for displaced persons on the Tunisian and Egyptian borders. European experts were also sent to affected regions for emergency planning and coordination in case the situation worsened. Additionally, 17 million euros were allocated to Tunisia to support the “democratic transit” and develop a legal basis for holding elections. A mission of EU observers was also sent to assist the national commission on constitutional reform.

The only significant innovation in the reviewed ENP format was the

introduction of a differentiated approach in interacting with each individual country in the region, and the proclamation of the “more for more” principle, which implies that the partners that are most successful in reforms and democratization receive more aid from the EU – at the expense of less effective partners. Assessing each country’s progress on the path of reform is based on regular Progress Reports analyzing the realization of short and medium-term tasks set out in the Action Plans. If the partner country implements them successfully, it may receive additional financial aid and a wider access to the European market, and also enjoy some privileges in the migration sphere. Institutionally, the new ENP principle involved launching the SPRING program for Southern Mediterranean countries. Initiatives under this program (with a separate budget) are realized in addition to all other ENP and UfM projects, and are determined by EU delegations in their active cooperation with state institutions of Arab countries.

In 2015, the ENP was revised again¹², and a more differentiated approach in interaction with each partner country was taken. The Action Plans and Reports were replaced by more individual and specialized bilateral programs in the form of Partnership Priorities and related agreements, prescribing obligations for the EU and partner countries. Reports on progress in realizing coordinated Priorities are more specialized and form a basis for political dialogue in regular meetings of bilateral Association Councils.

At the same time, on the basis of Association Agreements with each partner country¹³, there are ongoing measures in harmonizing norms and standards, information systems and statistics in various fields. In the economic sphere, the general strategic goal to create a Euro-Mediterranean free trade zone is implemented through gradual liberalization of the economies of partner countries. On this basis, the European market will gradually open for each of them. Negotiations have begun (at the present moment only with Morocco in 2013 and Tunisia in 2015) on modernizing the Association Agreements and signing treaties on Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, which will provide support for partner countries in conducting economic reforms and bringing their legislation into compliance with the *acquis*.

In other spheres, the EU undertakes similar measures. The strategic Regional Transport Action Plan for 2014-2020 is focused on gradual

building of the Trans-Mediterranean transport network system, harmonizing norms and standards of countries in the region in the sphere of aviation, shipping, railways, automobile and urban transport, and also realizing several joint projects, both on bilateral and subregional basis, to increase security and develop surveillance measures with the technical and financial support of the EU. Achieving this strategic goal will be assisted by creation of a Euro-Mediterranean aviation zone by means of bilateral agreements signed with individual partner countries on a Common Aviation Zone. Among Arab countries, only Jordan and Morocco have so far signed these agreements with the EU¹⁴.

The greatest share of financial and technical support within the ENP is provided at the bilateral level – between the EU and its individual agencies and institutions, on the one hand, and the partner country, on the other. For example, in Tunisia the EU finances a number of projects in the sphere of border control and combatting terrorism. Counter-terrorist programs are also carried out in Lebanon and Jordan. The main instruments of EU policy with Arab Mediterranean partner countries are twinning programs, TAIEX and financial support provided either through the ENI or other EU organizations, programs and foundations.

Additional Interaction Formats

Arab countries are also participants and beneficiaries of several EU programs and foundations which operate outside the ENP and UfM. Although the acute problem of migration at currently on the agenda of several projects within the UfM and EPS¹⁵, significant financial and technical aid is provided through the Mobility Partnership Facility. The program is carried out by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, and the International Security Fund. The program includes measures for increasing potential in working with legal migrants, raising awareness and protecting their rights, and also integrating them into national economies. It also provides assistance in reforming national legislations on migration and asylum, as well as combatting illegal migration and strengthening border control. The normative basis for this program is Mobility Partnership agreements

signed between the EU and partner countries. These agreements have already been signed with Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan, and negotiations continue with Lebanon.

Cooperation programs on border control with Arab countries are also on the FRONTEX (European Border and Coast Guard Agency) agenda. The EU4BorderSecurity program operates for Southern Mediterranean countries, while African (including Arab) countries are engaged in a program for increasing interaction between intelligence departments. FRONTEX implements measures to increase information exchange and potential risk assessment on border security and illegal migration issues, and also realizes joint tactical operations for protecting borders and coastlines.

