

PRIMAKOV NATIONAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF
WORLD ECONOMY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATION
RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

MIDDLE EAST SURVEY

YEARBOOK 2023

Moscow
IMEMO
2024

УДК 327:339(5):(6)
ББК 66.4:65.5(5):(6)
М65

Recommended for publication by
the IMEMO Academic Council

Series "The Library of Primakov National Research Institute of
World Economy and International Relations"

Reviewers:

Dr. Victoria Zhuravleva, Head of the Center for North American Studies, IMEMO
Prof. Alexander Yakovlev, Chief Research Fellow, Center for Arab and Islamic
Studies, Institute of Oriental Studies

Editorial board:

Prof. Sergei Afontsev, Prof. Irina Semenenko, Dr. Nikolay Surkov,
Dr. Irina Svistunova, Dr. Tatyana Tyukaeva,
Prof. Irina Zvyagelskaya

Chief Editor – *Irina Zvyagelskaya*

English Editor – *Laird Cenotto*

Print Version and Jacket Design – *Ibragim Ibragimov, Timur Kadyrmambetov*

M65

Middle East Survey. Yearbook 2023 / Irina Zvyagelskaya (ed.). –
Moscow : IMEMO, 2024. – 191 p.
ISBN 978-5-9535-0625-0
DOI 10.20542/978-5-9535-0625-0

The Middle East Survey is published annually since 2024 by the Center for
Middle East Studies, Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and
International Relations (IMEMO).

УДК 327:339(5):(6)
ББК 66.4:65.5(5):(6)

All rights reserved. This Yearbook may not be reproduced in whole or in part
without written permission from the publishers.

To view IMEMO publications, please visit our website: <https://www.imemo.ru>

ISBN 978-5-9535-0625-0

Copyright © IMEMO, 2024

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION (<i>Irina Zvyagelskaya</i>).....	4
LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS	6
SECTION I. ARAB COUNTRIES	10
Chapter 1. The Role of Egypt’s Leader in Formulating Foreign Policy Identity (<i>Ibragim Ibragimov</i>).....	10
Chapter 2. Security Challenges in the Maghreb Region (<i>Timur Kadyrmambetov</i>).....	29
Chapter 3. Qatar’s Economy in 2023: Managing the 2022 FIFA World Cup Legacy (<i>Nikolay Kozhanov</i>).....	41
Chapter 4. Innovation Development in GCC countries (<i>Stanislav Lazovskii</i>).....	52
Chapter 5. Algeria and the Great Powers in the Changing International Setting (<i>Nikolay Surkov</i>).....	76
Chapter 6. India’s Place in the Foreign Policies of the UAE and Qatar (<i>Tatiana Tyukaeva</i>)	91
SECTION II. OTHER REGIONAL PLAYERS	106
Chapter 7. The War of Iron Swords: Continuity and Change in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (<i>Liudmila Samarskaia</i>).....	106
Chapter 8. The Baloch Issue in Iran: From History to Present Day (<i>Anastasia Bogacheva</i>)	115
Chapter 9. Turkey’s Cultural and Humanitarian Relations with Post-Soviet States (<i>Irina Svistunova</i>)	134
SECTION III. NEIGHBORS. THE CASE OF AFGHANISTAN	143
Chapter 10. The Stages of the Formation of Afghanistan’s Armed Forces (<i>Ilya Guzhev</i>)	143
Chapter 11. Political Islam in Afghanistan: Origins and Ideology (<i>Evgenii Belkov</i>)	158
SECTION IV. FOREIGN POWERS	176
Chapter 12. Why Support for Israel Has Become Hostage to Political Strife in Washington (<i>Alexey Davydov</i>).....	176
Chapter 13. Germany’s Policy in the Middle East: 2023 as a “Turning Point”? (<i>Philip Trunov</i>)	182

INTRODUCTION

Irina Zvyagelskaya

The Yearbook 2023 opens a series of regular publications of the Center for Middle East Studies of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations. Its purpose is to familiarize a wide range of readers with the latest works devoted to the most important issues of the MENA region. The collection also includes articles on Afghanistan.

This latest edition does not focus solely on the describing and analyzing events that took place in the Middle East in 2023, even though the year was extremely rich in this regard. As proof, we need only recall the normalization of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Turkey's rapprochement with the Arab states, and the beginning of a severe crisis in Palestine-Israel relations. The rapidly changing situation and a sudden increase in tension underline the fragility of the present-day situation, which hardly anyone could have predicted.

The Middle East, perhaps even more than other regions of the world, remains a fragmented space where along with strong nation-states one can find states and societies that have become victims of the most severe conflicts. Once-prosperous countries have been turned into failed states while the activities of non-state or quasi-state actors speak loudly about a deep-rooted weakness within the regional system of international relations.

An important feature of the region is the high level of involvement of external powers in its affairs – the United States, the EU, Russia, China, and India. Each of these global players occupies its own niche and influences developments in this region in its own way. Regional players remain dependent on their global partners and continue to use these close ties with them in their own interests. In general, the leading states of the Middle East are increasingly demonstrating their independence, not only in the region itself but also at the global level. Such ambitious development strategies require that these countries not only diversify their economies and foreign relations, but also show persistence in pursuing their own interests, including taking steps to reduce tensions.

The authors tried to analyze a wide range of topics. Among those explored are the consequences of unfinished conflicts, the economic opportunities of the main regional players, and the situation with ethnic minorities. Other

articles discuss the formation of armed forces, bilateral relations, the use of soft power, the role of leadership in policy formation, religious issues, as well as the policies of external players.

The role of the Middle East in world politics and in the global economy has been clearly increasing and the painstaking works of these experts will help readers understand what is happening in the region, as well as assess its potential, opportunities, and failures.

The Yearbook comprises original articles along with the previously published in Russian. The last have been revised, updated and abridged for the present edition.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Anastasia Bogacheva is a Junior Research Fellow at the Center for Middle East Studies of the Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). Anastasia graduated from World Politics Department at Moscow State University, the Chair of Regional Issues of World Politics. In 2017, she accepted an internship at Tehran University in the World Studies Department. In 2018-2019, she worked in the secretariat of the Group of Strategic Vision “Russia-Islamic World” and at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences. Her major research interests include domestic and foreign policy of Iran, as well as ethno-political processes in the Middle East.

Evgenii Belkov is a Junior Research Fellow at the Center for Middle East Studies of the Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). He graduated from Institute of Asian and African Studies (Moscow State University), where he is currently a student of postgraduate studies since 2022. His research focuses on the role of political Islam in Afghanistan, its historical and modern forms and manifestations.

Alexey Davydov has a PhD in political Science and is a senior research fellow at the Center of North American studies of the Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). He specializes on the U.S. foreign policy, including the Middle East, Eurasia, Central and South Asia, on the U.S. strategies of democracy promotion, counterterrorism, postconflict peacebuilding, and international development assistance.

Ilya Guzhev is a Junior Research Fellow at the Center for Middle East Studies of the Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) specializing in Afghan studies. He graduated from the Institute of Asian and African Studies (Moscow State University). His research focuses on the role of Afghanistan in international relations and on the transformation processes in the Afghan Armed Forces.

Ibragim Ibragimov is a Research Fellow at the Center for Middle East Studies of the Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). In 2014, he graduated from the Department of World Economy and International Relations of the National Research University Higher School of Economics. Later, he received a Master's degree in History from the Oriental Studies Department of St. Petersburg State University. Since 2018, he has been a postgraduate student at the Institute for African studies, Russian Academy of Sciences. Ibragim's area of expertise includes international relations and political processes in the MENA region. He has authored several articles and chapters on international relations and security in the Middle East and North Africa, particularly in Egypt and Lebanon.

Timur Kadyrmambetov is a Junior Research Fellow at the Center for Situational Analysis of the Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). In 2021, he graduated from the School of International Relations at MGIMO University. Later, he received a Master's degree in Area Studies (Eastern division) from MGIMO. Since 2023, he has been a postgraduate student at IMEMO RAS. His main field of research deals with international relations in the MENA region, especially foreign policy of Maghreb countries.

Nikolay Kozhanov has a PhD in Economics and is a Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Middle East Studies of the Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). He is also an associate professor at the Gulf Studies Center of Qatar University. His research interests are focused on Gulf energy security, Russian foreign policy in the Middle East, as well as Iran's economic and international relations. Nikolay is the author of many publications, including articles and chapters in both Russian and English, and was the scientific editor of several books.

Stanislav Lazovskii is a Junior Research Fellow at the Center for Middle East Studies of the Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). He is a graduate of the Moscow School of Economics at Moscow State University (2020) and holds a Master's degree. In 2023, he completed his postgraduate program at IMEMO

RAS (World Economy). His main field of research deals with the economies of Middle East states, economic sanctions against Syria and Iran, and the Islamic economic model.

Liudmila Samarskaia has a PhD in History and is a Research Fellow at the Center for Middle East Studies of the Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). She is a graduate of the Jewish Studies Department of the Institute of Asian and African Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University. She authored several articles and chapters on the history of international relations in the Middle East, Jewish and Arab national movements, as well as Mandatory Palestine. She is the author of the book “The Balfour Declaration in the Context of Anglo-Zionist Diplomacy During the First World War”.

Irina Svistunova has a PhD in History and is a Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Middle East Studies of the Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). She graduated from Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO). She is the author of numerous books, papers, and reports on international relations in the Middle East, on foreign policy of Turkey, history and contemporary Russia-Turkey relations, as well as on ethno-confessional groups and sociopolitical processes in Turkey.

Nikolay Surkov has a PhD in Political Science and is a Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Middle East Studies of the Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). He is an associate professor at the Department of Oriental Studies of Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO). His area of expertise includes foreign policies of the Arab states, international relations, Russian and US policy in the MENA region. Dr. Surkov has authored over 80 publications, including articles, columns, and book chapters.

Tatiana Tyukaeva has a PhD in Political Science. She is a Research Fellow at the Center for Middle East Studies of the Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), and a Senior Tutor at the Department of Middle East Languages at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO). Tatiana received her

Master's degree from the School of International Relations and her PhD from the School of Political Studies, MGIMO. She specializes in Arab studies. Her field of interest covers various aspects of foreign policies of Gulf monarchies and sociopolitical developments in the Palestinian territories.

Philip Trunov has a PhD in Political Science, and is a Leading Research Fellow of the Institute of Scientific Information for Social Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences (INION RAS). His area of expertise includes international security issues and Germany's foreign policy. Dr. Trunov has authored over 120 articles and 4 individual books.

Irina Zvyagelskaya is a professor, Doctor of Science in History, a Corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, as well as the Head of the Center for Middle East Studies of the Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). For many years Irina has been lecturing at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations under the Russian Foreign Ministry (MGIMO) and at the Institute of Asian and African Countries at Moscow State University. Her area of expertise includes contemporary history, conflicts, international relations, and security issues in the Middle East and Central Asia.

SECTION I. ARAB COUNTRIES

Chapter 1. The Role of Egypt's Leader in Formulating Foreign Policy Identity

Ibragim Ibragimov

Middle Eastern countries claiming leadership in the region actively use foreign policy to confirm their status as key players. Current leaders of regional powers, especially in the context of the Middle East, play a key role in defining and shaping their countries' foreign policy strategies. Their personal beliefs, priorities, and strategies often become determining factors in international relations and interactions with other countries.¹

The last decade can be characterized as a period when Egypt was in search of its foreign policy identity. The 2011 revolution and the events of the Arab Spring marked a new period in Egypt's foreign policy strategy. The trends that began years ago are picking up momentum for further development. The Egyptian political elite is still in search of its foreign policy self, but over the years it has been able to produce several models that can coexist, and from time to time one or another paradigm comes to the fore. However, without strong influence from the leader of the state, one or another formula and model of identity would not be able to evolve. Even if the political views of the head of state diverge from those of his predecessor, the country's foreign policy does not undergo significant changes.

Recently, the problem of the Arab Republic of Egypt's (ARE) self-image in the international arena has attracted the academic community both in Egypt and abroad. However, there are few scientific studies in domestic historiography devoted to self-image in foreign policy decisions of Middle Eastern states.

Among existing studies, special attention has been paid to the influence of the typology of political leadership, the interconnections between the leader's personality, his/her vision of the surrounding world, his/her actions, and the foreign policy decisions he/she makes.² The scientific approach, according to which political leadership is recognized as an important factor in the foreign policy of a state and its influence on identity, is poorly developed in the Russian academic environment. However, there are a number of researchers whose works are devoted to political leadership and

its role in the process of foreign policy formation.³ A comprehensive study of the identity factor in the domestic and foreign policy of the Middle East countries is considered in the collective monograph “Middle East. Politics and Identity” edited by Irina Zvyagelskaya.⁴

Traditionally, the study of the foreign policy of the “country of the great pyramids” has been given special attention in the Russian academic environment. Among domestic researchers, to a greater or lesser extent, studying Cairo’s relations with the outside world since it gained its independence in 1952, we can distinguish a number of prominent authors: Evgeni Primakov and Igor Belyaev, Alexey Vasiliev, Vitaly Naumkin, Vladimir Titorenko, Mikhail Bogdanov, Alexey Borisov, Vladimir Vinogradov. The problematic nature of Egypt’s foreign policy has also received wide coverage in foreign scientific literature, including Egyptian.⁵ Issues relating to Egypt’s identity and its influence on foreign policy is an important topic in the scientific community, so much so that a number of noteworthy works have been devoted to it.⁶ Additional studies by other authors have focused on specific leaders and their influence on the formation of Egypt’s foreign policy.⁷

Egypt’s foreign policy identity will be examined in the context of the continuity of its foreign policy since 1952, whereby each leader demonstrated his vision of what the country’s foreign policy identity actually was. The theoretical and methodological basis of this article is a comparative analysis. The foreign policy paths pursued by Presidents Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar El-Sadat, Hosni Mubarak, Mohamed Morsi and Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, respectively, will be compared using three different criteria: firstly, the style of their foreign policy leadership; secondly, each political leader’s positioning of his country in the regions of the Middle East, Europe, Africa, and Asia, which acquires special significance in light of Egypt’s location at the intersection of these regions; lastly, the political leader’s vision of the nature of Egypt’s relations with its nearest neighbors, primarily with the major powers of the region (Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the UAE, Israel, and the Republic of Turkey), as well as with major global players (the United States, the Russian Federation, and the People’s Republic of China). In this context, Egypt’s relations with the Gulf monarchies and African countries are also important.

Nasser's Perspective on Egypt's Identity in Foreign Policy: a Pan-Arab Narrative

During the presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser in the mid-twentieth century, Egypt's foreign policy positioning was commemorated by a dramatic change, which left an indelible imprint on the formation of the country's national identity. Nasser's era made vital adjustments to their strategy of international relations – making pan-Arabism a key component of the ARE's foreign policy. The role of the institution of the head of state, in the person of Nasser, became crucial to the creation of Egypt's new foreign policy image. The dissection of this period not only reveals unique aspects of its foreign policy strategy, but is also an important key to understanding the subsequent development of the country's foreign policy, allowing us to identify important trends and priorities in the global arena. In this context, the study of Nasser's foreign policy role becomes an integral part of analyzing the evolution of Egypt's international relations and serves as a prologue to understanding the current challenges and prospects of the country's foreign policy strategy.

In an effort to create a new system with an equally new identity, Nasser and his associates attempted to bring about cultural, social, political, and economic transformation in the country.⁸ Nasser outlined his vision for Egypt's foreign policy in his book, *Philosophy of Revolution*, the concept of which identified three circles to which Egypt belonged: Arab, Islamic, and African. As he noted, “these circles enable us to realize our place and our role.”⁹ In his book, Nasser lays the foundation for his pan-Arab ideology, which would become one of the dominant ideologies in the region.

The changes brought on by Nasser's regime resulted in pan-Arabism becoming the main identity of his authoritarian state, which also carried out the function of his internal legitimacy. In addition, the pan-Arab identity was utilized to increase the Nasser regime's ability to freely maneuver in foreign policy, providing cohesion and unity in society.

During Nasser's presidency, significant changes triggered greater emphasis on and the prioritizing of foreign policy. At the time of Egypt's independence in 1952, the country did not possess complete freedom in deciding its path. There were, however, factors that defined the country's foreign policy. The events of the 1950s, when Cairo gained independence from Great Britain, when the country was thrice attacked during the Suez Canal crisis, when it began delving into Arab affairs and made contact with the socialist world,

marked the beginning of a new stage in the formation and development of Egypt's foreign policy concept. Egypt's withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact in 1955 and its nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956 were key events, ones that shaped Egypt's new course.

Following these events, the country's position and authority in the Arab world, as well as in the international arena as a whole, was strengthened as Egypt firmly established itself as the vanguard of the Arab liberation movement. In this regard, developments in the regional and international environment of this period pushed the Nasser government to actively promote pan-Arab ideas. It was under Nasser that the Arab national idea became particularly popular and was consistently implemented in attempts to establish Egypt's political and cultural hegemony.¹⁰ Nasser's authority quickly transcended national boundaries and went beyond Egypt, making him the recognized and unquestionable spokesman for the ideas of Arab nationalism. Against this backdrop, the desire to unify all Arab countries increased. Egypt, being the strongest Arab country in economic and military terms, began to be considered as the leader of the Arab world and the center of its unification. This recognition led to the creation of the United Arab Republic (UAR), which included Egypt and Syria. In 1958, Nasser became president of the UAR and became a role model for many politicians in the region. His popularity grew particularly among the revolutionary Arab youth. Therefore, many countries established their own Free Officers movements, which actively participated in the political life of their states. In addition, Nasser's Egypt provided extensive support to national liberation movements in Asia and Africa.

During the presidency of Nasser, confrontation with Israel also became a key component of Egypt's foreign policy identity. This confrontation reflected a desire for national independence, while at the same time supported the idea of unifying Arab nations. Nasser perceived Israel as a symbol of imperialism and colonialism, and the Arab-Israel conflicts such as the Suez Crisis (1956) and the Six Day War (1967) were key moments in the formation of Egypt's national identity. Moreover, for Nasser it had become a personal matter; he had taken part in the first Arab-Israel war of 1948-1949. Humiliated by the Arab defeat, he decided to fight against Zionism and dedicated himself to the Arab-Israel conflict.¹¹

The confrontation with Israel served as a powerful mobilizing factor within the country, strengthening the legitimacy of Nasser and his regime in the

eyes of society. However, it failed to achieve noticeable practical results. Egypt's leadership continued to build up the country's military might, considering it one of the most important measures for strengthening the UAR's power and ensuring its security. The army was seen as an effective tool in realizing the state's foreign policy goals and confronting the "Zionist enemy".¹² In a historical context, this struggle against Israel's presence became an integral part of Egypt's foreign policy identity at this stage, defining its role both in the region and in the international arena.

Egypt's growing influence in the Arab world and its support for revolutionary sentiments, as well as the country's insistence on emphasizing its exceptionalism, the indisputability of international experience, and the political views of its leaders, not to mention the country's persistent imposition of slogans calling for the political, economic, and military consolidation of all Arab countries around Egypt, in many cases led to the opposite result – Arab leaders were now becoming wary of Cairo's words and deeds. In essence, Nasser's "three circles" foreign policy concept was designed to affirm Egypt's central role in the Arab world, which was being liberated from colonial and semi-colonial dependence, while emphasizing Egypt's claim as the sole leader of all Arabs.

Unlike some Arab states, the purpose of Nasser's adoption of pan-Arabism was twofold: to assume Arab leadership; and, strengthen Egypt's regional and international position. Nasser believed that by achieving such a position he could create room for maneuvering between the great powers and allow his country to attract additional resources from which it would greatly benefit, primarily of an economic nature.¹³ However, the Egyptian pan-Arab identity imposed limitations on Egypt's foreign policy. Nasser's political and moral (but not military) success led the state to make erroneous conclusions, decisions, and actions. As the costs of the country's pan-Arab policy increased, its discordance with Egypt's capabilities and condition became apparent. The high costs of the war in Yemen and the disastrous 1967 war were seen as the results of Egypt's pan-Arab policy, which gradually resulted in Cairo's detriment and discredited its leaders. If the 1950s are seen as the peak of the political identity of pan-Arabism in Egypt, the 1960s, and especially the collapse of the alliance with Syria, are seen as the era of the abandonment of this identity and its associated policies.

In the 20th Century, no politician in the Arab East enjoyed as much influence as Nasser. It is safe to say that it was he who generally brought Egypt and the

Arabs into the world of big politics. Together with this, Nasser's commitment to the idea of uniting the Arabs, against a backdrop of deep contradictions among Arab states, and the orientation of their foreign relations towards the industrialized countries of Europe and America, deprived Egypt's President's Arab policy of its prospects. In addition, the radicalism of Nasser's pan-Arabism, which allowed the use of force in the name of the triumph of an idea, brought Egyptian policy to a dead end in a number of cases. In this regard, Egypt's long involvement in Yemen's civil war had a very negative effect on its Arab image. The crushing military defeat in June 1967 symbolized the collapse of the socialist and pan-Arab model of social order in the Middle East. The war also weakened the position of the UAR in the region. Egypt's importance as the center of the Arab world began to gradually diminish. Nasser had to give up his claims as the leader in the Arab East and was forced to make serious compromises in inter-Arab affairs, including reconciliation with Saudi Arabia.

Refocusing on Itself: Egypt Above all Else

Nasser's departure raised many questions, both about the durability of the regime and the consistency of its course in domestic affairs and, by extension, the further development of Egypt's foreign policy. Anwar Sadat, both in domestic and foreign policy, would choose a different path, one that would eventually lead to a change in Egypt's foreign policy orientation. However, just like his predecessor, Sadat continued the tradition of monopolizing foreign policy and consolidating political decisions.

During the Sadat era, Egypt abandoned its pan-Arab identity and began to change its foreign policy to one based on a new identity structure, which, in contrast to Nasser, emphasized Egypt's abandonment of its claim to a leading role in the region and the Arab world. This transformation signaled a new priority for the Egyptian state – patriotism – which would be called upon to ensure the most favorable conditions for economic liberalization, thereby attracting foreign capital to the country and improving the socio-economic situation in society.

Sadat removed influential Nasserists, who were expecting to be a part of the new collective leadership, from their posts. As Sadat intended to reconsider his predecessor's political priorities, their positions were unacceptable to him.

Having consolidated power, Sadat increasingly made the most important decisions alone, not only without consulting his fellow politicians but also without informing them about his intentions. Sadat, with his broad powers, personally directed the country's strategy in international relations. His influence had a significant impact on the formation and implementation of Egypt's foreign policy priorities and strategies. It was known fact that when faced with a serious problem, Sadat would seclude himself at his residence and spend several days there. Former American President Richard Nixon once characterized him as a man who likes to think alone. He noted that the Egypt's President rarely exchanged views with his inner circle or ministers, and he made the most important decisions during long walks by himself along the Nile.¹⁴ They were forced to learn about many of such decisions from the president's speeches in meetings or on the radio. A prominent Soviet diplomat Vladimir Vinogradov, who worked for many years as an ambassador to Egypt, also noted that: "Sadat was lonely in a human sense."¹⁵ His advisers called him "the lonely Pharaoh".¹⁶ He disliked reading reports and analytics and often gave unexpected orders, which made his foreign policy behavior unpredictable. Such was the case with the so-called "Sadat Initiative" in February 1971, when he offered to "exchange" the opening of the Suez Canal for the withdrawal of Israel's troops at a distance deep into the Sinai. Another example of his single-mindedness was the creation in 1971 of a Federation of Arab Republics composed of Egypt, Syria, and Libya. The terms of this federation were carelessly worded, leaving much of the text appearing ill-conceived and unclear, showing just how hastily the project was conceived. Only two people knew of the President's intention to wind down relations with the Soviet Union, and the decision to launch the 1973 War was made after discussions with Hafez al-Assad. His famous trip to Jerusalem and his speech at the Knesset was also his personal decision.¹⁷ Sadat's personality and stance in taking foreign policy actions played a huge role in Egypt's foreign relations, especially in the normalization of relations with Israel. It should be noted that his vision, determination, and willingness to take risks to achieve peace in the region played a crucial role.

It is important to emphasize that the leader's influence, in this case Sadat's, not only determined the foreign policy role of the state but also significantly shaped its features and orientation. Sadat's personal approach, personal convictions, and strategic decisions played a key role in transforming Egypt's foreign policy course from a period of conflict to one that sought

peaceful solutions to the Arab-Israel confrontation. His historic visit to Israel in 1977 and the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1978 were key moments in this changing relationship.

During Sadat's rule, Cairo's activity in inter-Arab affairs gradually declined. It was during this time that he issued the slogan "Egypt first, second, and last". While Nasser persistently spoke of his people as Arabs, Sadat spoke emphatically of Egyptians.¹⁸ Under Nasser, nationalists sought to prove that culture was brought to Egypt by the Arabs, while under Sadat, they proved that Egyptian culture was much stronger and more deeply developed by the time Arabs arrived and, therefore, the alien Arabs adopted the local Egyptian culture. This was also reflected in the change of the name of the country, which in 1971, after the adoption of a new constitution, became known as the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Cairo's main foreign policy problems can be presented as a kind of triangle, the sides being the liberation of the occupied territories, the USSR, and USA. The size (importance) of each side varied depending on the situation. However, when Anwar Sadat came to power, he was not sure whether relations with the USSR should be continued as he was not favorably inclined toward the Soviet Union. To him, Soviet ideology was unacceptable; he only wanted to play the policies of the two great powers - the USSR and the USA - against each other in the interests of Egypt, and in accordance with his understanding of these interests.