Since 2015, Regional Development and Protection Program has continued for countries of North Africa and the Horn of Africa, financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (total budget over 40 million euros). It aims to provide aid to partner countries in ensuring the rights of migrants and refugees through interaction with respective state institutions, non-state organizations and civil society organizations, developing the legislative and institutional base, combatting illegal migration, providing food, medical, legal and psychological aid to migrants and refugees, and assisting their return to their countries of origin.

Additionally, Egypt, Tunisia and especially Morocco and Libya, are recipients of aid from the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. Since 2015, the Fund has implemented 10 programs in Libya with a total budget of over 400 million euros, primarily providing aid and protection for migrants and refugees, restoring infrastructure, educational and medical institutions, as well as strengthening border protection. These programs have included direct humanitarian aid to refugees and migrants, and evacuating them; providing water and electricity for schools and hospitals; organizing training programs for young people and supporting start-ups, providing technical assistance and training to the coastguard.

Apart from that, since 2014, the Madad fund has targeted the consequences of the Syrian crisis, and its main beneficiaries among Arab countries are Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq, as well as Syria and Egypt to a lesser extent. The fund, in cooperation with national state

institutions and international organizations, realizes programs for Syrian refugees and local population in the spheres of elementary and higher education, professional training (access to educational services, teacher training, improving infrastructure and equipment), urban infrastructure, access to drinking water, health care, humanitarian aid and social welfare.

With assistance from various EU organizations, a number of international programs are realized in Arab countries in the scientific, educational and cultural spheres, the largest being *Erasmus Mundus* and *Erasmus+*. The programs are aimed at developing ties and contacts between universities, the professorial staff and students, and increasing academic mobility among Euro-Mediterranean countries. *Erasmus+*, launched in 2014-2020, organizes joint master's programs between European and Arab universities, provides scholarships for students, carries out projects for exchanging experience and raising qualifications of teachers, reforming curricula, and also formulating proposals for modernizing national education systems based on European standards. Furthermore, *Erasmus+* sponsors the RESCUE program for universities of Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq to support refugee students in receiving higher education.

As the EU began to devote increasing attention in its foreign policy to promoting democratic values, protection of human rights, supporting civil society and ensuring stable socio-economic development, respective programs (in addition to those functioning bilaterally and regionally within the ENP and the UfM) have been launched through a newly created financial mechanism – the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI). It addresses developing countries, and the Arab nations are active beneficiaries of programs implemented and financed from its budget. DCI works with state institutions, regional authorities and municipalities, as well as non-state actors, international organizations and EU bodies. Additionally, there are the European Endowment for Democracy¹⁶, founded in 2013, and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, established in 2014, which provide grants and direct financial assistance to various projects to support representatives of civil society and human rights organizations and are not obliged to coordinate their activities with national state institutions.

Since 2015, the EU began to implement more targeted and

consolidated measures in the sphere of strategic communications, aimed at combatting disinformation and Islamist extremist propaganda, providing detailed information to the societies of partner nations about EU activities and values, explaining its policy, and ultimately forming a positive image of itself, primarily in the neighboring countries. The Arab Stratcom Task Force was created for strategic communications with Arab countries. It consists of delegations from the EU and is working in cooperation with regional and local partners. At present, this field of EU policy in Arab countries is poorly institutionalized, and events are held on a rather limited scale and ad hoc basis. At the moment, there are only three EU delegations – in Egypt, Jordan and Morocco, which launch test projects on strategic communications, and develop mechanisms for their future activities. For example, in Morocco they conduct surveys among young people to reveal what they know about EU policies and how it is perceived, as well as to determine most effective means and methods of informing them. The Arab Stratcom also realizes support programs for Arab journalists and bloggers, student exchanges, and cultural events.

This list is not exhaustive and does not include all the programs, foundations and mechanisms of EU financial, informational and technical support to Arab countries. As European policy on the Southern Mediterranean develops and new challenges arise, the thematic coverage of spheres of interaction has not only widened, but it has also shifted focus to intensifying people-to-people interaction, and made a special emphasis on working with youth. These instruments and cooperation formats are designed to gradually involve Southern Mediterranean countries in European practices and values at all levels and in all spheres.