The results of the October 1973 war signaled the beginning of Egypt's clear pivot toward political and, later, military rapprochement with the United States. Accordingly, cooperation with the USSR was avoided. In addition, after the end of this war, the long, difficult and contradictory process of political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict began, as Egypt was in no position to endure yet another "October victory". This circumstance significantly, if not decisively, influenced the Egyptian President's final refusal to attempt to resolve conflict with Israel by force and predetermined his choice in favor of a political settlement. Moreover, he did so while taking into account only Egyptian interests, without much regard for other Arab countries.¹⁹ This political mindset naturally led to the weakening of the ARE's role and influence in the region. The signing of a peace deal with Israel did, however, lead to the normalization of bilateral relations, after which diplomatic relations were established and the economic boycott of Israel came to an end. However, overall, peace remained cold. Egyptian

society was neither ready nor willing to develop relations with a recent adversary. However, serious socio-economic difficulties were leading to a gradual change in the national mood due to the hardships brought on by the confrontation. Sadat's regime used this growing war weariness to establish a congruence between state and public preferences that Egypt withdraws from the conflict.²⁰ In evaluating the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, it should be noted that Sadat went out of his way to solve Egypt's problems at the expense of other Arab countries and the PLO.

Moreover, the treaty did not, and could not at that time, create an environment favorable to a general Arab-Israel settlement; moreover, it did not put an end to Israel and the Arabs' attempts to resolve their unresolved problems by force. Most Arab states condemned the treaty with Israel and severed diplomatic relations with the ARE. As a result, Egypt's position in the Arab world deteriorated sharply. At the same time, it should be noted that many of the measures taken by the Arab states with regard to Egypt were declarative in nature and were not respected in practice.

By signing the Camp David Accords, Sadat set three objectives for himself, which he successfully resolved: he managed to return the Sinai; he withdrew from the confrontation with Israel, freeing Egypt's resources for economic development; and, reoriented his foreign policy towards the United States, for which he received enormous assistance to solve the country's socio-economic problems. At the same time, Egypt's unilateral orientation towards the US led to a strong and multilateral dependence on Washington, which persists to this day and forces the current regime to actively diversify its foreign policy. Overall, it is difficult to explain Egypt's foreign policy shift in the 1970s when, in addition to personal characteristics and political beliefs, external and internal conditions played an equally important role. As a result of these changes in foreign policy priorities and strategies, the Sadat period differed significantly from the Nasser era in terms of foreign policy approaches, objectives, and choice of instruments to achieve Egypt's national interests.

Hosni Mubarak's Balanced Approach: Multidimensional Identity through the Prism of Reconciliation

Egypt's new president, Hosni Mubarak, inherited a difficult foreign policy: the country was isolated in the Arab world and heavily dependent on the United States. Mubarak faced the daunting task of breaking the stalemate

and regaining the country's former position in the Arab East, while at the same time maintaining special relations with the United States and peace with Israel. Mubarak sought to create an identity for the state that would incorporate elements of the vision of the two previous presidents. Mubarak found it more difficult to create a foreign policy identity and achieve political balance, as he insisted that Egypt have a greater multidimensional identity than his predecessors envisioned.

In Mubarak's view, no single Egyptian identity was more dominant than the others. As a result, his foreign and domestic policies lacked Sadat and Nasser's clarity and coherence. In Mubarak's version, however, policy appeared more balanced and significant, as he declared his commitment to international law, the principles of non-violence in international affairs, and the desire to overcome confrontationalism in the region, all while attempting to restore ARE's regional and international prestige.

Under such circumstances, it would be wise to utilize a new approach to overcome Egypt's difficult foreign policy situation. Mubarak's approach, which emphasized Arab identity and rapprochement with the Arab world, followed the thesis that "any Arab-Egypt rapprochement would not come at the expense of peace".²¹ At the same time, the fact that Egypt "inalienably belonged to the Arab world" was celebrated in every possible way.²² However, this did not preclude the argument that Egypt's national security would become more sustainable when there was peace in all parts of the Middle East and the Palestinian problem was justly resolved. Therefore, Egypt's priority in foreign policy, as mentioned above, was to gradually restore its role and place in the Arab world, and to make the ARE a mediator in facilitating the resolution of the Arab-Israel conflict and the PLO's negotiations with the US and Israel.

Egypt's President, through his actions, was able to mitigate the negative reaction to Camp David and, step by step, was able to regain Arab sympathy. Mubarak developed a successful formula for Egypt-Israel relations and promoted his role as a mediator in the negotiations.²³ While projecting the thesis that peace in the Middle East was Egypt's strategic goal, Egypt simultaneously emphasized that normalization of relations with Israel was not contingent on the resolution of the Palestinian problem. Participation in peace initiatives in the Middle East in the 1990s and 2000s was part of this policy, when Egypt established an active policy for attracting foreign

investment and developing economic relations with other countries in order to support its domestic development and solve economic problems.

Mubarak took upon himself a mediating and stabilizing role, seeking to ensure regional security and economic development. His leadership role in the Arab world and active participation in key international initiatives distinguished Egypt as an important player in global politics. At the same time, Mubarak's emphasis on balance and diversity in foreign relations highlighted his strategic foresight in maintaining Egypt's interests on the world stage. Mubarak did not seek a Nasser-style revival of Egypt's leadership. As Raymond Hinnebusch points out, "unlike Nasser's Egypt, which claimed Arab leadership by playing the role of hero in the Arab revolution and showing independence from the West, Mubarak's Egypt presented itself as an equalizer and stabilizer of the Arab world."²⁴

In the last decade of Mubarak's rule, Egypt's foreign policy found itself face-to-face with issues of trust and the ability to resolve contradictions within the country, which led to anti-government demonstrations and divisions. The manifestation of this crisis materialized in a confrontation between government and Islamist movements that viewed Egypt's identity as primarily being Islamic. Israel's military operations against Lebanon and Gaza and Egypt-Israel cooperation in the blockade of the Gaza Strip were met with criticism and the loss of face, especially among its citizens perceived this as support for Israel's policy toward Palestine. Such a pragmatic stance could not elicit understanding from Islamists and Arab nationalists who felt it necessary to subordinate Egypt's narrow, country-specific interests to a broader agenda, whereas Mubarak's foreign policy was primarily aimed at preserving the status quo. Having an active foreign policy, asserting Egypt's role as a regional leader, or increasing its involvement in the Palestinian cause were not on the agenda. It was Egypt's geostrategic restraint that made it a guarantor of regional stability and a reliable ally of Washington.²⁵ Mubarak chose not to put to use the regional capabilities at Egypt's disposal, which led to a decline both in his country's activism and its influence in international affairs.

Along with an identity crisis, Mubarak's reputation was further damaged by the fact that he was never able to advance Egypt's regional position to a level comparable to that of Nasser or Sadat in terms of political initiatives. For some time, the Arab Spring significantly reoriented the attention of the authorities toward solving domestic problems. The period of Mubarak's rule

demonstrates a gradual regression of Egypt's regional role. The downslide and deterioration of the country's conditions and status were attributed to his incompetence and his advanced age.²⁶ This, in turn, influenced the entire Middle Eastern system and led to the growing influence of other regional powers, namely Turkey, Iran, and the Gulf monarchies. Most Egyptians shared the view that the Mubarak regime served the interests of Tel Aviv, Riyadh, and Washington rather than the national interests of their country.²⁷ Accordingly, the emerging ruling elites were expected to reconsider their foreign policy choices, which in turn would lead to a more independent and assertive Egypt abroad.

Islamized Self-image Under Mohamed Morsi

The transformational processes of the Arab Spring led to the reexamination of Egypt's domestic and foreign policies. Before coming to power, the Muslim Brotherhood claimed that foreign policy would undergo serious change: it would stop the normalization of relations with Israel, revise the Camp David agreement, and reduce Egypt's dependence on the United States. They expressed dissatisfaction with Egypt's declining influence, both regionally and globally.²⁸ Even though one year of Mohamed Morsi's rule is not enough to judge the results of his foreign policy, nevertheless its orientation and the foundations of an identity managed to manifest themselves even over such a short period of time. The new administration's foreign policy program and the positions of the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) were largely in line with the ideology and beliefs of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Islamists' ideas to revise Egypt's foreign policy strategy looked quite revolutionary. The 2012 program of the FJP emphasized Egypt's aspirations to play a key role in regional and world politics and, in this regard, its readiness to pursue a decisive foreign policy. Mohamed Morsi, in his statement after his election as President of the country, stated that he would "build a strong Egypt and change its national security system in a way that corresponds to Egypt's capabilities and its real weight in Arab, Islamic, African and international affairs ... restore Egypt's free will in international relations ... abolish any subordination to any external power."

In fact, Mohamed Morsi's course differed from Mubarak's only in a few symbolic ways. Modest attempts were made to adjust the direction of Egypt's foreign policy, but in general Morsi acted within the framework of

the country's already-established alliances, especially with regard to the U.S. and Israel.

Whereas policy under Mubarak was based on the integration of pan-Arab slogans into the Sadat's logic of protecting national interests, the Morsi government replaced pan-Arabism with Islamism, incorporating it into the logic of a patriotic state. Morsi's government was Islamist on the one hand, while on the other, it acted according to the logic of a modern state defending its national interests. His government preferred a pragmatic approach over an ideological one in stark contrast with the political declarations of the Muslim Brotherhood. Therein lied the real challenge: restoring regional and international ties, but without compromising Egypt's interests and national security. More broadly, Morsi found it difficult to reconcile the ideology of political Islam with the pragmatism necessary for effective foreign policy.²⁹

President Morsi, inheriting political and security challenges, faced the need to stabilize the economy, which placed limitations on revolutionary initiatives abroad. Special relations with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states became a priority, and continuity of foreign policy was emphasized in maintaining the peace treaty with Israel. Active involvement in African politics, especially on the Nile water issue, was aimed at preserving historical rights. In pursuit of a pragmatic policy to stabilize Egypt and use the Muslim Brotherhood in its regional strategy against Iran, Washington sought contact with the Islamists.³⁰ For their part, Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood needed to ensure that their rise to power in Egypt was recognized by the United States.

In an effort to strengthen regional leadership, Egypt began to develop relations with ideologically close countries.³¹ Egypt sought to strengthen relations with countries where parties and movements ideologically or organizationally close to the Muslim Brotherhood were in power in order to eventually form a regional axis of Egypt-Turkey-Qatar-Sudan-Tunisia. Egypt expected to play a key role in this new form of regional order, however, against the backdrop of acute domestic problems, this concept was never realized.

Egypt's global pivot in policy included the search for new partners to develop the country's economy. The concept of "Pivot to the East" became an important milestone in Egypt's foreign policy, as was Morsi's visit to China (his first presidential trip outside the Middle East), which symbolized

his desire to diversify economic ties and attract additional inflows of foreign investment. The trip showed that Egypt views Asia, and especially China, as an important political and economic partner.

The new approach toward regional policy and its global strategy of diversifying economic ties reflected Egypt's desire to create a stable and predictable relationship with the outside world. However, there was no fundamental change in Egypt's foreign policy course.

Unlike Mubarak, Morsi shaped foreign policy based on the country's Islamic identity, but was still unable to combine pragmatism with the ideology of political Islam. His course proved unsuccessful, which then further exacerbated domestic problems. Morsi did not control key foreign policy instruments, which led to the weakening of Egypt's position both regionally and globally. The army, intelligence services, and diplomatic corps resisted the new government's attempts to influence foreign relations. As the country's former foreign minister Nabil Fahmy noted, Morsi was more concerned with the policies, priorities, and discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood than with serving as President.³²

A New Vision of Identity Under al-Sisi: the Transition to a “New Egypt”

Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi's reign marks a redefinition of the country's identity, with a focus on creating a “New Egypt”, one that will expand the country's global capabilities and protect its interests. Building on a tradition of participation in different configurations of the international system,³³ and taking into account the growing influence of public opinion, the President has taken many steps both at home and abroad to reinforce the strengths of Egypt's foreign policy, employing them with greater flexibility and pragmatism. President Sisi's rise to power was marked by the diversification of foreign ties, as well as an intensification of regional policy, which can also be seen an attempt of sorts to compensate for Egypt's failures in addressing the problems of domestic political and socio-economic development.

The New Egypt under al-Sisi's leadership has had a significant impact on the country's foreign policy positioning. His vision seeks to enhance stability and attract investment, which will build upon Egypt's positive image in the eyes of the international community. Al-Sisi emphasizes economic development and regional stability, which are both attractive to investors. This new identity helps position Egypt as a country seeking modernization and cooperation, which cannot but affect its image in the global arena.

Egypt's foreign policy positioning under the leadership of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi at the global and regional levels is determined by strategic priorities. Formulating the direction of Egypt's foreign policy in the post-June 30, 2013 era, al-Sisi has proclaimed that Egypt's national interests should be placed above the interests of global and regional allies. The key principles of his doctrine are: balanced relations with the great powers and key regional players, i.e., Cairo's strategic relations with Washington should not preclude the development of ties with other world powers such as Russia and China; respect for traditional notions of sovereignty and non-interference, refusing to make concessions to external forces or powers when implementing Egypt's domestic policy, in which no one should interfere; asserting a nationalist approach to foreign policy making, i.e., under the auspices of Egypt's government; and, focusing on combating threats to national security and emphasizing countering cross-border terrorism.³⁴ Al-Sisi's statements indirectly reflect a very important and new trend: the realization that the national security of individual Arab countries can only be achieved within the framework of a common regional security system.³⁵ Today, there is a complex debate about the establishment and functioning of a security system in the region.³⁶ Its role in shaping foreign policy should be expressed in pursuing a balance of interests, ensuring national security, and strengthening Egypt's place on the global stage.

Egypt's foreign policy priorities under President al-Sisi seek to maintain stability and security in the region. Relations with Egypt's neighbors, especially in the Middle East, are a key element of its foreign policy. Egypt, therefore, is actively involved in the resolution of regional crises. It is vital for Al-Sisi that the Middle East and North Africa not be perceived as a region of chaos, with Cairo instead preferring to emphasize political settlement of conflicts and the preservation of statehood in unstable countries.³⁷

Al-Sisi reaffirmed Egypt's commitment to the 1979 peace treaty with Israel, given the security concerns in the Sinai Peninsula and the negative attitude toward Hamas. The President seeks to engage constructively with Ethiopia and Sudan to resolve issues involving the sharing of the waters of the Nile while securing Egypt's interests.³⁸ He aims to improve the perception of the country by foreign investors and tourists through infrastructure projects and support from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kuwait. Likewise, he aims to manage the country's wealth, and strengthen its alliance with Gulf states,

while reorienting the country's gaze toward the future instead of fixating on the past.

Al-Sisi's vision predicates that the country needs to change its image – instead of a religiously-oriented revolutionary state, the New Egypt can enter the international arena, ready to meet political and economic, as well as security challenges, ensuring that each and every citizen possesses a multi-layered identity.³⁹ An important step in this direction was the approval of the national sustainable development plan “Egypt's Vision 2030”, which proclaims the country's primary national goals: modernization and reform. The plan also envisions active citizenship and positive participation of all segments of society in the development of the country, while placing added emphasis on empowerment, equality, and social justice.⁴⁰ Cairo attaches great importance to cooperation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), believing that this cooperation will help bring foreign investors and tourists back to the country.

Al-Sisi seeks to harmonize domestic and foreign policies, focusing on strengthening the country's regional role. His policies pay great attention to internal development, peace with Israel, and strengthening ties with the Gulf states. Foreign policy autonomy is often sacrificed for economic gains. Yet, despite the challenges, Al-Sisi's strategy remains focused on combating threats to stability and deepening cooperation with donor states.

* * *

Egypt's foreign policy positioning was shaped by their leaders and their understanding of the country's national interests. Although volatile, the continuity of this course emphasized Egypt's role as the leader of the Arab world. Presidential power strongly influenced foreign policy, while changes in the identity of the ruling elite were also reflected in international relations. Egypt's example underlines the importance of political identity and leadership in shaping a country's foreign policy, although they do not play a decisive role in every case.

Notes

1. *Zvyagelskaya, I. D., Kozhanov, N. A., Svistunova, I. A., & Surkov, N. Yu.* (2019). The states of the Middle East in search of a foreign policy identity. *Mirovaya Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya*, 63(9), 93-103. (in Rus.)
2. *Hermann, M. D.* (1991). Leadership styles in the formation of foreign policy. *Policy. Political Studies*, (1), 91-98. (in Rus.); *Dyson S. B.*,

- Preston T.* Individual characteristics of political leaders and the use of analogy in foreign policy decision making // *Political psychology*. – 2006. – T. 27. – №. 2. – pp. 265-288.; *Hermann M. G.* Explaining foreign policy behavior using the personal characteristics of political leaders // *International Studies Quarterly*. – 1980. – T. 24. – №. 1. – pp. 7-46.; *Hermann M. G., Hermann C. F.* Who makes foreign policy decisions and how: An empirical inquiry // *International Studies Quarterly*. – 1989. – T. 33. – №. 4. – pp. 361-387
3. *Drobot, G. A.* (2018). The concept of leadership and other forms of power and influence in world politics. *Econimika i Upravlenie: Problemy, Resheniya*, 3(3), 9-13. (in Rus.); *Drobot G.A.* (1996) The role of personality in making foreign policy decisions. *Obozrevatel*, 4 URL: https://i-sng.ru/observer/observer/N04_96/4_13.htm (in Rus.); *Semenenko, I. S.* (Ed.). (2017). Identity: personality, society, politics: an encyclopedic publication. Izdatel'stvo" Ves' Mir"., 992 p. (in Rus.); *Rozhkova, L. V., & Lazko, R. A.* (2018). The role of a political leader in shaping the foreign policy course. *Vestnik Penzenskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta*, (1 (21)), 50-53. (in Rus).
 4. The Middle East. Politics and Identity/ I.D. Zvyagelskaya (ed.); *S. Patterson* (transl. from Russ.). – Moscow : IMEMO, 2022. – 389 p.
 5. *Shama N.* Egyptian foreign policy from Mubarak to Morsi: Against the national interest. – Routledge, 2013.; *Hinnebusch R.* The international politics of the Middle East. – Manchester University Press, 2003.
 6. *Ahmadian H.* Egyptian foreign policy identities // *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs*. – 2014. – T. 5. – №. 3. – pp. 5-31.; *Mellor N.* Egyptian Dream. – Edinburgh University Press, 2015.; *Karawan I.* Foreign Policy Restructuring: Egypt's Disengagement from the Arab–Israeli Conflict Revisited // *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*. – 2005. – T. 18. – №. 3. – pp. 325-338.; *Karawan, I. A.* Sadat and the Egyptian–Israeli peace revisited. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Vol. 26, No.2. 1994.; *Korany B.* Egypt: Between overstretch and pivotalness in its foreign policy // *Diplomacy and developing nations: post-Cold War foreign policy-making structures and processes*. – Routledge, 2012.; *Sabet A. G. E.* Geopolitics of identity: Egypt's lost peace // *Contemporary Arab Affairs*. – 2017. – T. 10. – №. 1. – pp. 51-92.; *Telhami S., Barnett M. N.* Identity and foreign policy in the Middle East. – Cornell University Press, 2002.
 7. *Grimm J., Roll S.* Egyptian Foreign Policy under Mohamed Morsi: Domestic Considerations and Economic Constraints // *SWP Comments*. – 2012. – T. 35. pp. 1-3; *Duman A. H.* Leaders and Egyptian Foreign Policy: Individual Factors During Nasser and Morsi Periods // *Ortadoğu Etütleri*. – 2020. – T. 12. – №. 2. – pp. 369-389.; *Khawaja N. A.* Egypt's

- Foreign Policy Analysis: From Nasser to Morsi //Pakistan Horizon. – 2013. – T. 66. – №. 1/2. – pp. 43-63.; *Shalaby E. S. A.* Egypt's Foreign Policy 1952-1992: Some personal reflections //Bulletin of Peace Proposals. – 1992. – T. 23. – №. 3. – pp. 107-115.
8. *Telhami S., Barnett M. N.* Op. cit. p. 157.
 9. *Nasser G. A.* The Philisophy of the revolution. – Cairo : Mondiale Press – 1950.
 10. The Middle East. Politics and Identity/ I.D. Zvyagelskaya (ed.). Op. cit. p. 63
 11. *Duman A. H.* Op. cit. p. 377.
 12. *Khawaja N. A.* Op. cit. p. 44.
 13. *Duman A. H.* Op. cit. p. 376
 14. *Nixon R.* Leaders: Profiles and reminiscences of men who have shaped the modern world. – Simon and Schuster, 2013. – p. 340
 15. *Vinogradov V. M.* Egypt: From Nasser to the October War. From the Ambassador's Archive. - M: IV RAN, 2012. – p. 151. (in Rus.)
 16. *Karawan, I. A.* Op. cit. p. 257.
 17. *Chen T.* Four Points toward the Understanding of Egypt's Foreign Relations //Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia). – 2011. – T. 5. – №. 1. – p. 97
 18. *Vinogradov V. M.* Op. cit. p. 93. (in Rus.)
 19. *Telhami S., Barnett M. N.* Op. cit. p. 162.
 20. Ibid.
 21. *Ahmadian H.* Op. cit. p. 17.
 22. *Shalaby E. S. A.* p. 111
 23. *Hinnebusch R.* Op. cit. p. 211.
 24. *Hinnebusch R. A. Ehteshami A.* Op. cit. p. 205.
 25. *Grimm J., Roll S.* Op. cit. p. 1
 26. *Sabet A. G. E.* Op. cit. p. 58
 27. *Droz-Vincent P.* A Post-Revolutionary Egyptian Foreign Policy?... Not Yet //The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF). – 2012. – p. 1
 28. *Selim G. M.* Egyptian foreign policy after the 2011 revolution: the dynamics of continuity and change //British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies. – 2020. – p. 12
 29. *Aly A. M. S.* Post-revolution Egyptian foreign policy //Middle East Brief. – 2014. – T. 86. – p.1.
 30. *Selim G. M.* Op. cit. p. 14
 31. *Grimm J., Roll S.* Op. cit. p. 1
 32. *Ahmadian H.* Op. cit. p. 23.
 33. *Aly A. M. S.* Op. cit. p. 5

34. *Giuseppe Dentice*. Shifting Priorities: The Evolution of Egypt's Foreign Policy. ISPI. 24.09.2020. URL: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/shifting-priorities-evolution-egypts-foreign-policy-27409> (accessed 21.06.2021)
35. Sisi: Egypt and Saudi are leaders of Arab security. AlArabiya News. 30.07.2015. URL: <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2015/07/30/FM-Egypt-Saudi-solidarity-key-to-protect-regional-security-> (accessed 23.11.2023)
36. *Peter Jones*. It is Time to Establish a Middle East Regional Security System. The Cairo Review of Global Affairs. 24.04. 2020. URL: <https://www.thecaireview.com/essays/it-is-time-to-establish-a-middle-east-regional-security-system/> (accessed 21.11.2023)
37. *Mohamed Kamal*. The Middle East According to Egypt. The Cairo Review of Global Affairs. 2018. URL: <https://www.thecaireview.com/essays/the-middle-east-according-to-egypt/> (accessed 21.11.2023)
38. The largest hydroelectric power plant under construction in Ethiopia near the border with Sudan, located on the Blue Nile River, a right tributary of the Nile River. It has been the subject of a dispute between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan since 2011.
39. *Winter O., Shiloah A.* Egypt's Identity during the el-Sisi Era: Profile of the "New Egyptian" //Strategic Assessment. – 2019. – T. 21. – p. 70.
40. Egypt Vision 2030. URL: https://arabdevelopmentportal.com/sites/default/files/publication/sds_egypt_vision_2030.pdf (accessed 21.11.2023)

Chapter 2. Security Challenges in the Maghreb Region

Timur Kadyrmambetov

The Maghreb has seen quite a few changes over the past year, which have certainly affected both the domestic political situation in specific outlying countries and across the region as a whole. One can observe both long-standing unresolved conflicts, including the dispute over the status of Western Sahara, and the crisis in Libya, as well as relatively new challenges that became more acute in 2023, such as terrorism and security in the Sahel region. Moreover, all the aforementioned problems concern not only the Maghreb states but also their Mediterranean neighbors. Yet, all these problems did not suddenly emerge out of nowhere. On the contrary, the Maghreb region has been facing security challenges for a long time. Since 2010, however, they have become much more acute.

The Western Sahara Conflict

Despite having been on the regional and even international agenda for quite some time, the problem of determining the status of Western Sahara remains unresolved to this day. The most crucial moments in the development of this crisis became the formation of the Sahrawi People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in 1972, which is the armed wing of the Polisario Front, and the signing of the Madrid Pact in 1975 between Spain, Morocco, and Mauritania (both North African countries claimed the territory of Western Sahara). Following the signing of the Pact Spain committed to withdraw its military contingent from the country by 1976.¹

Despite the existence of a legal framework, the Polisario Front declared its independence and created the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Since that time, the National Liberation Front has been fighting the Kingdom of Morocco to achieve its independence. Going as far back as 1975, the Algerian leadership has supported the Western Saharan struggle against the Moroccan authorities and has provided political, economic, and military assistance to the Polisario Front.

The Western Sahara conflict should be seen within the framework of the struggle between Morocco and Algeria for political influence in the region. The active support provided to the Polisario Front by the Algerian authorities is motivated by two factors:

1. A desire to uphold the principle of solidarity with peoples who are struggling for political and economic liberation, and for the right to self-determination (Article 27 of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria constitution);
2. The need to contain Morocco's ambitions.²

At the same time, the struggle for Western Sahara is linked to the defense of the legitimacy of the royal family in Morocco.

A truce that had existed since 1991 between the Polisario Front and Morocco was broken in 2020. One of the main unfulfilled provisions of the truce was to hold a referendum on the independence of Western Sahara.

Morocco seeks to consolidate its status over the territory of Western Sahara, thus it seeks support from various actors, such as the African Union (some African states have recognized Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara: Côte d'Ivoire, Comoros, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe, CAR, Burundi, Eswatini, Zambia, Malawi, Guinea, Djibouti, Gambia, Liberia, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Senegal), but also from its Western partners France and Spain.

Unlike Spain, whose authorities in March 2022 supported the Moroccan Western Sahara Autonomy Proposal, which calls for the Kingdom to be given autonomy, France is balancing between Morocco and Algeria to build constructive relations with the leaders of both states without compromising its national interests.

On the one hand, France's relations with Morocco have traditionally developed better than with Algeria. This can be explained by the different historical backgrounds of the two countries, as French Morocco, unlike Algeria, did not fight for independence. On the other hand, Algeria has been France's main trade and economic partner in the whole of Africa for many years, so France's active support of Morocco on the issue of the status of Western Sahara could lead to a significant deterioration of already complicated Algeria-France relations. In such a situation, France is carrying out a balancing act between Morocco and Algeria in order to build constructive relations with the leaders of both states, but doing so without compromising its national interests.

Under tremendous pressure from both Morocco and Algeria, France's Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna commented rather discreetly in March of 2022 on France's position on the issue and called the Moroccan Initiative on Western Sahara "a serious and important basis for discussion."³ Such

actions do not satisfy the Moroccan leadership. On the eve of the President of France Emmanuel Macron's visit to Morocco (originally scheduled for January 2023, but which has yet to materialize), Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch of the Kingdom of Morocco, giving an interview to the French newspaper L'Opinion, said that "France can no longer play the role of an observer in the Western Sahara crisis and that it needs to decide which side it is on."⁴

Another important aspect related to the Western Sahara conflict is Morocco's signing of the Abraham Accords in December 2020. In response to the signing of these agreements, the US and Israel recognized the Kingdom's sovereignty over Western Sahara. At the same time, Algeria's Prime Minister Abdelaziz Jarad said that the signing of these agreements by the Moroccan authorities will only lead to destabilization in the region and "will bring Israel closer to the borders of Algeria."⁵ Moreover, the irreconcilable positions of Algeria and Morocco were reflected in the unilateral severance of diplomatic relations by the former in August 2021. At the time, the country's Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra backed up this decision as being the result of "hostile actions of the Kingdom towards the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria."⁶

The Western Sahara issue remains unresolved and diplomatic relations between Algeria and Morocco have not been restored. Despite the complexity of the conflict, Algeria's Foreign Minister said in an interview with Al-Monitor that he was "very pleased" with the position of Joe Biden's administration on the Western Sahara issue.⁷ In contrast to the actions of former US President Donald Trump, Joe Biden seeks to distance himself from direct involvement in resolving the status of Western Sahara, instead preferring to leave the issue to the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and the UN Personal Envoy to Western Sahara, Staffan de Mistura.

The Crisis in Libya

Since the beginning of the military conflict in Libya in 2011, neither Algeria nor Morocco has been directly involved. On the contrary, the authorities of both countries have tried to offer themselves as effective mediators in resolving the contradictions between the warring parties.

The principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, Article 28, is enshrined in Algeria's constitution.⁸ However, it was amended

in 2020. Now the President of the country with the consent of 2/3 of the parliament can send a military contingent outside the country. In 2011, the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution № 1973, according to which a no-fly zone (NFZ) was imposed over Libya and the country was bombed under the pretext of protecting civilians, was negatively perceived by the leadership of Algeria. Moreover, the family of Muammar Gaddafi was granted political asylum and this decision was the main reason why the international community began to put pressure on Algeria. Despite this, Algeria responded to the criticism of other states with dignity: the asylum was granted not for political reasons, but solely for humanitarian reasons. It was not until 2013 that Muammar Gaddafi's wife and three children left Algeria.⁹

This balanced and unchanging position of Algeria under the presidency of Abdelaziz Bouteflika (1999-2019) was preserved under the new President Abdelmadjid Tebboune. After coming to power in 2019, Tebboune declared that Algeria would intensify its activities on the Libyan track and would promote a peaceful solution to the problem exclusively through political means.¹⁰ Since then, Algeria has been making maximum efforts to resolve the crisis in Libya peacefully without the military intervention of other countries.

The political leadership of Algeria has pursued a consistent policy of asserting itself as the initiator of the peace process and mediator in the peace talks between the representatives of Tobruk and Tripoli. This was stated by Algerian President Tebboune at the Berlin Conference in January 2020.¹¹

Algeria's leadership has pursued making its country an important platform for discussing and resolving the crisis in Libya. In January 2020, Algeria hosted a meeting of the foreign ministers of the five states bordering Libya (Tunisia, Egypt, Chad, Sudan and Niger). The meeting resulted in a statement by the representatives of the states condemning foreign interference in Libya's internal affairs.¹² Despite Algeria's activism, the country's leadership failed to become an important force in resolving the conflict in Libya. Only in August 2021 was a second meeting held, which again did not lead to any serious results.

Morocco, unlike Algeria, does not share a border with Libya. Despite this, its leadership holds a steadfast position on Libya's crisis and is more actively involved in its resolution than Algeria and Tunisia. It should be noted that during the reign of Muammar Gaddafi, relations between Morocco and

Libya were far from friendly. According to data published by the US Central Intelligence Agency in January 2017, Muammar Gaddafi repeatedly opposed royal authority, particularly in Morocco, and stated that kings and crown princes in monarchies were “mentally ill people.”¹³ There were also contradictions on the issue of the Western Sahara conflict, as Gaddafi supported the free will of the inhabitants of Western Sahara and opposed the forceful annexation of this territory to Morocco.¹⁴

The fall of Muammar Gaddafi’s regime in Libya became an opportunity to restart bilateral relations. Morocco was one of the first Arab countries in North Africa, along with Egypt and Tunisia (August 2011), to recognize the legitimacy of the National Transitional Council in Libya. Morocco was also seen by the Council’s new authorities as a party with whom bilateral economic relations could be developed.

From the very beginning of the conflict in Libya, Morocco has actively supported any UN actions aimed at resolving the conflict and offered itself as a mediator in the conflict’s settlement. Thus, in 2015 in the Moroccan city of Skhirat, and under the auspices of the UN, the New General National Congress, the House of Representatives, and the head of the Libyan National Army (LNA), General Khalifa Haftar signed agreements to settle the conflict (the Skhirat Accords). However, later the General would refuse to implement the provisions of the Skhirat Accords. On the one hand, these agreements failed to form a reliable legal basis on which the crisis in Libya could be resolved, mainly due to all the conflicting interests of the feuding parties in Libya. However, on the other hand, these agreements were indeed a breakthrough in resolving the crisis in Libya. At the same time, Morocco was able to show itself to be an effective mediator, so much so that its territory was often used for various consultations and meetings between the different political forces operating in Libya.

Since 2020, Morocco has hosted the inter-Libyan negotiations, under the framework of which the Joint Committee (6+6) carries out its functions. Representatives of the following political forces participate in these meetings:

- The High Council of State of Libya – an advisory body formed as a result of the Skhirat Accords, the task of which is to consult the Government of National Unity and the House of Representatives. Until August 2023 it was headed by Khalid al-Mishri, a member of the Islamic Justice and Construction Party affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood.

- The House of Representatives is a legislative body based in Tobruk. It is supported by General Khalifa Haftar, who opposes the Islamists' rise to power.

Such meetings were held in September, October, November, and December of 2020, as well as in January of 2021 in the cities of Bouznika and Tangier. Morocco has created an effective platform for the parties to the Libyan conflict to express their position on several issues. Speaking at one of the consultations, the representative of the High Council of State, Ibrahim Sahad, praised the role of the Kingdom of Morocco in resolving the ongoing crisis in Libya.¹⁵

In January 2023, during a joint press conference in Rabat with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Special Representative for Libya and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Abdullah Bathily, Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita said that the Kingdom supports Libya's national sovereignty and territorial integrity and emphasized that the crisis in Libya can only be solved through diplomacy and not through foreign intervention.¹⁶

In May and June of 2023, new rounds of negotiations of the Joint Committee were held in Bouznika. The parties discussed the adoption of a new electoral law, but failed to reach an agreement. The Moroccan authorities have successfully offered themselves as a reliable mediator. Analyzing Morocco's activity as it pertains to Libya, one can make the argument that such activity is connected with the rivalry between Morocco and Algeria for regional leadership.

The conflict in Libya has also worsened due to its having taken on an international scope, which has only led to the deterioration of the socio-economic, political, humanitarian, and migration situation, not only in the country and the sub-region but also in the entire Southern Mediterranean. Moreover, it has led to an increase in terrorist activity both in the Maghreb and in the Sahel region.

Instability in the Sahel Region

Terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa is most often tied to religious motivations. All terrorist organizations that have been established in both Arab and African countries have been supporters of the "Islamic Way", i.e., according to their beliefs, jihad is the only way to achieve their goals.¹⁷ Jihad

is understood as a war against “a tyrant ruler who refuses to rule his state according to Shariah law.”¹⁸

Although the civil war in Algeria ended in 2002, the authorities were unable to fully control Islamist cells that continued to carry out terrorist attacks in Tunisia, Morocco, and countries in the Sahel region. As a result, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Jihad was created in 2002, which was later renamed Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (The group is designated a terrorist organization in Russia).

However, the crisis in Libya became a new challenge for the entire African continent, which led to even greater terrorist activity in North Africa. After the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi’s regime in Libya and the activation of terrorist cells in the country, the U.S. and several EU countries began waging war against them, this escalation of the conflict led to increased numbers of militants relocating to the south, namely to countries of the Sahel region: Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad.

Traditionally, the countries of North and West Africa have been considered France’s sphere of influence. Toward the end of the 2000s, however, the Arab states of the Maghreb began to increasingly assert their political independence, gradually giving impetus to the deterioration of France’s relations with its former colonies, both in political and socio-economic spheres. Nevertheless, all the way up to 2022, France has maintained not only its political influence but also its military presence in the Sahel region (Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad).

As has been previously mentioned, in its fight against terrorism in the Sahel region, France’s leadership launched two military operations: “Serval” (January 2013 – July 2014) and “Barkhan” (July 2014 – November 2022). It is difficult to give an unambiguous assessment of the position of the Maghreb countries regarding France’s military operations on the continent. The main antagonist of France’s leadership’s actions was Algeria. On the one hand, France’s military operation could be negatively perceived, first of all, by the Algerian authorities, who categorically rejected the principle of interference in the internal affairs of other states. However, on the other hand, the actions of Algeria’s President Abdelaziz Bouteflika indicate the opposite. The Algerian authorities did not openly declare support for France’s military operation “Serval”, but did allow the latter’s use of its airspace for military aircraft engaged in fighting against terrorist groups in Mali, on the southern border of Algeria, despite certain difficulties in

bilateral relations. As some experts note, Algeria's authorities, although tacitly, supported the operation of France's leadership as they believed that it would allow them to effectively deal with instability in the region.¹⁹

At the same time, Algeria has been active in addressing the situation in Mali and other Sahel countries where terrorist groups have been active. During the intergovernmental commission between Algeria and France in Paris, Algerian Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia said that his country would never send its soldiers beyond its borders, thus reaffirming Algeria's commitment to the principle of non-interference.²⁰

Algeria's leadership went to great lengths to attract the attention of the world community to the problem of terrorism facing the African continent. In order to do so, Algeria initiated numerous resolutions within the framework of the African Union and the UN, which were later adopted. One of Algeria's diplomatic successes was the launch in 2013 (the first summit was held in 2014) of the Nouakchott Process, a mechanism focused solely on strengthening regional security and the exchange of information between states in order to combat terrorism.

It should be pointed out that the powers that be in France, in an effort to maintain their influence in *Françafrique*, decided to use force to maintain their positions in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. In addition, it is important to note that two parallel military operations were seen in France as a counterweight to Algeria's influence.

Thus, in addition to the ideological confrontation between the former metropolis and colony, as well as opposing political interests, France's leadership tried to overtake the role of peacemaker and mediator between the conflicting parties in the Sahel region, which, naturally, irritated Algeria. Thus, a year after the establishment of the Nouakchott process, France created the format of the Sahel Alliance (the G5), which included Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad. In other words, there were two structures – the G5 and the Nouakchott Process – both serving the same function.

It was only in October 2021 that Algeria decided to ban France's aerospace forces from flying over its territory. This move, naturally, was brought on by political differences and contradictions, but it has had a serious impact on the success of France's forces in the Sahel region.

As time has shown, the forceful methods used by authorities in France failed to strengthen the European power's influence in the region. In November

2022, France declared the end of its Operation Barkhan. This was the result of the Malian authorities' demand that all foreign troops be withdrawn from the country and that all their military bases be closed. Following Mali, the authorities of Burkina Faso in January 2023 demanded similar actions from the France's leadership.

In March 2023, Emmanuel Macron, during his tour of Central Africa (visiting Gabon, Angola, the Republic of Congo, and the Democratic Republic of Congo), declared that the era of France's presence in Africa was over.²¹ However, there was one last country that had a French military contingent on its territory in the Sahel – Niger. In July 2023, a military coup took place in the country, which demanded that France withdraw its armed forces from the country. It was not until September 2023 that President Emmanuel Macron announced that by the end of the year all his country's military forces would be withdrawn from Niger.²²

2023 was a critical year for France and its influence in the Sahel region. Military operations “Serval” and “Barkhan” were initially launched under the slogan of combating terrorism, since it was France that had suffered the most from terrorist attacks among all the countries of the European Union.²³ It was no less important that authorities in France maintained their influence in the region. However, that France's military contingent had been implanted in African states for such a long led to the inevitable growth of anti-French sentiment. As a result, France's leadership not only failed to deal with the threat posed by terrorist cells in the Sahel but also undermined its image among its former colonies.

* * *

The most significant changes in 2023 occurred in Sahel countries, where, firstly, military coups took place and, secondly, anti-French sentiment intensified, all of which led to the rise of serious security concerns in the region. Although by 2023 conflicts in Libya and Western Sahara had become frozen, one cannot deny the fact that they may intensify again against a backdrop of global instability. Moreover, Morocco and Algeria are rivals in the Maghreb region. This rivalry is dictated by historical and ideological reasons (a monarchy with an Atlanticist orientation and a republic with a socialist orientation).²⁴ Thus, such competition may bring risks to security and stability in the region.

Notes

1. United Nations. Declaration of Principles on Western Sahara (Madrid Accords) // The United Nations (UN) Peacemaker URL: <https://peacemaker.un.org/mauritania-morocco-spain-principles75> (accessed: 02.10.2023).
2. Algeria, Morocco and Western Sahara: Why Tension, Not Conflict, Has Become the Norm // Manara Magazine. 2023. URL: <https://manaramagazine.org/2023/02/algeria-morocco-and-western-sahara-why-tension-not-conflict-has-become-the-norm/> (accessed: 02.10.2023).
3. Moroccan Sahara... France renews its support for the autonomy plan // Maroc.ma. 2022. March 22. URL: <https://www.maroc.ma/ar/-/الصحراء-المغربية-فرنسا-تجدد-دعمها-لمخطط-الحكم-الذاتي/أخبار> (accessed: 02.10.2023). (in Arabic)
4. Aziz Akhannouch (chef du gouvernement marocain): «Notre relation économique avec la France est appelée à se développer» // L'Opinion. 2023. January 15. URL: <https://www.lopinion.fr/international/aziz-akhannouch-chef-du-gouvernement-marocain-notre-relation-economique-avec-la-france-est-appelée-a-se-developper> (accessed: 02.10.2023).
5. Algerian Prime Minister: Our country is being targeted and there is a foreign will for Israel to reach our borders // Al-Jazeera. 2020. December 12. URL: <https://www.aljazeera.net/politics/2020/12/12/رئيس-وزراء-الجزائر-بلادنا-مستهدفة> (accessed: 04.10.2023). (in Arabic)
6. Statement by Mr. Lamamra regarding the severing of diplomatic relations with Morocco // Algeria Press Service. 2021. August 24. URL: <https://www.aps.dz/ar/algerie/111617-2021-08-24-18-05-52> (accessed: 04.10.2023). (in Arabic)
7. Algerian FM 'satisfied' with Biden's Western Sahara policy // Al-Monitor. 2023. August 15. URL: <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/08/algerian-fm-satisfied-bidens-western-sahara-policy> (accessed: 04.10.2023).
8. Constitution of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. URL: <https://www.joradp.dz/har/consti.htm> (accessed: 05.10.2023). (in Arabic)
9. Gaddafi's family left Algeria // Al Jazeera. 2013. March 23. URL: <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2013/3/23/أسرة-القذافي-غادرت-الجزائر> (accessed: 05.10.2023). (in Arabic)
10. List of invitees and absentees from the Berlin conference on Libya // Al Jazeera. 2020. January 16. URL: <https://www.aljazeera.net/politics/2020/1/16/ألمانيا-برلين-ليبيا-الوفاق-حفتر-تركيا> (accessed: 05.10.2023). (in Arabic)

11. *Babkin S. E.* Algeria: has the “system” survived? (to the events of 2019) / Edited by N. G. Romanova; Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow : IV RAS, 2020. p. 182. (accessed: 05.10.2023). (In Rus.)
12. Libya’s neighbors meet in Algeria seeking stronger truce // Reuters. 2020. January 23. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-algeria-idUSKBN1ZM1SR> (accessed: 05.10.2023).
13. Les relations houleuses entre Hassan II et Kadhafi révélées par la CIA // Tel Quel. 2017. January 20. URL: https://telquel.ma/2017/01/20/les-relations-houleuses-entre-hassan-ii-et-kadhafi-revelees-par-la-cia_1532246 (accessed: 10.10.2023).
14. Ibid.
15. A new round of negotiations was held between the delegations of the Supreme Council of State and the Libyan House of Representatives // The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates. 2020. November 5. URL: <https://diplomatie.ma/ar/-استئناف-الحوار-الليبي-ببوز-نيقة> (accessed: 12.10.2023). (in Arabic)
16. Morocco confirms its support for Libya and rejects foreign interference. Libyan News Agency. 2023. January 30. URL: <https://lana.gov.ly/post.php?lang=ar&id=268943> (accessed: 12.10.2023). (in Arabic)
17. *Dolgov B.V.* Islamist Movement in Algeria and Tunisia: 1970-2017. Moscow : LENAND, 2018. p. 11. (accessed: 12.10.2023). (In Rus.)
18. *Korovikov A.V.* Islamic extremism in Arab countries. Moscow : Nauka, 1990. p. 53. (accessed: 12.10.2023). (In Russ.)
19. Operation Serval. Analyzing the French Strategy against Jihadists in Mali // Air and Space Power Journal-Africa and Francophonie (ASPJ-A&F). 2015. URL: https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/ASPJ_French/journals_E/Volume-06_Issue-3/spet_e.pdf (accessed: 14.10.2023).
20. Algeria makes “significant” efforts for security in Sahel // Algeria Press Service (APS). 2017. December 7. URL: <https://www.aps.dz/en/algeria/21678-algeria-makes-significant-efforts-for-security-in-sahel> (accessed: 15.10.2023).
21. Macron says era of French interference in Africa is “over” // Al Jazeera Media Network. 2023. March 2. URL: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/2/macron-says-era-of-french-interference-in-africa-is-over> (accessed: 22.10.2023).
22. La France contrainte de se retirer du Niger // Le Monde. 2023. September 25. URL: https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/09/25/la-france-contrainte-de-se-retirer-du-niger_6190866_3212.html (accessed: 22.10.2023).

23. *Chernega V.N.* France's fight against islamist terrorism // Aktual'nye problemy Evropy. 2021. №4. p. 146. (accessed: 22.10.2023). (In Rus.)
24. *Vasilenko A.* Unbearable intimacy. On Algerian-Moroccan relations // RIAC. 2023. October 18. URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/nevynosimaya-blizost-k-voprosu-ob-alzhimarrokkanskikh-otnosheniyakh/?sphrase_id=122024333 (accessed: 07.11.2023). (In Rus.)

Chapter 3. Qatar's Economy in 2023: Managing the 2022 FIFA World Cup Legacy

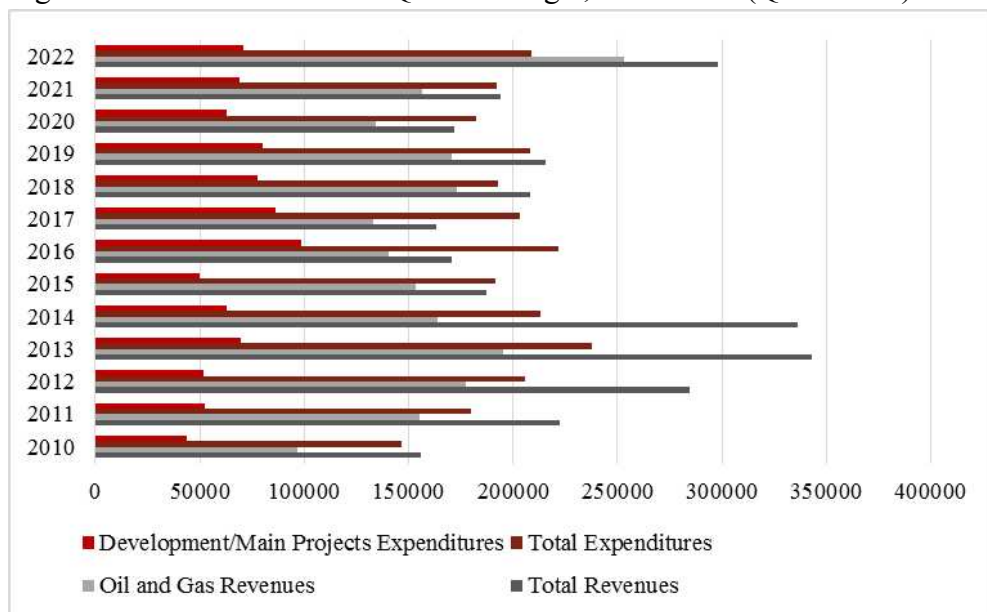
Nikolay Kozhanov

It was largely considered that the 2022 World Cup was a key driver of Qatar's economic developments in the 2010s, and that its end would lead to unpleasant consequences for the country, namely reduced GDP growth and a mass exodus of the workforce. In part, these expectations were justified: preparations for the 2022 FIFA World Cup provided an additional impetus to the development of Qatar's tourism industry as well as to service, construction, and housing sectors. There was also an increase in public spending. In fact, some official reports say that preparations for the World Cup brought in an additional one million workers to Qatar.² The scale of Qatar's transformation into a global venue for the world's main football event was so great that, according to authorities, it provided a substantial increase in the country's GDP.³ Consequently, it seems logical to assume that the end of the World Cup should have had a negative effect and slowed down economic development. Therefore, observers concluded that in order to maintain the high pace of development of its economy, Qatar urgently needs a new megaproject, and many analysts were busy guessing what this might be.⁴ However, a year after the end of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, it seems that Qatar's economy is doing well and showing no signs of recession. This naturally leads to a question: was the world championship as important from an economic point of view as it is often believed?