Controversies of the Policy for Promoting Democracy

The strategic course of the EU for exporting democratic and liberal values is sometimes an internally contradictory process. But the main challenge is the policies of individual European nations that pursue their own interests in Arab Mediterranean countries. For example, for a long time Paris gave political support to A. Bouteflika's regime in Algeria, despite a clear increase in authoritarian tendencies, especially before the Arab Spring (e.g., restrictions were removed on the number

of presidential terms, the president's powers were expanded, and state of emergency was imposed). The interest in preserving a "convenient" regime in a country that is important from energy and security points of view, not only for France, but for Spain and Italy as well, even at the price of ignoring undemocratic practices, was reflected in EU general policy during the 2011 protests: the "democratic awakening" in the country did not receive the same support as it did in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria. Furthermore, at the initial stage of the Arab Spring, France attempted to support the regimes of Z.A. Ben Ali in Tunisia and H. Mubarak in Egypt – Paris' main partners in the Southern Mediterranean.

Another even more telling example in this context is the present situation in Libya, where the energy interests of France and Italy clash. Despite the general European policy of organizing negotiations to reconcile hostile parties and supply humanitarian aid, Paris and Rome play an active part in the internal Libyan military and political processes in order to protect the interests of their energy corporations – Total and ENI, respectively, which compete for contracts in different parts of Libya. Apart from that, France provided military and technical aid to the forces of Khalifa Haftar, who opposed the internationally recognized government in Tripoli.

Another contradictory aspect in the EU's Euro-Mediterranean policy, aimed at promoting political dialogue in the name of stability, is the use of sanctions – for example, in the case of Syria. Although negotiations with Damascus on the Association Agreement and a free trade zone were unsuccessful, in 2011, the EU was the fourth most important trading partner for Syria. The EU reaction to the government's measures in dealing with the mass protests during the Arab Spring was to place an embargo on the import of Syrian oil and oil products (the core of Syrian export), ban the export of European technology and equipment, and curtail the financial assistance to a number of major infrastructural projects and enterprises in the finance and transport sectors. The reduction of export from the EU by 85% (as of 2016) and import from Syria by 97%¹⁷ was a serious factor in destabilizing the socio-economic situation in the country.

The creation of a free trade zone between Arab countries and the EU involves economic liberalization and mutual removal of tariff and customs restrictions on the movement of goods and services. Although

liberalization measures in Arab countries caused an increase in European investment flows, it was primarily the European companies who benefitted, having received almost unhindered access to Arab markets, as well as representatives of Arab large business (usually the ones with special relations with their countries' governments), who are already operating successfully in Europe and receive loans and expert assistance from foreign partners¹⁸.

In general, the EU policy that focuses on political dialogue, protecting human rights and freedoms and promoting socio-economic prosperity, is not opposed by the majority of Arab countries. At the state level, democratization and liberalization processes are hindered by local elites that seek to strengthen their power and maintain their economic monopoly. However, they are prepared in one form or another to adopt certain norms and standards of the *acquis* promoted by the EU in exchange for investments and technologies they require.

At the public level, there is certain aversion to European attempts to interfere in domestic affairs and impose their norms and standards. Surveys of students at several Arab universities¹⁹ after the events of the Arab Spring show that educated young people (i.e. the part of the Arab population most receptive to European values) believe that EU policy should be concentrated on economic development (from 30% of respondents in Egypt to 64% in Tunisia), or that the EU should not intervene at all (from 34% in Egypt to 10% in Tunisia). Another survey held in 2014 among representatives of civil society organizations in Tunisia²⁰ (the most advanced partner country in realizing democratic and liberal values, according to the EU) show similar responses. There is demand for European financial and economic aid, but people are wary of excessive political intervention and imposing certain projects in the democratization sphere favored by the EU to the detriment of the socio-economic support programs that the country needs. Tunisian civil society representatives point out that the EU works with a very limited number of local organizations and activists, while others must undergo an "extremely complicated" application process to receive assistance through European programs.

EU policy towards Arab Mediterranean countries is a process of their *gradual involvement* in the values and practices of the *acquis*. This

process is a goal in itself, and also a means of realizing vital European interests, primarily in the spheres of security and economy. The extent to which this involvement is realized differs from country to country, and depends on certain historical, political, socio-economic and cultural factors. It is clear that Arab societies, even those that are still undergoing the process of shaping their own identity, see no need for importing many of the aspects of the *acquis* in the form that the EU tries to promote them. However, European policy inevitably influences the constantly transforming Arab self-perception and self-positioning on the international stage.