The Economic Miracle of the 2022 FIFA and its Price

One thing can be said with certainty: the end of FIFA 2022 in Qatar brought a relief for the country's economy as there was no longer a need to allocate substantial resources to prepare for the global mega event. After Qatar received the right to hold the 2022 World Cup in 2010, the country's development expenditures substantially increased, becoming a growing burden for the country's state budget (see graphic insert in Figure 1), and increasing its external debt load.⁵

Figure 1. Select Indicators of Qatar’s Budget, 2010-2022 (QR million)



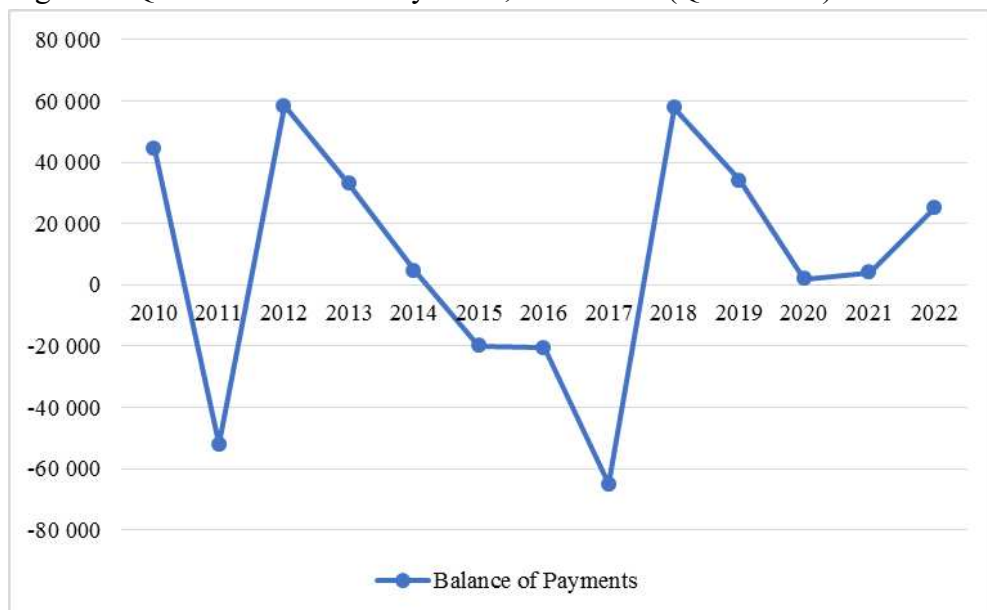
Source: Central Bank of Qatar

And let us not forget that this mega project was being rolled out during the oil market instability of the mid-2010s and the 2020 Covid pandemic, factors which decreased Qatar’s income from hydrocarbons and became an additional challenge for Doha, whose balance of payments occasionally went negative over the last 12 years (see graphic insert in Figure 2).

According to Qatar’s official estimates, Doha invested about \$8 billion only in the infrastructure directly related to the sporting event (i.e. stadiums).⁶ Yet, this does not include other urban infrastructure developed for hosting the World Cup, such as an underground railway system, wider roads, passenger and commercial sea ports, and a new airport terminal (among others), as these were formally constructed within the framework of the Qatar National Vision 2030 (i.e. independent of the 2022 FIFA World Cup preparations). As argued by Forbes, together with other investments, the aggregated cost of the 2022 FIFA World Cup for Qatar might go far above \$220 billion spent over the twelve years of preparations for the World Cup.⁷ Such major investment literally changed the skyline of Doha beyond recognition. Public transportation networks, including the Doha Metro purportedly built for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, made daily commuting extremely convenient for

local inhabitants, while new hotels and the growing leisure industry made the country attractive to tourists.

Figure 2. Qatar's Balance of Payments, 2010-2022 (QR million)

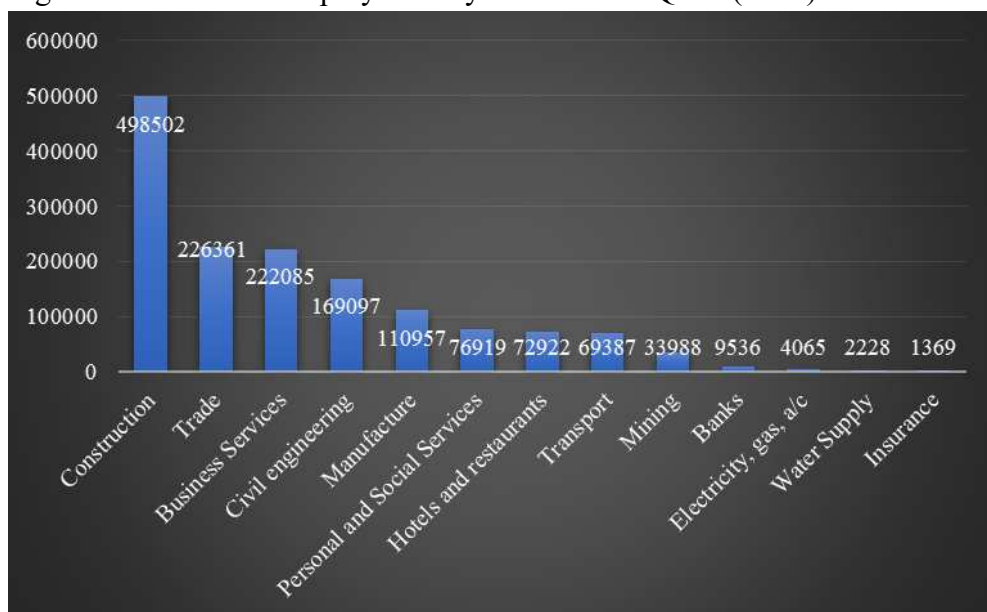


Source: Central Bank of Qatar

Nevertheless, not all of the newly built infrastructure will contribute significantly to the economic growth of the country after the 2022 FIFA World Cup. First and foremost, this refers to newly built stadiums, the current number of which is obviously excessive for the needs of a small country – even with all the plans on the books to turn it into a regional tourist and sports hub. Following the 2022 FIFA World Cup came to a close, the tourism and construction industries, together with some other sectors, were supposed to decrease their share in the country's economic development. Moreover, the construction and tourism sectors, as well as various types of services, are workforce-intensive and, as such are the largest employers in the economy (as opposed to oil and gas sectors).

A slowdown in the latter's economic growth would lead to a noticeable scaling back of the workforce (see graphic insert in Figure 3).

Figure 3. Workforce Employment by Activities in Qatar (2021)



Source: Planning and Statistics Authority of Qatar

In fact, recent official data indicates that some economic setbacks, indeed, occurred (see Table 1). Non-mining sectors demonstrated negative growth in the first quarter of 2023 as compared to the last three months of 2022 and a modest increase of 1.9 percent annually. Meanwhile, overall GDP growth was largely ensured by high oil and gas prices, which allowed Qatar’s mining sector to demonstrate 4.1 percent annual growth and raise the total GDP growth rate to 2.7 percent. Yet, this growth rate is still lower than the 4.2 percent average annual GDP growth rate for Qatar’s economy in 2022.

Table 1. GDP Growth by Economic Activities in the First Quarter of 2023 (% , 2018 constant prices)

	Quarterly Growth Rates	Annual Growth Rates
Agriculture	10	6.1
Mining	0.3	4.1
Manufacturing	-3.7	10.8
Electricity, gas, steam, water and air conditioning supply	-9.1	0.7
Construction	1.5	-12.5
Trade	-16.1	9.1

Transportation	7.2	16.8
Accommodation and food service activities	-13.6	17.3
Information and communication	-20.6	-7.9
Financial and insurance activities	-19.5	2.3
Real estate	-7.3	6.1
Education	7.3	2.5
Health	0.4	1.7
Financial services	5.3	2.3
Total GDP	-3.9	2.7
Mining sector	0.3	4.1
Non-mining sectors	-6.3	1.9

Source: Planning and Statistics Authority of Qatar

However, it looks like the leadership of the country was ready for these losses as the World Cup in Doha was not about economic profits, but rather about political gains to boost the country's soft power influence. Moreover, tourism and service sectors could, to a certain extent, be considered expendable.

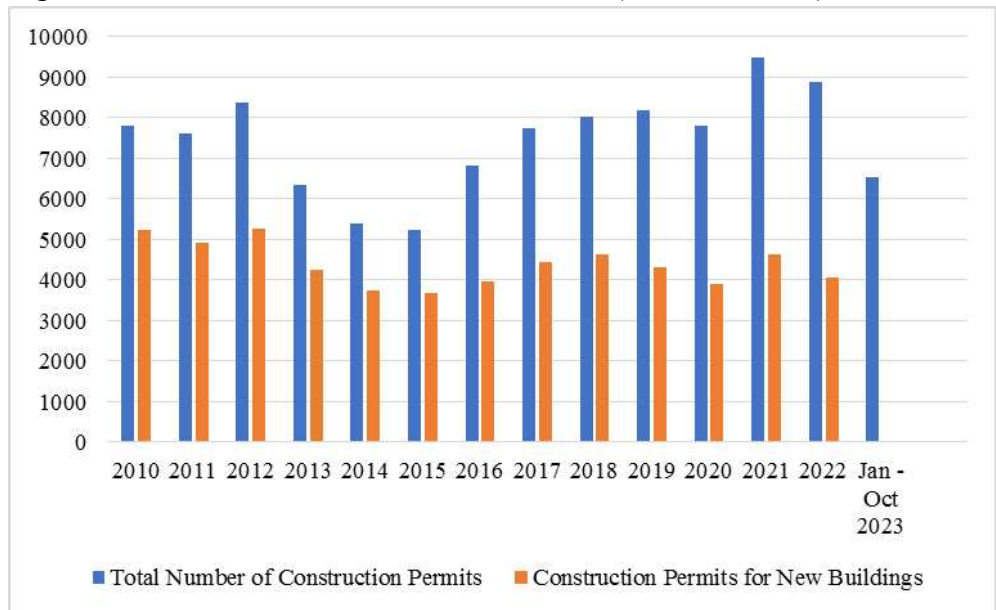
Expendables

The tourism sector, fashionable today in the Gulf, has substantially increased in terms of its contribution to Qatar's GDP, from 3 percent in 2019 to 7-12 percent in 2022.⁸ Yet, it can hardly be called the most important sector for Qatar's economic development. Due to the specifics of the country (small size, traditional cultural restrictions, competition with its neighbors), the prospects for the tourism industry in Qatar are less clear than that of Saudi Arabia's or the UAE's. Thus, by October 2023, even with the increase in the tourist flow (largely determined by the positive public memories of the 2022 FIFA World Cup experience, which will sooner or later fade away, and the overall improvement in the quality of tourist services) the country's hotel occupancy still remained lower than 60%.⁹

The construction sector is a different story. To a certain extent, in terms of political and economic importance for the country, it is too big to fail (see graphic insert in Figure 3), although the pre-crisis state has been the norm of its existence. According a number of economists who were interviewed by

the author on the condition of anonymity, real estate supply traditionally exceeds actual demand. And yet, the government puts no moratorium on construction activities as they are also a part of the rentier social contract existing in the country. Both the government’s loans, which were provided for the construction, as well as the rent that is received from leasing constructed properties represent a source of stable income for certain important families in the country. Under these circumstances, the country’s leadership will do everything in its power to ensure that this sector continues its development. And, indeed, preparations for the 2022 FIFA World Cup had little effect on the number of construction permits issued in the country as opposed to the crisis of the oil market in the mid-2010s (see graphic insert in Figure 4).

Figure 4. Construction Permits Issued in Qatar (2010-Oct 2023)



Source: Planning and Statistics Authority of Qatar

Depopulation Concerns

Initial expectations that the end of FIFA 2022 World Cup might lead to a net outflow in Qatar’s population were also not justified. The natural decrease in the population number during the 2023 hot summer period was mistaken by some experts as proof of Qatar’s inevitable post-World Cup depopulation. Yet, by autumn 2023 the numbers not only returned to normal but also increased (see Table 2).

Table 2. Qatar Population in 2018-2023 (millions)

2018	2.76
2019	2.8
2020	2.83
2021	2.75
2022	2.93
2023 (as for September)	3.06

Source: Planning and Statistics Authority of Qatar

The reasons for these failed negative expectations are complex and not always obvious. On the one hand, it is important to remember that the 2022 FIFA World Cup was not the first and only mega project of its kind held in Qatar. In 2006, Qatar had previously hosted the Asian games, the end of which was also predicted to have a negative impact on economic growth and demographics. Yet, this never happened. For the last 40 years, the country's population has only been growing (with the exception of 2021, which was affected by Covid-19). This, in turn, suggests that both the country and its expat community have the ability to adapt to the changing nature of economic activity in the country by finding a new niche if needed (expats), or managing the flow of work force in accordance with emerging demand (the Qatari state).

On the other hand, the contribution the tourist sectors contribute to Qatar's population structure is not as substantial as it might seem. Meanwhile, the demand for workers in the construction sector is not driven only by the needs of global sporting events. As mentioned above, the development of the construction sector is determined by in-country specifics, while the tourism sector has its own development strategies unrelated to sporting events.

It's All About LNG

In the end, the conclusion can be drawn that economic development in Qatar is determined not by tourism, construction, or any other industry, but rather by the country's oil and gas sector, which allows it to cover all potential risks and losses from its ambitious mega projects undertaken for the sake of soft power and influence. Despite the efforts of Qatar's government to diversify its economy, hydrocarbon production remains the driver of the Gulf state's economic development, which are in turn responsible for – above all else –

the implementation of Qatar's mega projects. As described in Qatar's second National Development Strategy (2018-2022):

“Economic growth has been driven by the growth of capital investment in mega infrastructure projects, including the Rail project, Hamad Port, Hamad International Airport, FIFA 2022 stadiums, and facilities associated with this global event, schools and hospitals, all funded with Qatar's hydrocarbon revenues.”¹⁰

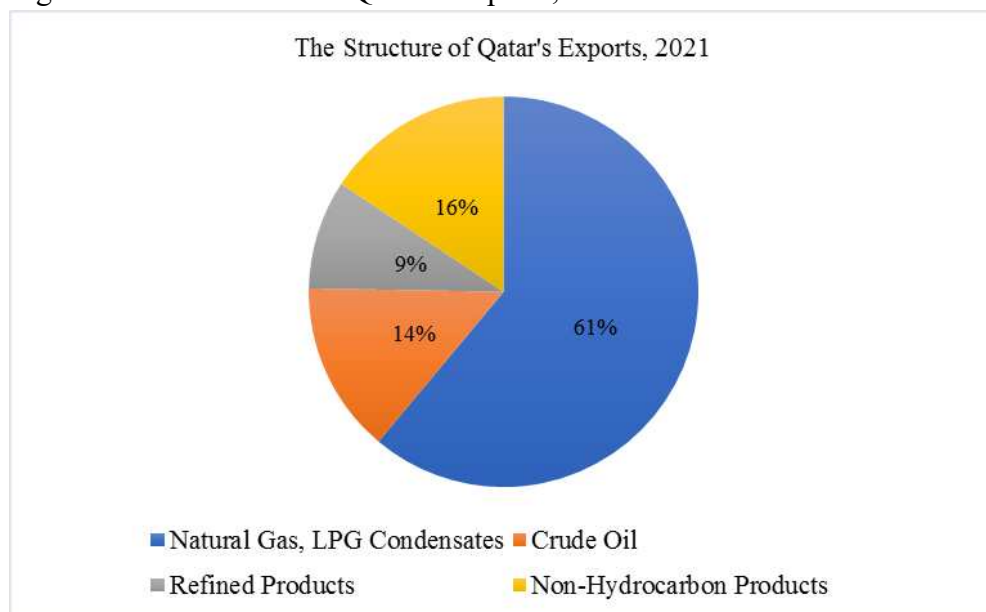
The share of the mining sector in Qatar's GDP is about 40 percent. By 2022, natural gas represented Qatar's main and dominant export. As of 2021, gas trade was bringing in \$53.4 billion (61 percent of the country's total exports (see graphic insert in Figure 5)). From 2016 to 2019, hydrocarbon exports (including oil) provided 55 percent of annual public revenues. If we also take into account the government's dividends from Qatar Energy,¹¹ this figure rises to approximately 82 percent.¹² All in all, in 2010-2022, the oil and gas sector was responsible for more than two-thirds of government revenue streams (see graphic insert in Figure 1) and guaranteed a positive balance of payments, while other sectors often produced negative balances. Revenue generated from natural gas exports are the main source the country's much-needed financial reserves for addressing economic challenges. Thanks to these reserves, Qatar is able to maintain its social contract: the ruling elite of a country effectively buys the loyalty of its citizens in exchange for expansive wealth transfers and social welfare spending. A high standard of living is ensured through the provision and distribution of direct and indirect subsidies.

Qatar's Global Role

In terms of its importance for the country's foreign policy, the oil and gas industry can compete with the mega events held by Doha. In the eyes of the world, Qatar is distinguished from other Arab energy producers by the fact that it primarily exports natural gas, rather than oil. The monarchy has the third largest natural gas reserves in the world after Russia and Iran,¹³ and, as of 2022, was competing with the US for the title of the largest LNG exporter in the world. On the one hand, this adds to Qatar's uniqueness, forcing external players to consider it separately from other Gulf monarchies and see it as an actor whose importance for global gas markets is comparable to that of Saudi Arabia's in the global oil trade, leading some researchers to call Qatar the “Saudi Arabia of gas.”¹⁴ This comparison, although somewhat

strained, reflects the essence of the matter: Qatar has compensated for its relative insignificance as an oil supplier by increasing its importance as a gas market player, which, from a geopolitical point of view, brings it up to the same level as Saudi Arabia. From an economic point of view, there is also a certain similarity between the two states in their ability to influence the situation in their respective markets. However, Qatar affects the market not by changing the volume of supply (i.e., it is not playing the role of “swing producer” as Saudi Arabia does), but by changing the direction of its gas exports (primarily between Europe and Asia) as needed to balance markets. On the other hand, it is generally accepted that Qatar’s foreign policy is based on the principle of being independent from its regional neighbors and on its ability to have strong political relations with players outside the region, a principle which is, again, largely promoted and supported by gas money.¹⁵

Figure 5. The Structure of Qatar’s Exports, 2021



Source: Middle East Economic Survey

The Choice Has Been Made

It is not surprising that Qatar’s main development strategies of the past have been revolving around the necessity to maintain competitiveness in the hydrocarbon sector and adjust it to the needs of the country’s ongoing energy transition. The importance of staging sports mega events was and still is less

significant than the need to develop the gas sector. While events similar to the 2022 FIFA World Cup strengthen the soft power of Qatar, LNG exports generate the necessary revenue to underpin the very fact of this soft power's existence. Under these circumstances, it is possible to say that the decision on the most important project of the next decade has been made: Qatar is actively working on expanding its LNG production capacities from 77 to 127 million tons per year by 2027, which Qatar's authorities hope will guarantee the country's leadership in this lucrative global market. Under these circumstances, the search for another mega project might be over for a while.

Notes

1. Gulf States Newsletter, Qatar Searches for a New Strategy after World Cup and Tamim's First Decade in Power // GSN, Issue 1175. URL: <https://www.gsn-online.com/news-centre/article/qatar-searches-new-strategy-after-world-cup-and-tamims-first>
2. Planning and Statistics Authorities, Qatar Economic Outlook 2021 – 2023. Issue 13. Doha: Planning and Statistic Authorities, 2022.
3. Ibid.
4. Gulf States Newsletter, Qatar Searches for a New Strategy after World Cup and Tamim's First Decade in Power // GSN, Issue 1175. URL: <https://www.gsn-online.com/news-centre/article/qatar-searches-new-strategy-after-world-cup-and-tamims-first>
5. Qatar Central Bank, External Debt for Government of Qatar in Million QR. Doha, QCB, 2022. URL: <https://www.qcb.gov.qa/English/Publications/Statistics/GovernmentExternalDebt/Documents/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%88%D9%85%D9%8A%202022%20%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AC%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%B2%D9%8A.pdf>
6. New Arab, No, Qatar has not Spent \$220 billion on World Cup Stadiums, The New Arab, 4 November 2022. URL: <https://www.newarab.com/news/no-qatar-has-not-spent-220-billion-world-cup-stadiums>
7. *Craig Matt*. The Money Behind The Most Expensive World Cup In History: Qatar 2022 By The Numbers, Forbes, 19 November 2022. URL: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/mattcraig/2022/11/19/the-money-behind-the-most-expensive-world-cup-in-history-qatar-2022-by-the-numbers/?sh=466c7227bff5>
8. Qatar Development Bank, Tourism Sector in Qatar, Doha, QDB, 2021. p. 3; Gulf Times, Tourism sector to contribute 12% of Qatar GDP by 2030. The Gulf Times, 8 January 2023. URL: <https://www.gulf->

- times.com/article/652859/qatar/tourism-sector-to-contribute-12-of-qatar-gdp-by-2030
9. Planning and Statistic Authorities, Qatar Monthly Statistics. Statistics of September 2023. Doha, PSA, 2023.
 10. Ministry of Development, Planning and Statistics, Qatar Second National Development Strategy (2018-2022). Doha, Ministry of Development, Planning and Statistics, 2019. p. 20.
 11. Before October 2021, the official name of Qatar Energy was Qatar Petroleum. However, to avoid unnecessary confusion, this chapter uses the current name of the company.
 12. Planning and Statistics Authority of Qatar. Qatar Economic Outlook. 2020 – 2022. Doha, Planning and Statistic Authority of Qatar, 2019.
 13. BP. BP Statistical Review of World Energy, 2019. (London: British Petroleum, 2020). Pp. 12, 90.
 14. *Cochrane, Paul*. Supertanker State: How Qatar is Gambling its Future on Global Gas Dominance. Middle East Eye, 2 July 2020. URL: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/qatar-gas-lng-market-oil-prices-dominance>
 15. *Çavuşoğlu, Esra*. From Rise to Crisis: The Qatari Leadership // *Turkish Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 1(7), 2020. p. 86.

Chapter 4. Innovation Development in GCC countries

Stanislav Lazovskii

The Arab countries of the Persian Gulf have taken advantage of the opportunities provided them by nature. From the sale of hydrocarbon resources, they have managed to accumulate significant capital, which they initially invested in the most profitable sectors in order to grow their national economies. On a practical level, these countries lead the Arab world in most large-scale projects and create opportunities that not only bring significant revenues but also push themselves closer to a threshold, beyond which they start the transition to a new qualitative level and transform themselves into a regional cluster that is integrated with the world economy. It is clear that the Arabian monarchies themselves are not quite ready to conduct large-scale R&D projects on their own, but this does not prevent them from striving to reproduce them harmoniously on their own terms, emulating new technologies, or even experimenting with the latest achievements of science – all in an effort to adapt them to the peculiarities of their world order.

The purpose of this study is to try to explain the reasons why GCC countries are struggling to innovate despite their being composed of rich countries with high per capita income.

At their present stage, GCC countries have realized the importance of investing in science, technology, and innovation (STI) to consolidate what they have achieved in terms of sustainable social and economic development, as following such a path has always led them to stable economic growth rates that do not depend on natural or non-renewable resources.

Moreover, the monarchies clearly understand that their current investments in STI to a large extent prompt a tide of investment in talent and human capital, providing cutting-edge solutions to many challenges in healthcare, the environment, and society – progress that is essential to take society to new levels of growth.

Nevertheless, the ability to mobilize abundant resources for innovation is not the same for everyone and varies from country to country. Those that are most successful in mobilizing funds are naturally ahead of their immediate subcontinent neighbors in many respects, and are quicker to succeed in implementing plans to develop their economies and infrastructure, which in turn serve as a platform for future breakthroughs that can bring new

knowledge, new technologies, and an array of goods to domestic and foreign markets.

Persian Gulf countries are not sitting idly on the sidelines and are instead taking strides to diversify their national economies and move away from the model of an energy-exporting state, while paying greater attention to technological development and the creation of national growth strategies. Examples of such cases are: Bahrain Economic Vision - 2030; UAE Economic Vision - 2030; Kuwait Vision - 2035; Qatar National Vision - 2030; Oman Economic Vision – 2040; and, Saudi Arabia Vision - 2030.

As their names imply, these national strategies are scheduled to be fulfilled by the mid-2030s at the latest, by shifting their economies toward high, value-added sectors, which play a key role in promoting consistent economic growth. This will enable them to level out development outcomes and narrow certain gaps that exist between various GCC members (for a number of reasons), which cannot be eliminated in short order. To achieve such ambitious goals, the Arabian monarchies will clearly seek to finally smooth out the uneven economic progress within their ranks by focusing on basic indicators.

The goals set for the sub-region may well seem ambitious, but nevertheless, what has already been achieved gives hope that in a short period of time the targeted parameters will be within closer reach.

Turning to the 2022 Global Innovation Index^{1,1} data, the GCC countries are in the middle of the overall world ranking list, except for the UAE, which ranks 31st between the Czech Republic and Portugal (see Table 1).

Table 1. Global Innovation Index for 2012 and 2022.

Country	World Ranking		Regional Ranking (Middle East and North Africa)	
	2012	2022	2012	2022
UAE	37	31	4	3
Saudi Arabia	48	51	7	5
Bahrain	41	72	5	9
Kuwait	55	62	8	7

¹ The Global Innovation Index reflects aggregate innovation indicators, the state of the ecosystem, and scientific base for the creation of new technologies in 132 countries of the world. This index makes it is possible to assess the level of development of countries both in terms of their world ranking and the indicators under study.

Oman	47	79	6	13
Qatar	33	52	3	6

Source: Compiled according to the Global innovation Index.²

As of 2022, GCC countries are ranked from 31st to 79th in the world ranking, but in 2012 their position was better. As can be seen from the presented data, the only GCC country that has improved its position in the rankings over the last 10 years is the UAE. The reasons for the deterioration of positions in the world ranking of most countries are both external (oil crisis in 2020, COVID 19 epidemic) and internal (related to the deterioration of some indicators (see Table 2)). Only the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait managed to improve their position in the regional ranking over the 10-year period of the study.

Table 2. Global Innovation Index World Ranking by Category – Resources and Environment for Innovation Development. (2012 and 2022).

Country	Institutions		Human Capital and Research		Infrastructure		Market Sophistication		Business Sophistication	
	2012	2022	2012	2022	2012	2022	2012	2022	2012	2022
UAE	40	6	23	17	17	7	55	23	16	26
Saudi Arabia	53	50	40	30	45	53	36	22	36	53
Bahrain	48	27	18	78	37	32	40	75	40	93
Kuwait	60	86	61	55	65	36	51	73	95	101
Oman	33	57	36	40	51	56	100	71	47	97
Qatar	35	25	14	56	27	29	84	47	8	73

Source: Compiled according to the Global Innovation Index.²

Most countries except Oman and Kuwait improved their positions on the Institutions indicator. The UAE has achieved the most success with respect to Institutional Development, Human Capital and Research Infrastructure, and Market Sophistication. Next in line is Saudi Arabia, which had success in Institutional Development, Human Capital and Research, and Market Sophistication. Bahrain was able to advance in the rankings for Institutions and Infrastructure, and Kuwait for Human Capital and Research, and Infrastructure.

Qatar was able to make progress and improve its ranking in Institutions and Market Development, while Oman failed to improve its position in any of the indicators.

Table 3. World ranking of the Global Innovation Index by Category and Innovation Dynamics. (2012 and 2022).

Country	Knowledge and Technology Outputs		Creative Outputs	
	2012	2022	2012	2022
UAE	110	59	20	45
Saudi Arabia	130	65	29	66
Bahrain	65	73	62	98
Kuwait	53	68	66	60
Oman	61	94	77	80
Qatar	77	69	19	59

Source: Compiled according to the Global innovation Index.²

In terms of Knowledge and Technology Outputs, the UAE and Saudi Arabia have made the most progress over the 10-year period, followed by Qatar, which have created educational institutions, supported research institutes, and increased funding for projects aimed at developing human capital.

The positions of Bahrain and Kuwait indicate a slight decline due to a deterioration in their rankings in the innovation categories. Oman failed to make a shift in any of the indicators.

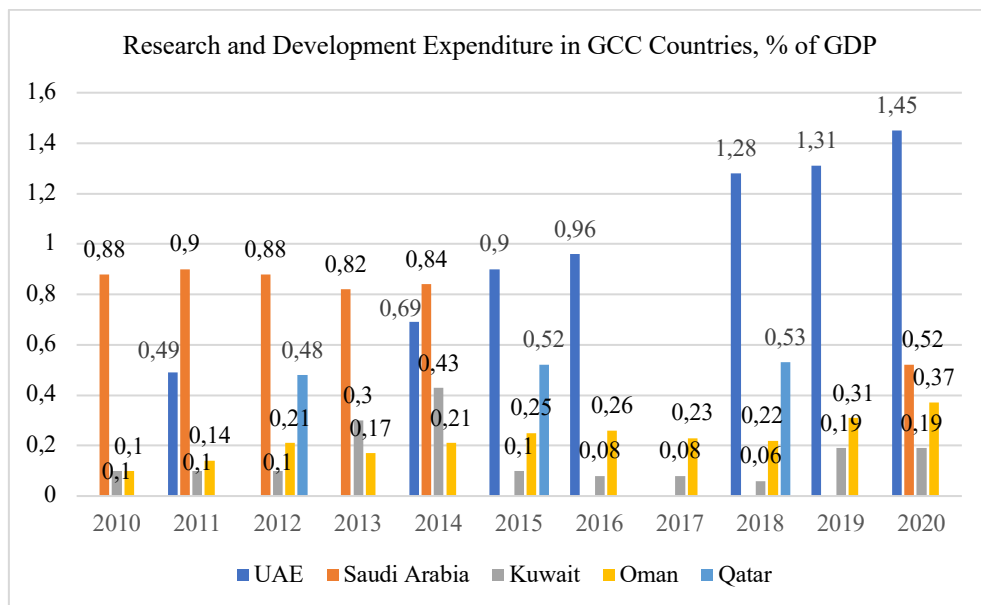
When analyzing the reasons for the successes and failures of the countries from this study in the development of innovation, which are reflected in the Global Innovation Index, let us consider several indicators determining their respective positions in the rankings.

According to UNESCO and the World Bank, Arab countries account for about 6% of global GDP, while government spending on R&D averages less than 1% of R&D expenditure.

According to the above chart, the UAE remains a leader in innovation, given the fact that its R&D spending has shown steady growth from 0.49% of GDP in 2011 to 1.45% in 2020 (see graphic insert in Figure 1).

In general, a conclusion can be drawn that only the UAE demonstrates positive growth in R&D funding, while the other countries in the scope of this study have unstable or one-level dynamics. Since this indicator is the basis for the compilation of many categories of the Global Innovation Index, we can state why the UAE managed to make such a leap in the world ranking.

Figure 1. Research and Development Expenditure in GCC Countries, % of GDP.



Source: Compiled from data² of The World Bank.³

The dynamics of R&D expenditures in Saudi Arabia has been unstable over the period under study, with a downward trend in the indicator since 2014.

The level of R&D expenditures in Qatar remained virtually unchanged over the period under analysis. R&D spending in Kuwait remained unchanged throughout 2010, 2011, and 2012, increasing only in 2013 and in 2014, when it reached a peak, after which it began a downward trend. Only in 2019 does growth reemerge and stabilize.

Oman has demonstrated a relatively stable trend line since 2012, with alternating short phases of growth and decline. Since 2018, however, there has been a steady upward trend.

Gulf governments are investing heavily in upgrading their infrastructure and equipping their institutions with state-of-the-art technology. For example, they allocate a significant portion of their budgets to building laboratories and infrastructure for universities, constructing new schools, as well as renovating existing ones. However, at present, these countries do not allocate

² **Note:** There is little information on science, technology and innovation funding, especially R&D expenditure, in the countries studied. The available data are fragmented, partly because there is no centralized or aggregated budget allocated to science, technology, and innovation.

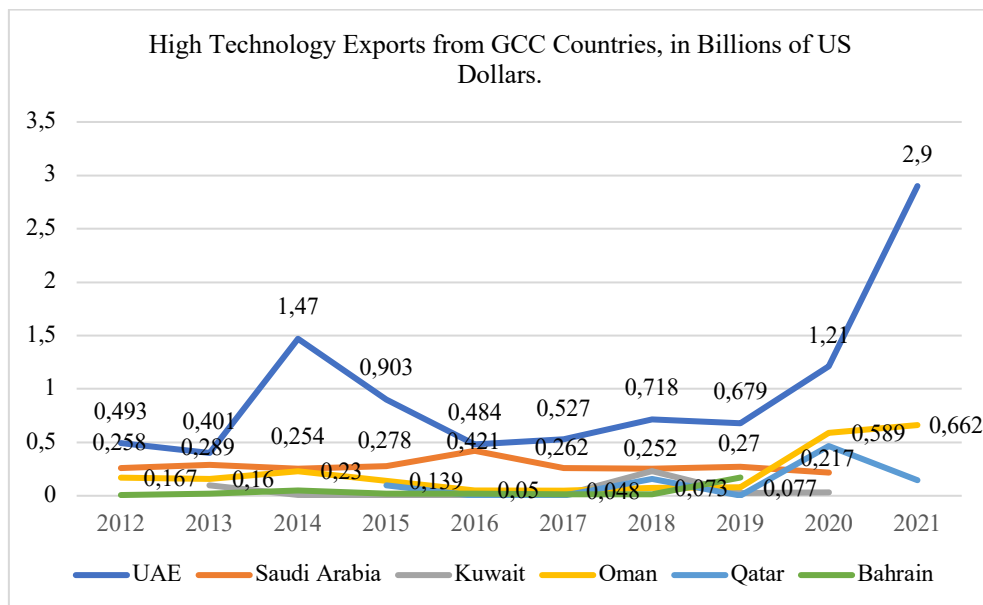
sufficient funds for high quality research. The average value of the indicator is 0.6% of GDP, compared to 2.5% in the OECD, for example.

Consequently, GCC countries are missing an important opportunity for growth. Numerous academic studies have confirmed that there is indeed a quantitative impact of R&D on GDP. Although the results vary slightly, they all claim that an increase in R&D spending significantly increases a country's GDP. According to the studies, an additional one percent spent on R&D can lead to a 0.6-2% increase in growth over time.⁴

It is fair to say that the time required to achieve commercial returns can be years or even decades, healthcare being a good example. Therefore, countries in the region need to improve the quality of their research and development to facilitate the transition to more diversified and sustainable economies. High-quality research will help address social problems more effectively and reduce import dependence.

A natural result of a country's innovation development activity is the ability of its high-tech companies to create, accumulate, and subsequently export their final innovative and high-tech product. Let us look at what happened to high-tech exports in the GCC countries over the period 2015-2021.

Figure 2. High Technology Exports from GCC Countries, in Billions of US Dollars.



Source: Compiled according to The World Bank.⁵

As graph above illustrates, there is a clear leader among GCC countries. Only the UAE has managed to advance in this indicator over the period 2015-2021, where there is a potential for continued growth in the values of this indicator, which the clear upward trend would seem to imply. In general, the UAE's policy of creating innovative, entrepreneurial, scientific and industrial clusters with the active involvement of specialists from different countries, most often from developed countries, not only in terms of economic development but also in terms of technology, has made it possible to make a breakthrough in this direction and leave the other countries of the GCC behind.

Due to the fact that they were the first to implement such a policy and offer the best conditions, they have been able to achieve gradual success. The remainder of the countries in the region are gradually coming around to this and will also be able to increase their innovation, investment, and scientific attractiveness as time goes on.

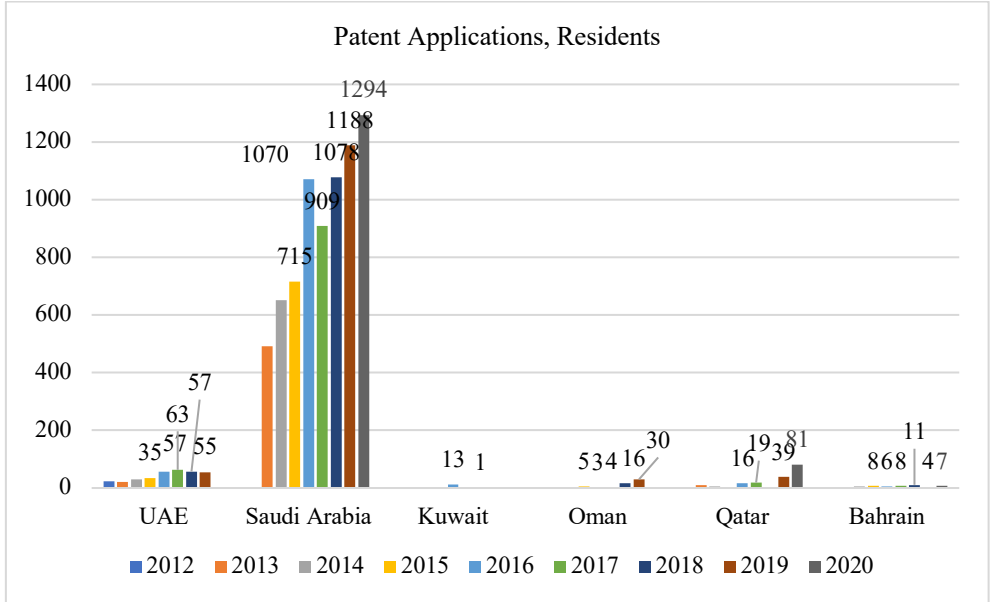
Another noteworthy indicator demonstrating the differences between countries in their technical science and research development is the number of resident patent applications they produce. Until January 2021, patent policy and administration were handled by the GCC Patent Office based in Riyadh.³ The way it worked was that the office received and processed patent applications in the GCC and once a patent was granted through the office, it was valid in all six member countries. Applications are now processed in national patent offices.

Saudi Arabia is the absolute leader in this area, exceeding the number of patent applications by thousands of times compared to other countries. For the most part, in association countries, patent applications are being filed in the fields of petrochemicals, natural resource extraction, and energy. In Saudi Arabia, the state-owned company Saudi Aramco, along with major research centers, plays a major role in the development and patenting of new energy-related technologies.

What's more, in 2022 Saudi Arabian authorities established a national system – the National Intellectual Property Strategy System (NIPST), which rests on four pillars: IP creation (intellectual property); IP administration; IP commercialization; and, IP protection.

³ **Note:** It is likely that the lack of data in the area of patents after 2020 is precisely because the patent agency stopped accepting new applications as of January 2021.

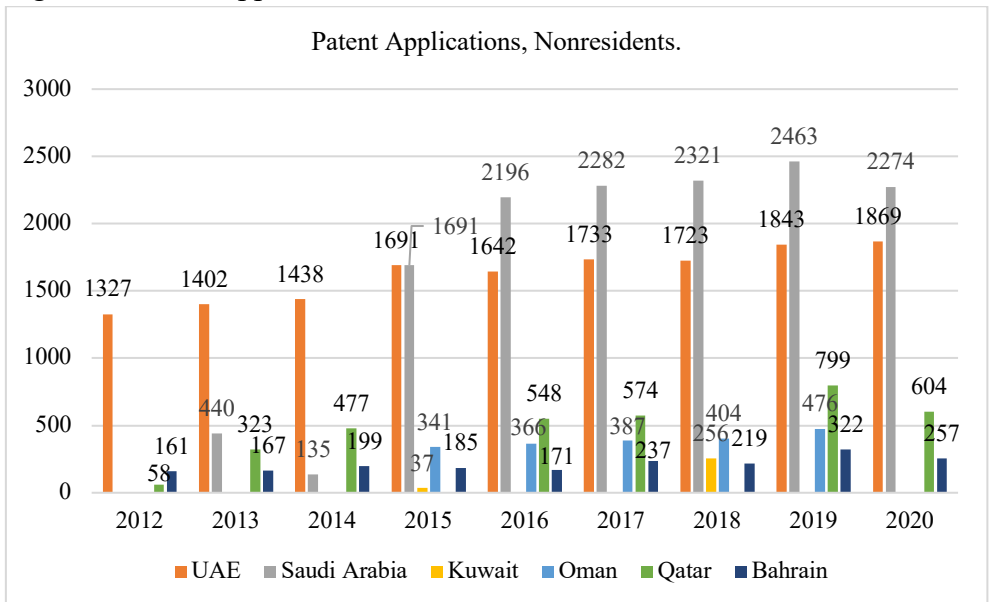
Figure 3. Patent Applications, Residents



Source: Compiled according to The World Bank.⁶

The situation is quite different in the number of patent applications of non-residents.

Figure 4. Patent Applications, Nonresidents.



Source: Compiled according to The World Bank.⁷

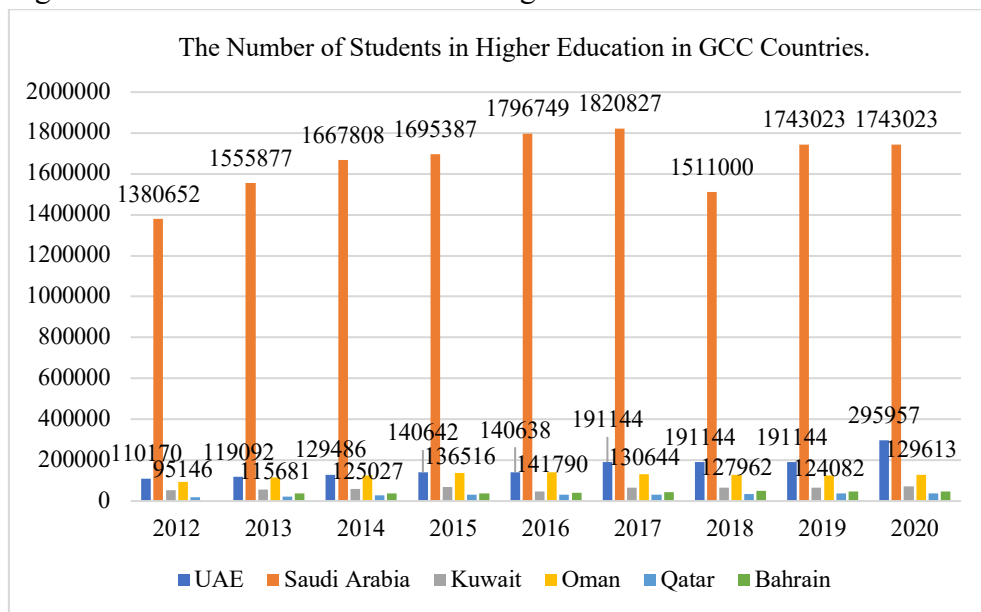
Saudi Arabia also remains the leader in this area, with a slight edge over the UAE. The remainder of the countries under review are at roughly the same level, as is the case with resident patent applications.

This enormous difference in values between residents and non-residents is not without reason. The policy of attracting foreign researchers to scientific centers in the region leads not only to an increase in the quality of education but also to the creation of innovative technologies and inventions in these countries, which then become part of patent applications in the agencies of the countries in the region.

The biggest challenges for GCC countries lie in their transition from traditional oil-based economies to a knowledge-based ones. Diversification of income streams, modernization of production, and restructuring of different sectors of the economy are significant challenges. Successfully tackling them requires that national educational and scientific personnel be well-trained, and that an effective system for attracting foreign highly skilled labor be created.

Let us analyze what is happening with scientific development and higher education in the countries under study.

Figure 5. The Number of Students in Higher Education in GCC Countries.



Source: Compiled from data of the GCC Statistical Agency (GCC-STAT).⁸

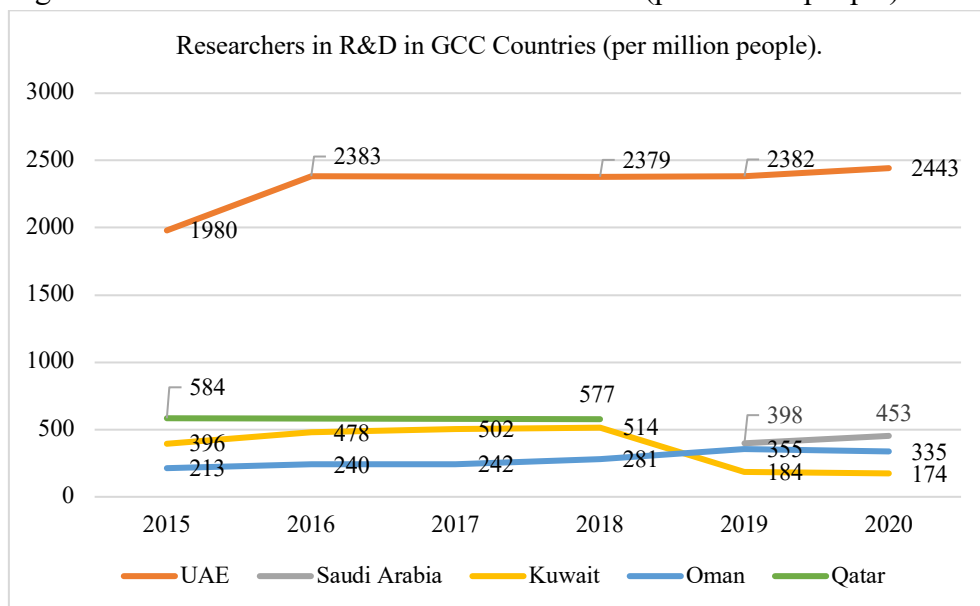
The data from the chart above demonstrate that there are striking differences in terms of university student enrollment in GCC countries. The absolute leader in this area is Saudi Arabia, which in absolute terms is dozens of times ahead of other countries in the region (note: the population of the KSA is also many times larger than other GCC countries).

The UAE also shows stable dynamics, transitioning to a trajectory of growth beginning in 2020.

Unexpectedly, Oman rounds out the top three with values averaging at the same level over the indicated period. With a population of 5.6 million, Oman shows university student enrollment approaching UAE’s numbers by 2020, a country which is almost twice as populous (9.9 million) as Oman.

A surprising trend is found in the number of R&D researchers.

Figure 6. Researchers in R&D in GCC Countries (per million people).



Source: Compiled according to The World Bank.⁹

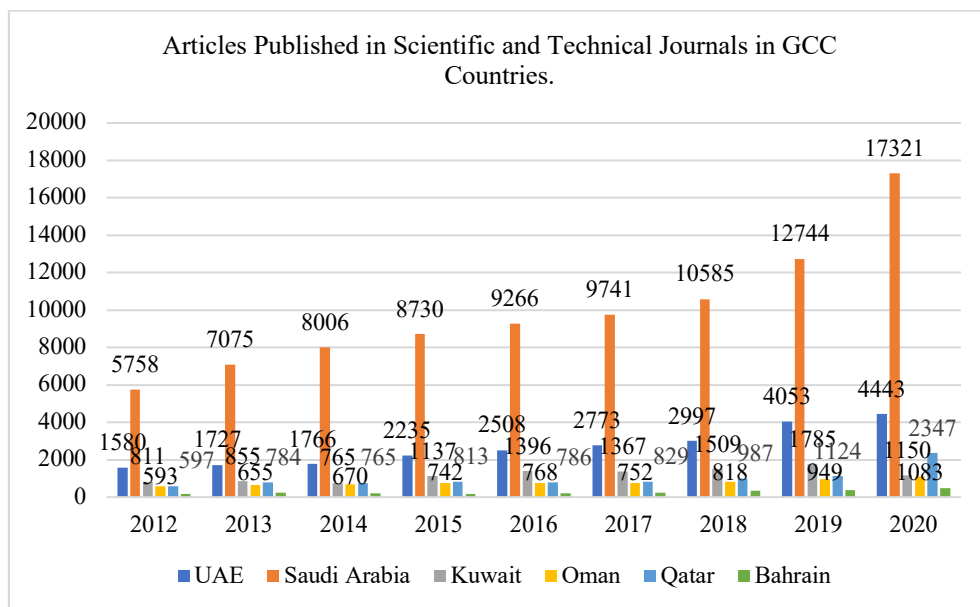
In this category, with an overwhelming advantage and the prospect for further growth, we again find UAE in the lead, followed by Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Due to fragmented data, it is difficult to assess whether Qatar and Saudi Arabia’s efforts are successful or not, but if we compare this indicator with R&D expenditures, there should be a slight increase in the numbers of research studies.

The UAE leads in this indicator not only because of its approach and tools for building an innovation economy model, but also because its expenditures are multiples higher compared to other countries.

It is because of their support for science, the number of researchers they have in technical fields, their recruitment of foreign specialists both for research projects and to teach at universities, and, in the case of Saudi Arabia, the attraction of human capital to the research departments of their largest state-owned oil company, these countries have been able to move up in the world rankings for knowledge and technology development. Their achievements in human capital and research should also be noted.

This argument is also supported by data on publication rates in science and technology.

Figure 7. Articles Published in Scientific and Technical Journals in GCC Countries.



Source: Compiled according to The World Bank.¹⁰

The data presented in the above diagram show that Saudi Arabia is the absolute leader, followed by the UAE and Qatar, countries that demonstrate a consistently positive growth trajectory. This situation illustrated in this graphic underscores how these countries attach special attention scientific endeavors. The remainder of the countries show unstable dynamics, usually small phases of growth followed by a decline, and vice versa.

According to PricewaterhouseCoopers estimates, the number of articles co-authored by GCC countries with other countries in the world is 68% of the total number of articles. Collaboration between universities in the region and industry in research and development is still very limited.¹¹

The current legal framework for intellectual property in most GCC countries does not sufficiently support the commercialization of research. Governments lack clearly regulated national technology research programs and the appropriate legal framework to support them. Universities, on the other hand, need to improve their research bases in order to continue their development. Too many of them still have outdated and overly-bureaucratic recruitment and procurement policies designed for organizations with completely different business objectives.

As can be seen from the graphic above, the UAE and Saudi Arabia are the leaders among GCC countries in science and innovation development. In fact, almost all indicators of these countries have future growth potential. Phases of stability for these countries were most often replaced by phases of growth, which, coupled with the competent use of public management tools, financial planning, and successful attraction of “minds” allowed them to achieve progress and improve their Global Innovation Index rating, which the rest of the GCC countries have failed to do.

However, in order to further elaborate on the reasons for this situation illustrated in the charts above, it is necessary to take a closer look at the projects that are being implemented in each particular country. Therefore, a country-by-country analysis can provide more clarity to the overall picture of the situation.

As the reader can guess, **the UAE** has significant financial resources, providing them the ability to maneuver capital more freely and increase sovereign funds through their investment of oil revenues. The country has established several funds to finance innovative projects and, accordingly, possesses all the required financial infrastructure needed to tackle their stated mission. In order to increase the efficiency of capital investment, UAE authorities have resorted to a proven strategy of entering public-private partnerships and extending it to the entire territory of the state. This allows the country, as part of its national growth strategy, to develop and improve mechanisms that serve the needs of innovative construction. A clear example of this are the projects authorities are implementing on the Saadiyat artificial island, as well as other innovation clusters.

Such initiatives were most actively disseminated through research channels of centers in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, mostly with the active support of the Innovation Center at the University of Science and Technology. Khalifas (KUSTAR) and the Science and Innovation Park at the UAE University.

Following in the footsteps of these centers, a whole group of innovation incubators and accelerators have been further established throughout the Emirates. As an example, the Dubai Future Accelerators program aims to attract and support entrepreneurs and venture capital firms from around the world and help them connect with local sponsors, mainly government agencies in various industrial sectors, to develop innovative technologies.