Notes

1 Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union // Official Journal of the European Union. 2012. October 26. URL: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF (retrieved: 22.08.2020).

2 European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations. Chapters of the *Acquis* // European Commission. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/conditions-membership/chapters-of-the-acquis_en (retrieved: 22.08.2020).

3 See, for example: Petrov R. A. *Transpozitsiya «acquis» Evropeiskogo Soyuza v pravovye sistemy tret'ikh stran: Monografiya* [Transposing the “*acquis*” of the European Union into the legal system of third-party countries: Monograph]. K.: Istina, 2011. — 384 p.

4 Magen A. Transformative Engagement through Law: The *Acquis Communautaire* as an Instrument of EU External Influence // *European Journal of Law Reform*. 2007. Vol. 9. P. 361–392.

5 See, for example: Igumnova L. O. *Normativnye tseli vneshnei politiki Evropeiskogo soyuza* [Normative goals of European Union foreign policy] // *Irkutsk State University Bullet*. 2011. № 1 (1). P. 154–169; *Who Is a Normative Foreign Policy Actor? The European Union and its Global Partners* / Ed. by N. Tocci. Centre for European Policy Studies. Brussels, 2008. — 329 p.

6 Wolfers A. *The Goals of Foreign Policy // Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962. P. 67–80.

7 Risse T. "Let's Argue!": Communicative Action in World Politics // International Organization. Winter 2000. Vol. 54. No. 1. P. 5.

8 Barcelona declaration adopted at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference. 1995. November 27–28 // European External Action Service. URL: http://www.eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/eu-romed/docs/bd_en.pdf (retrieved: 22.08.2020).

9 Abbott S. The EU and the Middle East: From the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to the Union for the Mediterranean // E-International Relations. 2018. November 28. URL: <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/11/28/the-eu-and-the-middle-east-from-the-euro-mediterranean-partnership-to-the-union-for-the-mediterranean/> (retrieved: 22.08.2020).

10 The Secretariat is headed by the Secretary General, who coordinates the work of six deputies, each responsible for their own sector (in accordance with the six priority spheres). The Secretary General and his deputies (three from the EU, three from partner countries) are appointed by member nations of the UfM for a three-year term, and the Secretariat includes representatives from over 20 countries. When meetings at all levels are held, the principle of co-chairmanship is applied – an EU representative and representative of partner countries.

11 A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean. Brussels. 2011. March 3 // European Commission. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/pdf/policy/com_2011_200_en.pdf#View=fit&pagemode=none (retrieved: 22.08.2020).

12 Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Brussels. 2015. November 18 // UfM Secretariat. URL: https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/20151118_Joint-Comm_-_Review-of-the-European-Neighbourhood-Policy.pdf (retrieved: 22.08.2020).

13. Of all the Arab countries of the Southern Mediterranean, Libya remains the only state that has not signed an Association Agreement with the EU, and has an observer status within the UfM. Interaction between the EU and Syria is based on 1977 Cooperation Agreement, and negotiations on signing an Association Agreement had been in progress until suspended in May 2011, along with all the rest EU

interaction with Syrian state institutions. Nevertheless, both Libya and Syria are beneficiaries in a number of programs realized by ENP, UfM and some EU agencies, organizations and funds.

14 Euro-Mediterranean Transport Partnership (EUROMED) // European Commission. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/international-relations/european-neighbourhood-policy/euro-mediterranean-transport_en (retrieved: 22.08.2020).

15 For example, START program held in 2012-2015 in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya at the governmental level, included measures to regulate migration flows and restore socio-economic stability in countries of democratic transit. In 2009-2013, for Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, a program was realized to support 115 organizations of civil society protecting migrants' rights.

16 The activity of this organization is deemed undesirable in the Russian Federation.

17 Syria — Trade // European Commission. URL: <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/syria/> (retrieved: 22.08.2020).

18 Who Is a Normative Foreign Policy Actor? P. 60.

19 Students from universities in Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and Libya also took part in the study. See.: Teti A., Abbott P. Perceptions of the EU: Public Opinion in Six Arab States // ArabTrans. URL: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315836881_Perceptions_of_the_EU_in_MENA_Public_Opinion_Arab_Transformations_Policy_Brief_2 (retrieved: 22.08.2020).