Some of the innovation incubator and accelerator programs launched in the country are available to international entrepreneurs and companies, which are given the opportunity to network and work with local organizations on projects of mutual interest. The results of this collaboration can then be useful for business and offered to entrepreneurs for testing and then implemented for use in manufacturing or research in the UAE.

In addition to those initiated by the state, private innovation incubators and accelerators have become quite widespread in the UAE. These are generally open to foreign entrepreneurs and can also be a good fit for business support and networking in the innovation and information community. In addition, there are a number of corporate incubators that provide the physical space and infrastructure needed to set up a company in the UAE Free Zone with 100% ownership. Among these are the Dubai Science Park, Dubai Techno Park, Dubai Silicon Oasis, D3, Masdar City, Dubai Internet City, Dubai Biotechnology & Research Park (DuBiotech), among others.

Another notable example is the Dubai Emirate SME Agency (DubaiSME), which has developed innovation incubation programs through its Hamdan Innovation Incubator unit to support entrepreneurs in researching, protecting, and commercializing their high-tech inventions.

The In5 Innovation Center was established in order to stimulate entrepreneurship and innovation in the country. It is located in Dubai Internet City and focuses on five areas: supporting SMEs; preparing the environment for innovation; creating ecosystems for information technology; and, promoting the Emirate of Dubai as an attractive platform for high-tech start-ups.¹²

In Abu Dhabi, the Takamul program, launched by the emirate's Department of Economic Development, supports and finances local inventors,

universities, and companies, provides them with protection, and ensures commercialization of their innovations. In general, it should be noted that the state strictly monitors compliance with legislation in the field of intellectual property, patent law, and copyright protection.

The UAE also position itself as a regional leader in space activities, which is evidenced by their contribution to the development of technologies and research requiring large investments. According to its plans, UAE's leadership intends to put into operation the Gulf Space Center project, which will be located in Abu Dhabi, and roll out a satellite program worth \$800 million. The UAE is interested in expanding its participation in space research and is promoting the idea of establishing a Pan-Arab Space Agency for satellites, which would accumulate even greater financial and technical capabilities to execute this ultramodern mission, much to the benefit of science and the economy.

Back in 2016, authorities of **Saudi Arabia** developed and adopted a very ambitious strategy for the country's development, Vision 2030,¹³ which emphasizes high technology and investment in science and education.

The establishment of the first secular institution of higher education, King Saud University, marked the formation of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's (KSA) research sector. In 1963, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals was founded to focus on hydrocarbon research and education. In 2002, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Science Park was established at the University to act as an intermediary between business and scientific institutions.

The Research Institute is engaged in adapting imported technologies to the peculiarities of the KSA economy, increasing the knowledge of national experts and local industrial companies.

King Faisal University, a major scientific and educational center, was founded in 1975 bringing together four institutes – Agriculture and Food Industry, Veterinary and Livestock, Architecture and Planning, Medicine and Medical Research. Now the university has 17 institutes and 24 national research centers (NRS).

In 2009, the private research institute King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), which incorporates 10 NRSs, was launched. Among the projects receiving funding, the technology startup employing FalconViz technology deserves mention, which focuses on 3D airborne scanning and modeling systems. It is widely used for multi-rotor copters and

fixed-wing unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). In addition, during the past year, KAUST has provided huge funding to Saudi Arabia-based startup NOMADD Desert Solar Solutions to support innovation in solar technology. Patent protection has been sought for its NOMADD invention (NO-water Mechanical Automated Dusting Device), which relates to technology for cleaning dust off the surface of solar panels without using water, which can damage the panels.

Saudi Arabia is also working to develop a public-private partnership format, with a particular focus on innovative development. Prominent examples of public-private partnerships include the Saudi Arabian Advanced Research Alliance (SAARI), which works in collaboration with KAUST to promote innovation.

KSA leadership is investing heavily in major infrastructure projects related to urban construction. One of the largest is the “scientific and economic city” in Medina, created to boost tourism, develop high technologies, and attract foreign investors. The first such project in the country was implemented in Rabigh on the west coast, called “King Abdullah Economic City”.

One of the newest projects of this type is the creation of the city of Neom – the “city of the future”. Its creation was announced in 2017 and is expected to become a global center for innovation and commerce in the future.

The most innovative company, however, is the Saudi Aramco Oil Corporation, which has its own innovation centers. These centers play an important role in the company’s digital transformation by developing and using technologies of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) and supporting innovators, researchers, and entrepreneurs in the digital economy. Saudi Aramco’s largest innovation centers are Lab7, Spark Innovation Center, 4IR, Resource Exploration and Production Innovation Center, and Supply Chain Management Center.

Lab7 is an innovation center that was set up with the intention of developing the latest digital and industrial products as well as to introduce to international markets breakthrough ideas in sustainable development and manufacturing, as well as digital, industrial and social innovation.

The Spark Innovation Center remains a strong ecosystem for digital manufacturing and continues to attract investors and technology companies to drive manufacturing growth in the country’s energy sector. The center gives participants access to high technology, including robotics, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and the Internet of Things.

The Exploration and Production Innovation Center was formed to develop methods for extracting oil utilizing digital technologies. Owing to these methods, the company's geologists can optimize oil well development operation plans, regulate production, reduce emissions, and cut costs.

The Supply Chain Management Center is designed to optimize and automate logistics processes using, among other things, artificial intelligence technologies to display deliveries in real time, as well as optimize logistics components themselves.

Saudi Arabia is one of the most advanced Arab states in space research. The Kingdom has a developed rocket and space complex, but its own technological base is not sufficiently developed due to a lack of qualified personnel. Hence, authorities continue seeking to attract foreign specialists to carry out scientific and space activities. KSA does not have a national space exploration program in the form of an official document, but it is able to meet its own communications needs through satellites launched into orbit and finance the development of basic research and applied development in the space sphere.

In **Qatar**, the strategy for modernizing the economic system is outlined in the Qatar National Vision 2030, which focuses on building a “knowledge economy”.

The Qatar Foundation (QF), the largest public-private foundation for education, science, and community development, has been operating in Qatar since 1995.¹⁴ The Foundation's goal is to “support various enterprises, from hydrocarbon extraction to the knowledge economy as such, all while unlocking human potential.” The foundation concentrates on three areas of activity – education, science, and community development research – and includes a number of research organizations. Among these are: the Qatar National Science Foundation (QNRF), with financial assets of \$1.4 billion; the Qatar Science and Technology Park (QSTP); the Qatar Biomedical Research Institute (QBRI); the national research institute at Hamad bin Khalifa University; the Qatar Environment and Energy Research Institute (QEERI); and, the Qatar Computational Research and Development Center (QCRDC).

QF also oversees the Qatar Science and Technology Park (QSTP) and the \$7.9 billion QF Sidra flagship medical and research center, which is set to become a major center for research in the healthcare sector. Qatar University and Hamad bin Khalifa University conduct university-level research and are

major contributors to modernizing the country and upgrading its economic potential in order to become a knowledge-based economy.

In addition, the Qatar Foundation is the primary body responsible for funding the construction of a network of research and development centers throughout the country and performs this function by directly funding research through its national research fund.

Along with this, the government assists in the creation of technology ventures through the QSTB incubator, whose funds support the launch, creation, and growth of promising startups, subsidiaries, and SMEs by offering mentoring, training, business assistance, financing, and subsidized office space. For example, it uses its own funds to offer two-year subsidized rent programs to SMEs to reduce their overhead costs, expedite business liquidation procedures in case of business closure, and lower minimum capital requirements to facilitate business registration.

Qatar places special emphasis on improving the technological level of agriculture. Despite its dry climate, Qatar ranks first in the GCC in the 2021 Global Food Security Index (GFSI). The agricultural sector of Qatar's economy has expanded in recent years due to increased demand for food as a result of rapid population growth and government-supported initiatives to improve food security in the country. This has been facilitated by the introduction of a public-private partnership law, the establishment of single marketing channels for agricultural products, and government financial support for producers.

The country employs the widespread introduction and use of modern technologies for land cultivation and irrigation, such as automated irrigation systems, hydro- and aquaponics, which improve the quality of horticultural crops.

Qatar has only recently become active in the development of space technology, an area that has received increasing attention in recent years as evidenced by the establishment of the Qatar Aeronautics and Space Agency (QASA). In 2010, the Qatari satellite company Es'hailSat was founded, which is the main owner and operator of satellites. The company provides services to private consumers, legal entities and government agencies. Currently, satellite data in Qatar is used for communications, disaster management, and healthcare (telemedicine).

Bahrain. Like other GCC states, Bahrain has its own development program, which was established in 2008. The Bahrain Economic Vision 2030¹⁵

focuses on implementing the three fundamental principles of development – sustainability, equity, and competitiveness.

Most of the country's product and economic growth was attained with the help of a strong public sector, which in turn relies heavily on the extraction and export of energy resources. However, this model, due to the warming climate and the world's pivot to green development technologies, is no longer considered acceptable at the global level. In view of this fact, the Kingdom has decided to focus on the development of the private sector in its economy, which, according to government plans, will be able to compete with the extractive sector in the long term and effectively increase the growth rate of the economy, while also contributing to its diversification by minimizing its dependence on external markets.

According to the 2030 Agenda, public finance should adhere to the principle of sustainability and support a new system of public-private economic interaction. Development resources, which have been accumulated both in the form of gold and foreign exchange reserves, as well as assets in the country's sovereign investment fund, are to be invested in the development of human capital, i.e., in education and vocational training, with a special focus on applied sciences.

Bahrain's authorities are striving to improve the competitiveness of their country in the global economy and, therefore, attached special attention toward increasing labor productivity, which is planned to be boosted by developing a climate for innovation, especially in high value-added industries, attracting foreign specialists, who will both offer professional training of the King's subjects and themselves work in the national economy, as well as support economic entities and entrepreneurship.

One of the key areas within Vision 2030 is the creation of large elements of a digital economy. This point is reflected in the high level of investment in financial technology and the establishment of the Bahrain FinTech Bay, the region's largest fin-tech center, which provides laboratories, business accelerators, and educational services for research.

There are currently more than 34 accelerators, incubators, and co-working spaces in the Kingdom, all of which serve to invigorate innovation and the growth of new businesses. The Bahrain Business Incubator Center was established in 2003 by the Development Bank of Bahrain and was the first diversified incubator in the region. The Development Bank also established Riyadat to promote women entrepreneurs and bridge the gender gap.

The Ministry of Industry and Commerce also offers assistance in establishing incubators and accelerators by issuing the appropriate licenses, creating an enabling environment, and drafting legislation to regulate their activities.

The country's march towards digitalization also includes a national portal for government e-services, enabling the public to conduct over 500 electronic transactions with government services.

One of the main ways to support entrepreneurship and innovation in Vision 2030 is through the Tamkeen Labor Fund, which was established in 2006 with a total capital of approximately \$5.3 billion for supporting and developing the private sector of the economy.¹⁶ The main objectives of Tamkeen are to distribute funds for the promotion, creation, and development of enterprises, to support the initiators of labor productivity growth and increase the number of enterprises and, in general, to strengthen the position of the private sector in the economy. Tamkeen also gives young people the opportunity to create their own technology businesses through a business project competition, with Tamkeen assuming all the costs associated with its organization.

By simplifying registration procedures and lowering requirements, Bahrain's authorities are gradually reducing administrative barriers to the creation of technological businesses. The introduction of virtual registration by the Ministry of Industry and Trade allows entrepreneurs to register a company even without the physical presence of an office. However, this type of registration is only available for 39 types of business activities, mostly technological and creative, such as computer programming, design, photography, software development, sound recording, among others.

Research in Bahrain's space sector is moving in line with the country's general development of science and technology. Space activities are reduced to the operation of an organization such as A9C Capital, founded in 2008, which focuses on investing in high-tech research.

Since **Kuwait's** discovery of oil in 1938, economic and social well-being has become increasingly dependent on the production and export of this commodity. Strong attachment to a single export commodity, which accounts for the majority of government revenues, has over time ceased to be a reliable means of economic stability, not only because of exposure to price shocks but also due to political fluctuations in market conditions. For this reason, in 1956, the country established a sovereign investment fund to

which 10% of the country's oil revenues are allocated. Utilizing the fund's assets, Kuwait's authorities are able to make greater use of instruments for long-term planning and financing of economic programs and reforms.

However, even with the fund's substantial assets, the government has been very frugal in spending on R&D, which various sources estimate the share of in Kuwait's GDP to be between 0.1 and 0.5 percent, i.e., between 34 million and 170 million Kuwaiti dinars (\$112 million to \$560 million).

Stemming from the country's developed plan for economic diversification, authorities began allocating funds to the development of startup companies and the implementation of measures to support SMEs, especially in science-intensive and technological industries. However, if we take a closer look at the economic impact of these operations, then the share of SME contribution to the country's GDP immediately stands out as being nearly insignificant. This indicator for Kuwait in 2021 stood at the level of 3%, while in developed high-income countries it can reach an average of 50%.¹⁷

The Kuwait Foundation for the Promotion and Advancement of Science (KFAS), founded in 1976, is responsible for funding scientific research in the country. Its mission to find solutions for national problems began with the commitment of private sector joint-stock companies to fund research by contributing a set percentage of their annual profits – at the moment this figure is equal to one percent.

The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) is responsible for innovation development, i.e. in the field of scientific and technological research.¹⁸ The Institute's other valuable functions are focused on the following objectives:¹⁹ stimulating demand for innovation by private and public enterprises of various types, as well as individuals; training scientific and technological personnel; and, encouraging the private sector to become more active in attracting technical and innovative resources to modernize economic assets and production work.

For Kuwait, as an oil-exporting state, the Petroleum Research and Studies Center (PRSC) is of particular importance. The PRSC conducts research in the field of oil production and refining, polymers, and petrochemicals, as well as in materials science, healthcare, and ecology.

Kuwait is taking steps to organize a national space industry. Today, the country has a project (The Kuwait Space Rocket) to build and launch the first suborbital liquid-propellant dual-fuel rocket, the design of which began

in 2018, and in 2019-20 passed the assembly and testing phase. However, the first launch ended in failure.

Oman has also adopted an economic development strategy called Oman Vision 2040, which envisages building a developed, sustainable, and diversified national economy based on modern technology, knowledge, and innovation. The peculiarity of the program lies in its emphasis on the development of public-private partnership, which is expected to create conditions for modernization of the education system, offer support to scientific research and innovation, develop healthcare and medical services, as well as strengthen the sultanate's ties in the field of international cooperation.

As part of Oman's program, the Muscat Innovation Park was established. This project is, in fact, one of the most serious endeavors of the Research Council and is designed to promote scientific research and attract investment in national technological developments.

This complex is an innovation incubator tasked with accumulating funds to provide research and boost technology startups, which in turn are expected to increase the motivation of individuals from the local community to pursue education and participate in research and development of technological products.

As part of Oman's funding program Tawazun's Project, the Ministry of Finance signed a contract with Ericsson in November 2019 to build a Center of Excellence in telecommunications technology as part of the state's innovation policy.

To attract expertise and technology from other countries, the state-owned investment vehicle IDO Investment²⁰ is investing in innovative and technology startups established around the world that are still in their growth stage with the aim of attracting their operations to Oman's jurisdiction.

The company's flagship projects today are the Oman Startup Hub, an ecosystem where startup companies can collaborate and share experiences, and Aphcarios, a company that designs, develops, and mass produces innovative new electromechanical projects.

Other major projects in operation since 1985 are Oasis of Knowledge and Sultan Qaboos University and its Cyber Security Innovation Center, the first of its kind in the Arab Gulf.

* * *

It is obvious that the Arab member states of the GCC are not sitting idly on the sidelines of global progress and are instead striving to reach higher growth trajectories. Innovative development promises them not only a sustainable upward movement but also helps them to move away from their dependence on oil and gas resources, which once played the primary role in the economic rise of the Arabian monarchies, the same resources that are now perceived as an evil capable of destroying the environment and undermining the thermal regime of the planet.

The foundation for the creation and development of innovation in GCC countries remains state support and, to a greater extent, state financing of innovation projects and their implementation using state platforms, innovation centers and enterprises, and state universities created with the application of research strategies.

GCC countries, under the influence of internal and external factors, have begun to systematize their development by creating programs of economic, scientific, and social growth that are focused on a minimum 10-year horizon, allowing them to consistently achieve, within the framework of their plans and by methodical actions, the goals declared by the UN as the main priority of the new century.

But Arabian monarchies cannot uniformly manage economic growth to the same extent and achieve the same success in today's innovation and information environment, which in the 21st Century is becoming the key to success and prosperity for the future. This is due to the fact that these countries are markedly differentiated in terms of their natural and energy resource endowments. This in turn affects their financial capacity to manage processes that determine their abilities to fight off not only to natural disasters but also to economic crises that can negatively affect their future growth.

In general, as a group, these small states of the Arab world are quite successful in creating innovative economies. However, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait demonstrate greater efficiency than their peers, which is confirmed by innovative development indicators tracked by international organizations. This is on the one hand. While on the other, progress in this area is currently lagging behind that of industrialized countries, which are much more successful in implementing major innovation projects, as well as creating developments that could allow them to maneuver more confidently

in areas that in the Arab East are still at a rather low levels of technological development. After all, the region is still playing catch-up in terms of development and is still inclined only to reproduce the achievements of the West to a greater or lesser extent, and not produce the entire specter of “foreign” innovation and then embody them in metal.

Having serious financial resources, GCC countries need to increase funding for both scientific organizations, innovation centers, the various programs to support innovative entrepreneurship, and investments in human capital.

In light of this, public-private partnerships are necessary for the creation and development of innovations, and given the rich experience of developed countries and observing the proper level of adaptation, these partnerships can create quite favorable conditions in the long term for the countries of this study, allowing them to transform into innovation economies.

Notes

1. Global Innovation Index 2022. Report: What is the Future of innovation-driven growth. – URL: <https://www.globalinnovationindex.org/gii-2022-report>
2. WIPO. Global Innovation Index 2022. What is the future of innovation-driven growth? - URL: https://www.wipo.int/global_innovation_index/en/2022/index.html
3. The World Bank. Databank. Research and development expenditure (% of GDP) - Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/GB.XPD.RSDV.GD.ZS?locations=SA-KW-AE-OM-QA-BH>
4. *Erdal Gumus* and *Ferdi Celikay*. “R&D Expenditure and Economic Growth: New Empirical Evidence”. *Margin—The Journal of Applied Economic Research* 9:3 (2015): pp. 205–217
5. The World Bank. Databank. High-technology exports (current US\$) - Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/TX.VAL.TECH.CD?end=2021&locations=QA-SA-AE-KW-OM-BH&start=2012>
6. The World Bank. Databank. Patent applications, residents - Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IP.PAT.RESD?locations=QA-SA-AE-KW-OM-BH>
7. The World Bank. Databank. Patent applications, nonresidents - Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain. URL:

- <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IP.PAT.NRES?locations=QA-SA-AE-KW-OM-BH>
8. GCC-STAT. Education in GCC countries. URL: <https://dp.marsa.gccstat.org/statistical-domain/education>
 9. The World Bank. Databank. Researchers in R&D (per million people) - Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.SCIE.RD.P6?locations=QA-SA-AE-KW-OM-BH>
 10. The World Bank. Databank. Scientific and technical journal articles. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IP.JRN.ARTC.SC?locations=QA-SA-AE-KW-OM-BH>
 11. PricewaterhouseCoopers. Advancing academic research in the GCC. URL: <https://www.pwc.com/m1/en/publications/advancing-academic-research-in-gcc/advancing-academic-research-in-gcc.pdf>
 12. *Shkvarya L.V., Frolova E.D.* Transformation in socio-economic development of the Gulf Group States // *Economika Regiona*. 2017. Vol. 13. No 2. pp. 570-578.
 13. Saudi Vision 2030. The story of transformation. - URL: <https://www.vision2030.gov.sa>
 14. Qatar Foundation. – URL: <https://www.qf.org.qa>
 15. The Economic Vision 2030 for Bahrain. From regional pioneer to global contender. – URL: <https://evisa.gov.bh/Vision2030Englishlowresolution.pdf>
 16. Tamkeen. Delivering impactful programs and services that catalyze your growth and success. – URL: <https://www.tamkeen.bh/about-us/>
 17. OECD (2021), OECD Reviews of Innovation Policy: Kuwait 2021, OECD Reviews of Innovation Policy, OECD Publishing, Paris. – URL: <https://doi.org/10.1787/49ed2679-en>.
 18. *Shkvarya L., Solovieva Yu.* An Innovative Component of the Economy of the GCC countries and economic integration / In the book: *New Trends, Strategies and Structural Changes in Emerging Markets*. Collection of extended abstracts of the reports of the participants of the VII International Scientific Conference. Edited by V.M. Matyushka, I.V. Lazanyuk. 2018. pp. 134-136.
 19. *Aidrous I.A.* Russian-Arab Cooperation: Future Prospects. Emerging economies: development challenges and innovative approach solutions. – UAE, Dubai. Russian-Emirates Publishing House. 2012. pp. 148-153.
 20. IDO Investments, Innovation Development Oman, is a technology investment firm. – URL: <https://ido.om/who-we-are/>

Chapter 5. Algeria and the Great Powers in the Changing International Setting

Nikolay Surkov

Since gaining its independence, Algeria has aspired to be a leader in North Africa. However, starting from the 1980s, Algeria experienced a gradual decline due to various internal issues. This decline reached its peak during the “black decade” of civil war in the 1990s. After this internal conflict, Algeria once again began to assert itself abroad with ever-increasing ambitions and by asserting a more prominent role in the region. However, Algeria’s foreign policy endeavors were dealt a setback by the second wave of the Arab Spring and the chronic socio-economic and political crises that gave rise to it.

After the ouster of Abdel-Aziz Bouteflika in 2019, the new leadership began transforming Algeria’s foreign policy to counter new threats and address its socio-economic challenges. Algeria increased its activity in its immediate environment, both in the Arab world and Africa. Yet, Algeria’s leadership paid much attention to strengthening the country’s relations with the great powers.

In light of the above, the question arises: does Algeria’s current leadership prefer cooperation with one of the great powers (the United States, the Russian Federation, or China) and what is the significance of each of these three powers from the point of view of Algeria’s national interests. To address this issue, we will assess and compare bilateral relations in security, trade, and economic ties, as well as joint strategic projects.

Algeria’s Foreign Policy Strategy under President Tebboune

Because the PDRA’s creation was the result of a long war of independence, the republic was traditionally focused on such aspects of foreign policy as anti-colonialism, sovereignty, and the non-interference of other countries in its internal affairs. Algeria has consistently supported the Palestinians and the Polisario front in Western Sahara. Algeria has also been an active member of the Non-Aligned Movement. The country’s leadership stresses non-alignment in its foreign policy and highlights its readiness to develop relations with all states except Israel. This attitude is confirmed by the position of the Algerian leadership regarding the special military operation in Ukraine. In April 2022, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune stated in an

interview that Algeria is a prominent member of the Non-Aligned Movement and does not interfere in issues that do not concern it. However, this attitude does not prevent Algeria from maintaining friendly relations with Russia, the United States, and China.¹

However, Algeria's anti-colonial and anti-Israel rhetoric does not pay big political dividends in the modern-day Arab world, nor does it boost the country's regional prestige. This was clearly demonstrated by the Arab League summit in Algier in November 2022, which was ignored by the leaders of the rich Gulf states. Consequently, contemporary Algeria positions itself as a regional power, but the main directions for its foreign policy are Sahel and Africa. This trend is reinforced by the fact that international terrorism and instability in neighboring countries, primarily Libya and Mali, remain Algeria's main threats. The country's new constitution, adopted in 2020, even permits the deployment of Algeria's troops abroad.² However, its long-term security depends primarily on the ability of the authorities to ensure modernization and development, which is impossible without cooperation with the world powers.

In 2021, Algeria's authorities declared their intention to pursue a "dynamic and proactive" foreign policy, which was aimed at several principal goals. At the top of this list is ensuring national security in the face of increased uncertainty on a global and regional scale, while maintaining regional stability and security remains a secondary concern. In this respect, the Western Sahara issue, the Libyan crisis, instability in the Sahel, and the Middle East and the Western Mediterranean were indicated as being the country's primary challenges. Third on the list of priorities for Algeria's authorities is the strengthening ties with Africa and the Arab world, with Algeria positioning itself as a link between them. Algeria reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening ties with Africa and the Arab world in 2021, and along with this greater emphasis on economic cooperation through the Continental Free Trade Area and various infrastructure projects, such as the Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline. Algeria has committed to "redouble its efforts" to maintain stability and security in the Sahel, in particular by providing assistance to Niger, Mali, and Mauritania.³

Algeria's new foreign policy places special emphasis on economic diplomacy, which should play well into to the country's implementation of its development plan.⁴ Unfortunately, Algeria faces dire economic challenges, hence the need to look for external partners, in particular,

consumers of its hydrocarbons and investors willing to fund modernization and diversification of its hydrocarbon-dependent economy. Oil and gas production accounted for about 20 percent of GDP in 2017, while revenues from exports of hydrocarbons provided 95 percent of total export revenues and 60 percent of the state budget. Consequently, the republic turned out to be very dependent on market fluctuations. As a result of both lower global demand and prices for hydrocarbons, Algeria's GDP growth rates between 2015 and 2019 decreased from 3.7 to 0.8 percent. By 2017, the country completely exhausted its Stabilization Fund, which was funded by revenues from energy exports. Thus, Algiers is unable to modernize its economy without the wide participation of foreign partners.

Currently, Algeria faces the need to develop its oil and gas production by increasing the productivity of existing fields and exploring new ones, both on land and the sea shelf, which requires technology and investment from abroad. Another challenge is the need to develop in-country oil refining in order to reduce dependence on fuel imports and increase the share of high value-added products in exports. Finally, the country's growth in energy consumption makes it strategically important to increase energy production, including renewables and nuclear power plants. All this also requires foreign partners.

In terms of economic diversification, Algeria's leadership prioritizes so-called "reindustrialization" through import substitution and the development of manufacturing. This should lead not only to a reduction in costs, but also to the creation of new jobs, and, consequently, the reduction of social tension. Algeria is also striving for food self-sufficiency in order to reduce dependence on imports (imports provide for up to 70 percent of Algeria's consumption of grain), which has become a serious burden for the country's budget. Modernization of agricultural production and its adaptation to changing climatic conditions requires modern technologies and new plants, to name a few. Another strategically important element of development is the digitalization of the Algerian economy and the introduction of high-speed Internet. However, in this domain Algeria lags significantly behind most countries in the world.

The Western Sahara issue occupies a central place in Algeria's foreign policy, as well as the decades-long rivalry with neighboring Morocco. During the Cold war, Morocco was oriented towards the USA, France, and the Western camp in general, while Algeria, led by Ahmed Ben Bella, leaned

more towards the socialist camp. Ideological contradictions overlapped with territorial claims, which in 1963 led to the “Sand Wars”. The conflict ended in a truce, which neither side found very satisfying. A new round of tension began in 1975 after Spain withdrew its forces from Western Sahara. In 1976, Morocco tried to annex this territory, citing historical ties, and Algeria began supplying weapons to the Polisario front. Since then, relations between these two states have resembled a regional cold war with an arms race and periodic outbursts of mutual hostility. Thus, Algier’s relations with other countries very often depend on their position on Western Sahara. Hence, after the de-facto recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara by the United States, France, and Spain, Algeria’s relations with the West cooled, and the republic’s tilt towards China and Russia began to strengthen. In light of its ongoing confrontation with Morocco, Algeria’s leadership attaches great importance to maintaining its military capability. Algeria prides itself on having one of the strongest and most well-equipped armed forces in Africa. However, regular supplies of high-tech weapons are required to maintain qualitative superiority. Algeria’s leadership is fully aware that in the (unlikely) event of a conflict with Morocco, Algeria will not be able to count on military supplies from NATO countries, so it is vital for the country to establish ties with alternative suppliers – Russia and China – as well develop its national defense industry.

Algeria-USA

During the Cold War, Algeria’s relations with the United States developed despite their ideological differences. Originally, in the 1960-1970s, Algeria adhered to a leftist ideology and developed relations primarily with the socialist bloc. However, in the 1980s, after more pragmatic politicians came to power, economic cooperation with the West began to grow and the United States quickly became the leading importer of Algerian oil. After the civil war, and driven by economic necessity, Algeria made considerable efforts to restore cooperation with the West, in particular with the United States.

Development of bilateral ties was facilitated by the fact that in the 2000s, America viewed Algeria as a potentially valuable partner in its global campaign against international terrorism. The republic, which boasts a strategic location and significant military capabilities, provided support in the fight against such groups as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and the ISIS in Sahel. Algiers shared intelligence information with Washington and

participated in various multilateral cooperation formats under the auspices of the United States and NATO, in particular in the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative. This made it possible to establish regular dialogue between the militaries of the two countries. However, during the presidency of Donald Trump, who tended to prioritize relations with Morocco, there was a visible setback in Algeria-US relations.

In December 2020, the United States recognized Moroccan sovereignty over the entire territory of Western Sahara and stated that the only possible solution to the territorial issue was the region's becoming autonomous as part of the Kingdom.⁵ Algeria became outraged by Washington's position on Western Sahara. Algeria's leadership believes that Washington's position allowed Rabat to continue its occupation of Western Sahara despite UN decisions to the contrary. Another major source of concern for Algeria was the signing of a 10-year military cooperation agreement between the United States and Morocco. Algeria also criticized the Arab-Israeli normalization process, initiated and promoted by the US, because it threatened to marginalize the Palestinian issue.

Algeria's arms trade with the United States is practically nonexistent, although, according to US authorities, the republic is interested in acquiring communications and other electronic equipment, light armored vehicles, medical supplies, and even drones.⁶ The sale of drones, however, is unlikely since Washington refused to transfer attack drones to Algerian even at the peak of their counterterrorism cooperation in the 2000s.

The US, for its part, is not fully content with Algeria due to the latter's close military ties with Russia, which are a serious concern for Washington. These ties have in fact been criticized in the US Congress. In September 2022, 27 congressmen appealed to the Biden administration to impose sanctions against Algeria because of its continuing purchases of weapons from Russia.⁷ Another problematic issue is the human rights situation in Algeria. American officials make it a point to monitor violations in Algeria and publish critical reports of their findings.⁸

Algeria's trade and economic ties with the United States have declined significantly since 2009. From 2009 to 2019, American imports from Algeria decreased by 77 percent – from almost \$11 billion a year to \$2.5 billion.⁹ This decline is mainly due to the US reducing its purchases of crude and refined oil. American exports changed slightly – the decline was less than 10 percent. Currently, trade relations are subject to serious fluctuations, which

can be explained by the dynamics of energy exports to the United States. In 2020, trade volume decreased to \$1.82 billion, while in 2021 it again exceeded \$3 billion. According to Algeria's authorities, the United States ranks sixth among the republic's trading partners.¹⁰ In fact, in terms of trade volumes, the United States has moved from the category of major trade partners to the category of secondary partners.

There is no information about major joint projects. However, US companies continue to operate in such a strategically important area as food security, supplying technologies for the production and storage of grain. Other promising areas of cooperation are healthcare, water management, and renewable energy, primarily solar.¹¹ In 2020, the United States became the largest foreign investor in Algeria – it accounted for 28 percent of all foreign investments, which amounted to about \$ 6.2 billion.¹²

As of the beginning of 2023, Algeria's relations with the United States could generally be assessed as ambiguous. Despite a number of problematic issues, cooperation has continued, including strategic dialogue. Algeria-US rapprochement has been facilitated by common military and political threats. From the US perspective, Algeria was a valuable partner in the fight against terrorist groups in the Sahel and its importance increased significantly due to the rolling-back of France's military presence in the region, especially in Mali. Washington was also interested in cooperation with Algeria in resolving the Libyan crisis.¹³

The conflict in Ukraine has increased Algeria's importance as an energy supplier to the West, particularly to Europe. The Republic might become one of the key providers of energy security for the EU, as was demonstrated by a long-term agreement on natural gas sales to Italy that was concluded in 2022. In the long term, this gives hope for a reset in Algeria's relations with France and Spain, if they manage to refrain from new provocative steps, especially in the Western Sahara. Improvement of relations with European countries, in turn, might create an opening for further rapprochement between Algiers and Washington.

Algeria-Russia

The USSR became a key ally for Algeria after that latter gained its independence. The Soviet Union played a big role in the economic reconstruction of the country after the war, especially in industrial development. Additionally, after the departure of French specialists from the

country, Soviet engineering and technical personnel were sent to Algeria. Thus, in the 1970s and 1980s the number of Soviet specialists working in Algeria reached close to 30 thousand people. Soviet financial and technical assistance allowed the newly independent country to build heavy industries, metallurgic and mining plants, as well as various infrastructure facilities, such as power plants, dams, and pipelines. The Soviet Union played a huge role in training the national labor force for both the economy and the armed forces. Bilateral cooperation was especially close in the military sphere. Since the late 1970s, Algeria's army has been equipped with Soviet weapons, and its older generation of generals received its education in the USSR. Due to the outbreak of civil war in Algeria and the break-up of the Soviet Union, there was a decline in bilateral cooperation in the 1990s, which was quickly reestablished. The fact was the republic needed to rebuild its economy and, more importantly, provide the army with new weaponry. In 2001, a declaration of strategic partnership was signed between the countries. Algeria became the first Arab state with which Russia entered into such an agreement. The rapprochement between the two countries was facilitated by Russia's support of Algeria on Western Sahara. What's more, Moscow does not recognize Moroccan sovereignty over this territory and insists that its status must be determined through a referendum. Russian Federation also condemned the US recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over the entire territory of Western Sahara and called this step a threat to regional stability.¹⁴

Current Algeria-Russia relations are primarily based on military cooperation and arms sales. In 2006, Moscow wrote off \$4.7 billion of Algeria's debt to the former USSR in exchange for new military contracts totaling about \$7.5 billion. By 2022, Algeria became the third largest purchaser of Russian weapons after India and China. Since the mid-2000s Algeria has purchased from the Russian Federation large quantities of tanks and other armored vehicles, combat aircraft and helicopters, as well as air defense systems, missile systems, and submarines. The Algerian military attach great importance to Russia's readiness to create joint ventures and localize the production and modernization of military equipment on Algerian territory. Algeria has continued its military cooperation with the Russian Federation despite the conflict in Ukraine. In September 2022, Algeria's military took part in the Vostok-2022 exercises,¹⁵ while in October the navies of the two countries conducted joint maneuvers, with yet another joint exercise with

ground forces taking place on Algerian territory in December. The scale of maneuvers and the number of forces involved were quite modest, but given the geopolitical situation, it was an important symbolic gesture on the part of Algiers.

The signing of a strategic partnership agreement between the two countries contributed to the development of trade and economic ties. In 2001, bilateral trade barely exceeded \$200 million, and by 2021 it had reached \$3 billion. However, it should be noted that the volume of Russia-Algeria trade can fluctuate greatly from year to year since a significant portion of Russian exports consists of military hardware. As for economic cooperation in general, Algiers is interested in collaboration in energy, mining (particularly phosphates), geological exploration, and pharmaceuticals,¹⁶ with both sides recognizing the importance of cooperating in the energy sector. Such cooperation consists of two aspects: exploration and production of oil and gas; and, policy coordination on the global energy market. As for production, such large Russian players as Gazprom, Rosneft, Stroytransgaz, Lukoil, and Zarubezhneft have all entered the Algerian market. However, it seems that continued bilateral coordination with the Russian Federation in the OPEC+ format and within the framework of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum is of much greater importance for Algeria than cooperation in the field of production. This topic is raised during every conversation between Putin and Tebboune.¹⁷ Algeria can attract investments and technologies by working with companies from Western and Asian countries, but Algiers is aware that without cooperation with Moscow it will be extremely difficult to maintain world energy prices at an acceptable level.

The Russian Federation is likely to evolve into an important partner for Algeria in food security. In 2021, the Russian Federation, after a five-year pause, resumed sales of wheat to Algeria, quickly displacing France. This became possible due to the fact that Algeria allowed a bug-damaged supply of wheat (in the amount of 0.5 percent, and then up to 1 percent) instead of the previous 0.1 percent. In 2022, Algeria became one of the five largest buyers of Russian grain, importing 1.3 million tons,¹⁸ which is almost a quarter of its total wheat imports.

Nuclear energy might become another strategic area of bilateral cooperation. The two countries signed an agreement back in 2014, which calls for construction of nuclear power plants and research reactors, production of radioisotopes, and the training of specialists. Algeria is interested in building

nuclear power plants to scale back on burning hydrocarbons and use cheaper energy to desalinate seawater. However, the Russian Federation has competition in this area – China also received a contract to modernize Algeria’s two research reactors.

On the whole, however, the development of Algeria-Russia cooperation is hampered by the similarity of their economies. Algeria’s authorities expected Russia to invest in the mining industry, port infrastructure, railways, housing construction and industry, but these hopes did not materialize. At the current stage, the problem of diversifying bilateral relations is critical, since they are mainly focused only on two areas – arms sales and energy.

Algeria-China

China was the first non-Arab country to recognize the Provisional Government of the Republic of Algeria (PGRA) in 1958. In turn, in 1971, Algeria supported the transferring of a permanent seat on the United Nations (UN) Security Council to China. Current development of political and economic ties with China fits into Algeria’s strategy for developing South-South relations, which is actively promoted by President Tebboune. Algeria’s leadership likes to highlight the fact that China builds relations with developing countries on the basis of mutual respect and offers equal partnership (unlike Western countries). It is also important that China has never been a colonial power, and contributed in every possible way to the anti-colonial struggle of African countries.

Algeria’s relations with China are based on pragmatic considerations. In 2006, the two countries signed a declaration on strategic partnership and cooperation. Since 2014, they have characterized their relations as a “comprehensive strategic partnership”. Algeria is the only North African nation to achieve such status. Algeria’s enthusiasm about relations with China is based on the fact that it is the latter has the second largest economy in the world and vast experience in implementing large infrastructure projects. China is also important for Algeria as a trading partner and a source of investment. In 2018, Algeria became a participant in the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, which involves the construction of a deep-sea port worth \$3.3 billion. Finally, as a creditor, China is more preferable to Algeria than the IMF and the World Bank as Beijing does not impose political or economic conditions on its loans to other countries. In November 2022, the second five-year plan for comprehensive strategic cooperation for 2022-2026

was signed. The document included development of ties in all areas, including economic, trade, energy, agriculture, science and technology, space exploration, healthcare, and humanitarian cooperation.¹⁹

China has replaced France as Algeria's main trading partner, although European countries still account for more than half of the total foreign trade of the republic. In 2018, Algeria was in fifth place among the PRC's largest trading partners in Africa, with bilateral trade reaching \$9.1 billion.²⁰ Despite the pandemic in 2020, China's share of Algerian imports was 17%.²¹ It should be noted that Algeria's trade with China consists of a large trade deficit. Such an imbalance is due to the fact that China supplies large quantities of consumer goods, but it purchases energy resources from Algeria in relatively small quantities.

Chinese companies play a crucial role in the implementation of several strategically important projects in Algeria: Africa's largest deep-water port, and the trans-Saharan highway, which connects Algeria and Nigeria. China pledged to invest up to \$7 billion in the extraction and processing of phosphates and about \$2 billion in iron ore mining.²² China is considered a potential source of investment in oil and gas exploration and production, as well as in the petrochemical industry. The leading energy companies of the two countries – Sonatrak and Sinopec – continue developing a close partnership.²³ Finally, Chinese companies intended to open an assembly plant for electronics and household appliances in Algeria.²⁴

The strategic rapprochement between the two countries includes a gradually developing partnership in the military sphere. According to Western experts, China's share in Algeria's arms imports was about 15 percent between 2012 to 2016. Since Morocco is buying ever-increasing amounts of high-tech weapons from the United States and France, it is important for Algeria to maintain parity, and China may become the main supplier of some types of weaponry. Beijing provides Algeria with cruise missiles, coastal defense missile systems, and drones. About 500 Algerian officers undergo training in China annually.²⁵

Common political interests facilitate cooperation between Algeria and China. Algeria uses its influence on the continent and in the African Union to attract China's interest in the region. Both Algeria and China are concerned with instability in the Sahel. For Algeria, this is a matter of national security, while for China it is important that Beijing ensure the security of its investments in Niger, Chad, Mauritania, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Algeria

also supports China on the issue of Uighur separatism in Xinjiang. And, more importantly, Algeria shares the PRC's position on the Taiwan. The only serious reason for Algeria's discontent is China's ambiguous position on Western Sahara. Beijing actively supports the liberation struggle of the Palestinian people (like Algeria), but prefers to remain neutral on Western Sahara. However, Algeria is careful not to focus on this controversy.

* * *

In the political sphere, Russia is the least problematic partner for Algeria as Moscow takes a clear stance on Western Sahara and also supports the Palestinians. Algeria also does not have any serious disagreements with China, though Beijing is more cautious on its stance on Western Sahara, which causes carefully hidden discontent. Finally, the pro-Moroccan moves by the United States after 2020 have drawn clear condemnation from Algeria.

The rejection of certain elements of US policy has in fact pushed Algeria towards the US's geopolitical competitors – China and Russia. This has been demonstrated by Algeria's position on such sensitive issues as the status of Taiwan and the war in Ukraine. However, there has been no sharp deterioration in relations between Algiers and Washington; rather, one can assume that these relations do not extend beyond a certain level and merely support a minimal degree of cooperation, since the two states have shared security interests in the Sahel.

As for military cooperation and arms sales, Russia remains the undisputed leader and, in for all intents and purposes, a strategic partner for Algeria. Moreover, the level of cooperation (at least in the short term) has not even been affected by the conflict in Ukraine and Western pressure. However, one should not ignore the efforts of Algeria's military to reduce its dependence on the Russian Federation. China has begun to play a more visible role in Algeria's arms market, and it might become a key supplier of various types of equipment, for example, reconnaissance and attack drones.

While Algeria's relations in the military and political spheres with the great powers leave few questions, things are somewhat more complicated in the economic sphere. In terms of trade, China is the undisputed leader, with more trade in goods than with the United States and the Russian Federation combined. This situation came to fruition when the United States reduced its purchases of Algerian oil. At the same time, trade with Russia is very dependent on arms sales. In the future, China is also quite capable of

replacing the US as the main foreign investor in Algeria. This is indicated by a significant number of large-scale joint projects in infrastructure, manufacturing, and mining. The United States and Russia can only offer Algeria some niche projects, such as renewable or nuclear power, pharmaceuticals, or agricultural technologies, to name a few. However, Russia has two significant advantages over the United States: it remains an important partner for Algeria within OPEC+ and is ready to invest in hydrocarbon production; and, if current trends continue, Russia might rapidly become one of the guarantors of Algeria's food security.

On the whole, we can speak of truly strategic ties in Algeria's relations with Russia and China (based on the entirety of characteristics). The Russian Federation remains a key partner in the military sphere, with China playing the leading role in the development of infrastructure and implementation of projects necessary for the modernization and diversification of the economy. Algeria's current relations with the United States look rather like an attempt to maintain status-quo working ties (where it is possible and profitable) with the leading superpower. At the same time, however, the volume of trade and economic cooperation has become unstable, and relations complicated by a number of significant political disagreements, meaning that relations are unlikely to go beyond case-by-case cooperation in the medium term.

Notes

1. Salaires, Espagne : l'interview de Tebboune en sept points // TSA Algérie, 2022, 24.04. URL: <https://www.tsa-algerie.com/salaires-espagne-linterview-de-tebboune-en-sept-points/> (accessed: 14.02.2023).
2. Algeria's constitution amended to allow intervention in Libya // The New Arab, 2020, 12.11. URL: <https://www.newarab.com/news/algerias-constitution-amended-allow-intervention-libya> (accessed: 14.02.2023).
3. Déclaration de politique générale du Gouvernement: une politique étrangère "dynamique et proactive" // ALGÉRIE PRESSE SERVICE, 2022, 23.09. URL: <https://www.aps.dz/algerie/145122-declaration-de-politique-generale-du-gouvernement-une-politique-etrangere-dynamique-et-proactive> (accessed: 14.02.2023).
4. Pour une Politique Étrangère Dynamique et Proactive // Services du Premier Ministre, 2021, 17.05. URL: <https://premier-ministre.gov.dz/fr/post/pour-une-politique-etrangere-dynamique-et-proactive> (accessed: 14.02.2023).
5. Proclamation on Recognizing The Sovereignty Of The Kingdom Of Morocco Over The Western Sahara // U.S. Embassy Rabat, 2020, 10.12.

- URL: <https://ma.usembassy.gov/proclamation-on-recognizing-the-sovereignty-of-the-kingdom-of-morocco-over-the-western-sahara/> (accessed: 14.02.2023).
6. Algeria - Country Commercial Guide // International Trade Administration, 2023, 31.01. URL: <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/algeria-defense> (accessed: 14.02.2023).
 7. Algeria to Sign 'Huge Deal' with Russia to Import Advanced Arms // Asharq Al-Awsat, 2022, 02.11. URL: <https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/3965011/algeria-sign-%E2%80%98huge-deal%E2%80%99-russia-import-advanced-arms> (accessed: 14.02.2023).
 8. Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Algeria // United States Department of State. URL: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/algeria/> (accessed: 14.02.2023).
 9. Algeria // The Office of the United States Trade Representative. URL: <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/europe-middle-east/middle-eastnorth-africa/algeria> (accessed: 14.02.2023).
 10. Algérie/Etats-Unis: volonté commune de promouvoir la coopération économique // ALGÉRIE PRESSE SERVICE, 2022, 14.06. URL: <https://www.aps.dz/economie/141170-algerie-etats-unis-volonte-commune-de-promouvoir-la-cooperation-economique> (accessed: 14.02.2023).
 11. Algérie/Etats Unis: signature de plusieurs accords de partenariat économique // ALGÉRIE PRESSE SERVICE, 2022, 16.06. URL: <https://www.aps.dz/economie/141271-cooperation-algero-americaine-signature-de-plusieurs-accords-de-partenariat-economique> (accessed: 14.02.2023).
 12. *Benalia S.* Elizabeth Moore Aubin, ambassadrice des usa «Nos relations sont excellentes» // L'expressiondz.com, 2022, 31.10. URL: <https://www.l'expressiondz.com/nationale/nos-relations-sont-excellentes-362426> (accessed: 14.02.2023).
 13. *Brahim S.* La coopération entre l'Algérie et les Etats-Unis s'étendra au domaine militaire // Le Jeune Indépendant, 2022, 30.03. URL: <https://www.jeune-independant.net/la-cooperation-entre-lalgerie-et-les-etats-unis-setendra-au-domaine-militaire/> (accessed: 14.02.2023).
 14. Moroccan-Israeli normalisation and US recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara // Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2020, 12.12. https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1449385 (accessed: 11.12.2023). (In Rus.)
 15. Participation de l'ANP à l'exercice stratégique de Commandement et d'Etat Major "Est-2022" en Russie // ALGÉRIE PRESSE SERVICE,

- 2022, 01.09. URL: <https://www.aps.dz/algerie/144284-participation-de-l-anp-a-l-exercice-strategique-de-commandement-et-d-etat-major-est-2022-en-russie> (accessed: 14.02.2023).
16. Algérie-Russie: signature d'un nouveau document servant de base aux relations bilatérales // ALGÉRIE PRESSE SERVICE, 2022, 10.05. URL: <https://www.aps.dz/algerie/139519-algerie-russie-signature-d-un-nouveau-document-servant-de-base-au-renforcement-des-relations-bilaterales> (accessed: 14.02.2023).
 17. The President of Russia and the President of Algeria made statements for the press // Kremlin.Ru [Official website of the President of Russia], 2023, 15.06. URL: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/71437> (accessed: 11.12.2023).
 18. Potential for export of Russian agricultural products to Algeria exceeds \$1.5 billion, November 15. URL: <https://tass.com/russia/1706873>(accessed: 14.02.2023). (In Rus.)
 19. *Sakia A.* Algeria-China Relations: A 2nd Five-Year Strategic Cooperation Plan // echoroukonline.com, 2022, 08.11. URL: <https://www.echoroukonline.com/algeria-china-relations-a-2nd-five-year-strategic-cooperation-plan> (accessed: 14.02.2023).
 20. BRI: Algeria has become China's 5th major African trading partner // ALGERIA PRESS SERVICE, 2019, 19.06. URL: <https://www.aps.dz/en/economy/29646-bri-algeria-has-become-china-s-5th-major-african-trading-partner> (accessed: 16.02.2023).
 21. La Chine demeurait le principal fournisseur de l'Algérie avec une moyenne de 8 milliards de dollars d'exportations annuelle // *Chine Magazine*, 2022, 29.05. URL: <https://www.chine-magazine.com/la-chine-demeurait-le-principal-fournisseur-de-lalgerie-avec-une-moyenne-de-8-milliards-de-dollars-dexportations-annuelle/> (accessed: 16.02.2023).
 22. En chiffres. Importants investissements économiques et partenariats entre l'Algérie et la Chine // *Algerie Focus*, 2022, 03.06. URL: <https://www.algerie-focus.com/en-chiffres-importants-investissements-economiques-et-partenariats-entre-lalgerie-et-la-chine/> (accessed: 16.02.2023).
 23. Energie et mines: Arkab reçoit le P-dg de Sinopec International Energy // ALGÉRIE PRESSE SERVICE, 2022, 15.11. URL: <https://www.aps.dz/economie/147630-energie-et-mines-m-arkab-recoit-le-p-dg-de-sinopec-international-energy> (accessed: 16.02.2023).
 24. Electroménager : partenariat algéro-chinois pour la production, commercialisation et export de produits // ALGÉRIE PRESSE SERVICE, 2022, 10.11. URL: <https://www.aps.dz/economie/147422->

- electromanager-partenariat-algero-chinois-pour-la-production-commercialisation-et-export-de-produits (accessed: 16.02.2023).
25. *Zoubir, Y.H.* (2023) Algeria and China: Shifts in political and military relations. *Global Policy*, 14 (Suppl. 1), pp. 58-68. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.13115>

Chapter 6. India's Place in the Foreign Policies of the UAE and Qatar

Tatiana Tyukaeva

The UAE and Qatar, two small Gulf monarchies, have been actively stepping outside the boundaries of their subregion and the framework of the Middle Eastern agenda. While pursuing their ambitious goals, not only are they expanding their networks of foreign political and economic ties with influential regional and global actors, but are also moving down a path of strategic diversification, all the while asserting their international status as reputable and useful partners. In addition to their role on the world energy markets, the UAE and Qatar aim to promote their image as progressive states, as well as educational, technological, innovation, and cultural hubs. They also are making strides to be efficient international mediators, major investors, humanitarian aid donors, as well as important players in political and military processes, and influential actors in the global information space. Since the mid-2010s, the UAE and Qatar have attached special attention to expanding their interaction with India, extending beyond their traditional agenda of trade, energy supplies, and labor migration to the Gulf monarchies. This trend has been further stimulated by New Delhi's changing foreign policy and its Look West concept, which focuses largely on developing cooperation with the Gulf. By the early 2020s, bilateral ties between the UAE and India, and Qatar and India, had extended to cover new spheres and reach new highs, which, on the one hand, reflects new and innovative tendencies in transregional cooperation among regional powers, while on the other, demonstrates the three countries' vision of their place in the international relations, not to mention their new economic and development goals. The year 2023 has demonstrated that this trend is persisting.