20 Kruger L. T., Ratka E. The Perception of European Policies in Tunisia after the Arab Spring // Centre International de Formation Européenne. 2014/1. No. 371. URL: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-l-europe-en-formation-2014-1-page-9.htm> (retrieved: 22.08.2020).

Conclusion

A search for identity will evidently remain with the Middle East countries for a long time. This is caused by the incomplete process of nation-building, especially in the Arab world, which led to the formation of fragile states with weak institutions. To occupy a place in international relations and economic division of labor, the state needs an effective system of management, economic capabilities, military potential, human capital.

For those countries that became independent relatively recently and for the local societies that have not broken away with archaic elements, these imperatives are unattainable in a short run. So their appeal to tradition and history is a logical response to reality, a means to secure a place of its own on the international scene. Even the most successful nations – Turkey, Israel and Iran, which lay claim to a special role, need a kind of historical legitimization for their ambitions. The cultural and civilizational background becomes an object of pride, a value which must constantly be defended by the foreign policy resources and, if necessary, by force.

International relations in the region largely reflect self-identification processes and are influenced by them. The role of symbols and traditional hierarchies in foreign relations often makes the situation in the region not sufficiently comprehensible for external forces and even unpredictable. Traditional societies with traditional leaders, in which status issues play an important role, cause swift and often unjustified escalations in reactions to threats. Fears arising from long-standing hostility are sometimes more important for decision-making than rational choice. Modern-day ambitions and expansionism tendencies are presented to the public by opinion-makers as a way to restore justice or historical rights that were once violated.

Foreign policy and political process reflect the historical narrative in their own way. Foreign policy success (real or imaginary) is often interpreted as a symbol of the general success of the regime, including in areas where this success may be questionable. Relations with external actors are built on seemingly mutually excluding tenets. On

the one hand, there is a customary dependence on global actors for ensuring security, and a readiness to seek another, not necessarily culturally close alternative, if this global partner has shown a lack of interest. The normalization of relations between Israel and several Arab nations is determined by tasks to contain Iran, as it becomes increasingly clear that the US intends to reduce its military and political obligations.

On the other hand, there are constant fears that external forces (global or regional) may become a threat for local traditions and lifestyles as they pursue their own agendas. As Randa Slim, an American expert of Lebanese origin, writes, “Many aspects of American popular culture are offensive in Muslim societies, and Americans, who acknowledge broad ignorance of the Arab world and Islam, are generally insensitive to what offended them and why. ... Arabs now feel that they are at a critical juncture in their history, facing a final battle to safeguard who they are as people and as a culture”¹.

The external influence has always had great significance in forming modern political systems and political identity in nations of the region. Elections, parliaments are present in the political systems of the Middle East states, although they do not replicate the Western model. The profound cultural differences often make the similarities seem superficial. The most modernized nations have political parties, trade unions, NGOs, they execute reforms, and civil society there demonstrates active engagement. But there are no grounds to exaggerate the similarity of political institutions. Social milieu remains unique, it includes traditional structures (tribes, extended families, solidarity groups), and functions in a very different way from European standards. The special role of religion, which prevents religious institutions from being separated from the state, the fragmentation of societies, the role of local identities – all of these factors inevitably have an impact on the foreign policy agenda.

Studying the identity factor in regional international relations is not only of academic interest, but of practical interest as well. A knowledge of the local culture and history makes it possible to better understand the logic behind the foreign policy choices made by the leaders and individual nations, when the national interest may give way to emotions dictated by old grievances, status considerations or

current ambitions.

These factors, along with others, hinder the creation of inclusive multilateral organizations and regional security systems, thus depriving international relations in the region of appropriate stability. In the Middle East, there is nevertheless a striving for engineering foreign policy strategies underlined by a greater degree of pragmatism. If realized, they may seriously reduce the number of conflicts made intractable due to a clash of sectarian, religious and ethnic identities.

Notes

1 Slim Randa M. The Arab-American-European Dialogue. Working Together toward a New Relationship between the West and the Arab Region (2001–2007) // Saunders H. Sustained Dialogue in Conflicts. Transformation and Change. N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. P. 173.

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