Foreign Policy Strategies of the UAE and Qatar: History and Evolution

Since the late 2000s, Abu Dhabi and Doha have been engaged in implementing their ambitious strategies of national socioeconomic development,¹ which are aimed at ensuring “common prosperity,” enhancing human capital, building knowledge-based economies, and asserting their international status”. By the 2020s, UAE and Qatar foreign policies could be described as pragmatic, diversified, and autonomous in how they advance

and defend their national interests. While remaining largely dependent on their Western partners, first and foremost the US, particularly in the military sphere, these two small monarchies prefer to implement their global strategies using the logic of a polycentric, “non-polar”² world order.

Meanwhile, even though the UAE and Qatar share a number of common traits in their international activities, they differ in terms of substance, approaches, and the means in which they implement them. For instance, Qatar was the first of the small Gulf monarchies to assert its autonomy and independence on the international arena. The Grand Architect of its global strategy, which put the “dwarf” emirate on the world map, was Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, who officially became Qatar’s Emir in 1995, but who had been largely influencing the state’s foreign policy since the late 1980s. Building on his predecessors’ reliance on one militarily and politically strong ally as a way of ensuring his country’s security, Sheikh Hamad transformed this reliance into a balancing and hedging strategy by extending his cooperation with major regional and global rival powers.³ At the same time, Doha skillfully applies various soft power instruments, such as the Al Jazeera network – ranked among the most influential of global media, its sovereign wealth fund – one of the largest in the world, as well as its hosting of major sporting events (in 2022, Qatar became the first Arab and Muslim country to host the FIFA World Cup). Doha has also successfully facilitated mediation in various conflicts. And, being one of the world’s most important gas suppliers, the monarchy continues to export LNG across the globe.

After a short-term stepping back in the early 2010s from the principle of neutrality, and following a period of aggressive military and political involvement in a number of conflicts in support of the Arab Spring revolutions,⁴ after Sheikh Hamad’s transfer of power to his son, Sheikh Tamim (who may lack his father’s audacity in implementing foreign policy, yet has inherited his strategic vision), and after Qatar’s victorious recovery from the blockade imposed by its neighbors, and following the resolution of the Gulf crisis of 2017-2021, Doha returned to its traditional principles of balancing, hedging, and soft power projection, both regionally and internationally.

The UAE, in its own right, for a long time largely followed the foreign political course of Saudi Arabia, its key regional ally. At the same time, Abu Dhabi was asserting itself internationally as an important hub of world trade,

turning itself into a major commercial and logistic center. Additionally, UAE's sovereign wealth funds made the list of the most influential funds on the planet and played a vital role on the world financial markets during the Global Financial Crisis 2008-2009.⁵ The UAE owes its status as an active and influential player in regional and global military and political processes to Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MBZ), son of the founder and the first President of the UAE. MBZ, after his father's demise in 2004, was elevated to Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi (in May 2022, he became the third UAE President) and, in this capacity, the architect of the country's ambitious foreign policy.⁶

Since the early 2010s, the UAE has increasingly demonstrated autonomy in asserting its political and economic interests, which on several occasions even caused discontent with some of Abu Dhabi's traditional partners. Additionally, the UAE's foreign policy took on a new dimension – leveraging its military⁷ – a switch that became manifested in the country's hard power projection across the MENA region and beyond, including their armed forces' participation in various conflicts and the establishment of military infrastructure. Abu Dhabi's resourceful use of hard and soft power instruments in implementing foreign policy goals ensured that the UAE managed not only to repeat but also to surpass Qatar's success to a certain degree.

During the 2010s, UAE foreign policy was largely determined by the country's pursuit of its ambitious economic development strategy. Yet, the containment of political Islam, the UAE's primary source of external threats, and Turkey, its main regional rival, was an equally important factor. Containment of the latter implied deepening military cooperation with the participants of the so-called anti-Islamist camp and an increasing use of hard power. By the early 2020s, against a backdrop of the intraregional trend of de-escalation, the UAE's foreign policy began shifting its priorities: while keeping hard power instruments within reach, Abu Dhabi chose instead to focus on achieving economic prosperity through regional and trans-regional "connectivity" projects, which placed emphasis on coordinating humanitarian security and innovational development.

An important dimension of the UAE's foreign activities today is its expanding network of "minilateral" cooperation platforms that unite small groups of states with common interests on certain issues.⁸ In addition, Abu Dhabi continues to deepen its involvement in world trade by concluding

bilateral Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPAs) with countries in the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, and Europe. The UAE's leadership traditionally attaches special attention to infrastructure and logistic projects, thereby expanding the country's regional and international influence in air, land, and sea communication networks, solidifying the country's role as one of the major global hubs.

India's Place in the Foreign Strategies of the UAE and Qatar

The increasing and deepening cooperation the two Gulf monarchies have had with India since the mid-2010s is in line with the goals of the UAE and Qatar's global development strategies. First and foremost, this refers to their foreign political and economic diversification objectives, which include developing ties with world and regional power centers and major blocs, but which is also part and parcel with their goal to become influential and independent actors in international processes, capable of promoting their own R&D and cultural agendas.

Abu Dhabi also values deepening cooperation with India in light of the latter's potential in the transregional "connectivity" networks, which the UAE very much want to shape and expand, and share their experience in creating innovational solutions to the problems of food security, clean energy, and logistics. As for Doha, which traditionally develops bilateral ties with major regional and international powers, its cooperation with New Delhi is an important element of its global approach of balancing and hedging, which proved vividly efficient during the 2017-2020 Gulf crisis when India played a part in stabilizing Qatar's economy when it was under siege.

At the same time, this increased cooperation was also brought on by the new Look West foreign policy pursued by the government of Narendra Modi (who became the Prime Minister in 2014), one of the main components of which was to develop ties with the Gulf monarchies. Additionally, the three countries share common foreign policy principles: showing agility and pragmatism in implementing national interests; perceiving an optimal world order as being polycentric; positioning themselves as important and independent actors in regional and international processes.⁹ The UAE and India also share the goal of building transregional "connectivity" networks with the view of enhancing economic benefits.¹⁰

Considerably contributed a great deal to the increase in cooperation between the two Gulf monarchies and India are the historic trade, people, and cultural ties, especially promoted by the growing Indian communities in the UAE and Qatar. In 2021, they constituted the biggest expat communities in the two countries reaching 3.5 million Indians in the UAE (more than 30% of the population) and more than 700,000 in Qatar (more than 20%).¹¹ And despite the fact that the majority of them are low-skilled workers, the share of highly qualified specialists is increasing in various spheres, including healthcare, education, business, finance, and media, to name a few. Interestingly, the UAE is the second largest (after the US) source of migrants' remittances to India: in 2020-2021, the flow from the Emirates accounted for 18%.¹²

Therefore, India's expatriates are actively involved in the implementation of the UAE and Qatar's economic development strategies, which receive additional support from a number of bilateral programs and platforms launched in the mid-2010s that focus on training, work experience, and personnel exchange, as well as employment assistance. On an official level, more attention has been paid to the problem of protecting the labor rights of low-skilled workers from India in the UAE and Qatar. At the same time, numerous cases of violations over the years, which international human rights organizations have pointed out repeatedly (especially, ahead of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar), have never had any noticeable effect on the dynamic of the Gulf monarchies' relations with India.

Abu Dhabi and Doha do not shy away from using their large Indian expat communities, as well as the growing labor, personal, and cultural ties they have with India, as instruments in their efforts to fortify their international image as centers of multiculturalism and religious tolerance. Along with mosques and churches, both the UAE and Qatar also host Hindu temples, with Dubai even welcoming a Buddhist temple. Both monarchies hold regular events celebrating Indian culture.

For a long time, the UAE and Qatar developed relations with India while pursuing similar agendas and patterns, mainly limited to energy supplies and labor migration. Since the mid-2010s, UAE-India and Qatar-India cooperation not only gained new impetus, but also acquired a new agenda, which reflects the newly established foreign policy goals of Abu Dhabi, Doha, and New Delhi.

UAE-India: From Trade and Security to Innovations and Connectivity

Economic pursuits remain one of the key pillars of UAE-India cooperation. In 2022-2023, the UAE became India's third largest trading partner (after China and the US), with turnover amounting to \$84.5 billion¹³ (compared to \$73 billion in 2021-2022¹⁴), while India is the second largest trading partner of the UAE. There has been a gradual decrease in the UAE's share of oil exports to India, which stood at 62% of overall bilateral trade in 2022. The UAE remains one of India's key oil suppliers, however, in 2023, the share of India's oil imports declined due to the surge in Russian oil shipments to the South Asian country.

In May 2022, the UAE-India CEPA came into effect, which aims to increase bilateral trade beyond \$100 billion in five years, reduce the share of oil supply, intensify business ties, and stimulate investment. The CEPA covers a number of spheres, including telecommunications, development and construction, education and healthcare, climate change and finance, tourism and hospitality, as well as air and maritime transportation.

In 2023, the UAE entered the top five biggest investors in India, with total volume of investments exceeding \$22 billion. In February 2023, on the anniversary of the CEPA's signing, an Abu Dhabi office of the UAE-India Business Council was opened (the New Delhi office was established in 2015). This move is intended to boost bilateral investments and attract \$75 billion from the UAE to India.¹⁵ Abu Dhabi is highly interested in cooperating with New Delhi in various projects, including infrastructure, maritime shipping, energy, and services, which constitute the main spheres of investment inflows.¹⁶ At the same time, UAE-based companies aim to attract India's investment in agriculture, tourism, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, and finance.¹⁷

Meanwhile, since the mid-2010s, UAE-India cooperation has intensified in the military-political sphere, where increasing dynamics of bilateral high- and highest-level meetings are most evident, including four visits by Prime Minister Modi to the UAE, and two visits by MBZ to India in 2015-2022. In addition, the Indian Foreign Minister participated as a guest of honor in one of the regular OIC summits in Abu Dhabi in 2019, which caused Pakistan's resentment. In 2017, the UAE and India declared that their bilateral cooperation had been promoted to the status of "comprehensive strategic partnership" and that ministerial "strategic dialogue" had been launched.

Abu Dhabi and New Delhi also share general approaches toward a number of issues pertaining to regional and global politics, especially on issues of counterterrorism and counterextremism, as well as having a shared perception of the challenges that Turkey's policies and its growing ties with Pakistan might cause. At the same time, India sees the UAE's relations with Pakistan as an important asset from the point of view of the UAE's mediation capabilities were tensions between New Delhi and Islamabad to become exacerbated. Notably, in 2021, Abu Dhabi mediated an agreement (the first one since 2003) between the two countries to ensure their commitment to all the cease-fire deals along the Line of Control in Kashmir.¹⁸

As far as security cooperation between the UAE and India is concerned, it is being developed within the framework of the Joint Defense Cooperation Committee, the Annual Defense Dialogue, and the Naval Staff Talks at the headquarters level. The two states signed the Agreement on Defense Cooperation as early as in 2003, yet up until the mid-2010s its implementation was limited to issues of naval and offshore security, combating piracy in the Western Indian Ocean, money-laundering, and other illegal activities. Recently, however, UAE-India security cooperation has intensified considerably and taken on a new agenda.

For instance, the UAE and India carry out military education exchanges and joint defense training programs. The two nations' naval ships regularly make port visits to each other, and both countries' defense officials have intensified their dialogue. Since 2018, their naval and air forces have carried out joint exercises, both on a bilateral (e.g., Gulf Star 1, Zayed Talwar, Desert Eagle) and multilateral (e.g., Desert Flag – which also includes US, France, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and Bahrain's air forces) basis. Both Abu Dhabi and New Delhi have demonstrated their commitment to expanding the scale and increasing the complexity of these joint drills in order to deepen their security services coordination. Likewise, they have shown interest in cooperating in military manufacturing.¹⁹ For example, the UAE was one of the first Arab states to declare its intention to acquire India's BrahMos missiles and expressed interest in the Akash missile system.²⁰ In February, 2023, the Indian ICOMM and the UAE's CARACAL signed their first defense technology transfer agreement, which regulates small arms manufacturing by the Abu Dhabi based company in India.²¹

In addition, the UAE and India are furthering their interaction on a number of “minilateral” platforms in military-political and economic spheres. The normalization of relations in 2020 between the small monarchy and Israel, a major partner of New Delhi in security, and the subsequent intensification of UAE-Israel contacts in this sphere, became a major contributing factor toward the emergence of more complex UAE-India cooperation. In October, 2021, during an online meeting, heads of Foreign Ministries of the UAE, India, Israel, and the US launched the I2U2 format, dubbed by some experts as the “Indo-Abrahamic alliance”²² Due to the US participation, some see the new group as another project for the containment of China.²³ However, other participant states, particularly the UAE and Israel, who hardly share Washington’s approaches in this regard, promote it as yet another instrument to develop transregional cooperation with influential (first and foremost, in an economic sense) power centers.

The I2U2 group aims to deepen interaction among its participants, stimulate investments, formulate new initiatives, and implement joint projects in the priority spheres of energy (especially, “green” energy). It also focuses on transport, healthcare, food and water security, with a special attention given to advanced technologies, and private sector involvement. The new group has already spoken out for initiatives to construct a network of integrated food parks across India, as well as launching a hybrid project for solar and wind energy.²⁴ Another initiative suggests forming an India-UAE-Israel food corridor²⁵ with the aim of enhancing food security in South Asia and the Middle East. The CEPAs the UAE signed in 2022 with India and Israel are expected to stimulate further cooperation between the three states in implementing new investment, logistics, and innovation projects.

The UAE and India are no less enthusiastic about their cooperation on other “minilateral” platforms, such as the recently-shaped trilateral format, which includes France, another traditional partner in the sphere of security of Abu Dhabi and New Delhi. In September of 2022, on the sidelines of the UN GA, Foreign Ministers of the three nations held a meeting that reached general agreement to establish a new format of interaction. In early February, 2023, the UAE, India, and France declared the launch of an ambitious roadmap for cooperation in the spheres of defense, energy (with special emphasis on solar and nuclear energy), and technology, with the aim of fighting climate change, protecting biodiversity, and building a circular economy.²⁶ The three states have also agreed to develop and expand cooperation in the military

sphere. In 2021, the UAE's naval forces participated for the first time in the regular India-France exercises *Varuna* held in the Arabian Sea.

Additionally, the UAE and India actively cooperate in implementing various joint projects in Africa,²⁷ which pose major interest to the both states, especially in the realm of economic and logistical issues.

In summary, since the mid-2010s, cooperation between the UAE and India has been gradually expanding and changing in nature. The oil supplies and trade that initially laid the basis for bilateral interaction, largely stimulated by the huge Indian community in the UAE, still remain on the bilateral agenda. Yet, new areas and new forms of interaction between the two countries since the early 2020s have become instrumental for Abu Dhabi and India's pursuit of their global and regional interests, especially given their increasing influence as economic, logistical, and innovation hubs.

Qatar-India: Moving Beyond Trade?

The key element of Doha-New Delhi relations is gas deliveries. For India, Qatar has been the biggest LNG supplier since the early 1990s when the very first long-term contracts were signed (the latest was prolonged until 2028) for 7.5 million tons (since 2015 – 8.5 million) of deliveries per year. Qatar's LNG in some years has accounted for up to 80% of India's gas imports,²⁸ decreasing to 42% in 2021²⁹ and then rising back again to 49.5% in 2022-2023.³⁰ India is Qatar's second largest LNG export destination, even though its share in overall gas export amounts to no more than 14%.³¹ Similarly to the UAE's energy export to India, Qatar's gas supplies to India remain large. However, its share in bilateral trade has been slowly decreasing due to the country's ongoing diversification of its commercial ties.

In 2022, India was Qatar's second biggest trading partner, even though the dynamic of their bilateral trade has been inconsistent and its overall volume remains insignificant. In 2021-2022, it reached \$17.2 billion,³² noticeable growth compared to \$10 billion in 2015-2016, but in fact was merely a return to the level of 2013-2014.³³ At the same time, while India's exports to Qatar are on the increase, a bilateral trade imbalance persists significantly in favor of Qatar. Yet, India is among Qatar's key food suppliers, especially vegetables, grain, and meat, which makes the small monarchy dependent on Indian imports.³⁴

Qatar has also expressed great interest in investing in India: the five-fold increase in Qatar's investments in India in 2020-2022 alone³⁵ is testament to

this. The Qatar Investment Authority has declared its intention to invest more than \$2 billion³⁶ in a number of projects in India, mainly in infrastructure, including the construction of roads, air and sea ports, hotels, as well as in the spheres of gas and fertilizers. Food and agriculture remain priority areas for Qatar, along with media and telecommunications. The deepening and diversification of bilateral economic cooperation has been facilitated by the recently established Joint Business Council and a number of investment and trade working groups. In June, 2022, the initiative Start Up Bridge was launched with the goal of increasing interaction between start-up projects in the two countries.

Doha and New Delhi also intend to expand the boundaries of their maritime cooperation, including developing ties between India and Qatar's ports in order "to share best practices in areas of port operations, logistics, supply chain management, and digitalization"³⁷ In 2017, when the blockade against Qatar was first enforced, India – while officially committing to neutrality in the Gulf conflict – opened direct supply lines between India's ports of Nhava Sheva and Mundra, on the one hand, and Qatar's Hamad Port, on the other, which ensured food deliveries to the small monarchy in a time of great need. This not only contributed to an increase (albeit short-term) in bilateral trade, but also made India an important element in Doha's food security strategy. Qatar and India are engaged in active cooperation in this sphere by means of joint investment projects aimed at increasing the Gulf state's agricultural provisions, *inter alia* through increasing local production.³⁸

At the same time, since the mid-2010s, Doha and New Delhi have started developing political and security dialogue, which was marked by Sheikh Tamim's visit to India in March of 2015, and Modi's visit to Qatar in 2016, the result of which has led to the intensification of high-level bilateral contacts. In 2018, the two nations agreed to create a joint commission on the level of foreign ministries with the aim of formulating a new agenda for deepening Qatar-India cooperation. However, this idea has yet to be implemented.

Recent years have witnessed intensification of interaction between Doha and New Delhi in the sphere of defense. Even though the respective agreement on cooperation was signed in 2008, its actual implementation was rather limited – mainly to meetings of the Joint Defense Cooperation Committee. In 2019, the joint annual Zair-Al-Bahr naval drills were held for the first time, which mainly concentrated on the fight against terrorism, piracy, and

maritime security. In March of 2022, Qatar also joined the India-hosted international naval exercises IONS, which also included maritime forces of a number of the Indian Ocean coastal states. Qatar, albeit in rather limited numbers, also occupies a few training slots in some of the Indian defense institutions, and the navies and coast guards of the two states regularly visit each other's ports and conduct joint search-and-rescue training missions.³⁹ Nonetheless, despite the positive dynamics of the expanding and diversifying Qatar-India cooperation since the mid-2010s, it remains largely limited by Doha's capabilities and foreign policy pursuits – Qatar's LNG supplies and India's role in ensuring food security of the small monarchy being the most pressing. Yet, this cooperation's importance should not be underestimated. Their newly activated political dialogue, which is the result of the search for new areas for cooperation, especially being that India is a major player, is a vital component of Doha's global strategy to assert its national political, defense, and economic interests, and reap benefits from the country's boost in status.

* * *

The UAE and Qatar, two small Gulf monarchies, have been extremely successful in overcoming their geographic limitations, as well as in efficiently asserting their political and economic influence, not only on a regional but also international scale. Developing multifaceted interaction with such an important power as India is a natural necessity and an important instrument in implementing their global foreign policy strategies. Even though the UAE and Qatar differ in how they develop their cooperation with India, the intensity, areas of priorities, and the mechanisms of its realization (despite the gap between what they declare and what they actually implement), the trend of diversification of bilateral ties is nevertheless very clear, especially since both countries possess a mutual interest in deepening contacts and demonstrating their successes to the world. The year of 2023 once again demonstrated that the revival of the UAE and Qatar's cooperation with India, which began in the mid-2010s, is not coincidental, short-lived excitement, but rather part of a larger strategy for each of the three states, emanating directly from their needs. And therefore, this cooperation is destined to expand even further.

Notes

1. *Melkumyan Elena*. Development of Arab Gulf Monarchies: Breakout to Future // *Azia i Africa Segodnya*. 2020. No. 2. pp. 37-42. (in Rus.) DOI: 10.31857/S032150750008471-0
2. *Haqqani Husain and Janardhan Narayanappa*. The Minilateral Era // *Foreign Policy*. 2023. January 10. URL: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/01/10/minilateral-diplomacy-middle-power-india-israel-uae/> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
3. *Roberts David*. The Four Eras of Qatar's Foreign Policy // *Comillas Journal of International Relations*. 2016. No. 5. pp. 1-17. DOI: cir.i05.y2016.001
4. *Kabalan Marwan*. Actors, Structures and Qatari Foreign Policy // *Al Muntaqa*. 2019. Vol. 2. No. 2. pp. 61-82
5. *Sherwood Leah*. Risk Diversification and UAE Foreign Policy // *The Small Gulf States. Foreign and Security Policies before and after the Arab Spring* / Ed. Almezaini K., Rickli J.M. London: Routledge, 2017.
6. *Roberts David*. Qatar and the UAE: Exploring Divergent Responses to the Arab Spring // *Middle East Journal*. 2017. Vol. 71. No. 4. pp. 544-562. DOI: 10.3751/71.4.12
7. *Telci Ismail and Horoz Tuba*. Military Bases in the Foreign Policy of the United Arab Emirates // *Insight Turkey*. 2018. Vol. 20. No. 2. pp. 143-166. DOI: 10.25253/99.2018202.11
8. *Janardhan Narayanappa and Afterman Gedaliah*. New UAE-India Economic Deal Opens the Door for Minilateral Partnership with Israel // *The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington*. 2022. March 2. URL: <https://agsiw.org/new-uae-india-economic-deal-opens-the-door-for-minilateral-partnership-with-israel/> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
9. *Leonova Olga*. Indian Foreign Policy Strategy. Evolution, Principles, Goals // *Observer*. 2017. No. 5. pp. 25-42. (in Rus.)
10. *Bhamidipati Gopi Krishna*. India's Shift from Strategic Restraint to Strategic Recalibration in West Asia // *The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington*. 2022. August 9. URL: <https://agsiw.org/indias-shift-from-strategic-restraint-to-strategic-recalibration-in-west-asia/> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
11. Indian Community in UAE // Embassy of India. URL: <https://indembassyuae.gov.in/indian-com-in-uae.php> (accessed: 19.11.2023); India-Qatar Bilateral Relations // Ministry of External Affairs. Government of India. URL: https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Qatar_2021_new.pdf (accessed: 13.03.2023).
12. *Bag Sauradeep*. UPI in the Gulf: Revolutionising Remittances // *Observer Research Foundation*. 2023. February 20. URL:

- <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/upi-in-the-gulf-revolutionising-remittances/> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
13. *Chaturvedi Arpan*. India ties up with UAE to settle trade in rupees. Reuters. 2023. July 15. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/world/india-ties-up-with-uae-settle-trade-rupees-2023-07-15/> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
 14. UAE expects trade with India to cross USD 100 bn in 2-3 years // The Economic Times. 2022. October 10. URL: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/uae-expects-trade-with-india-to-cross-usd-100-bn-in-2-3-years/articleshow/94765350.cms> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
 15. India-UAE Business Council Launched to Boost Bilateral Trade and Investment // Outlook. 2023. February 20. URL: <https://www.outlookindia.com/business/india-uae-business-council-launched-to-boost-bilateral-trade-and-investment-news-263572> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
 16. UAE – India Relations // Invest India. URL: <https://www.investindia.gov.in/country/united-arab-emirates> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
 17. Abu Dhabi seeks Indian investments, invites startups to establish hubs // The Times of India. 2022. December 4. URL: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/startups/trend-tracking/abu-dhabi-seeks-indian-investments-invites-startups-to-establish-hubs/articleshow/95976226.cms> (accessed: 13.03.2023).
 18. *Soliman Mohammed*. An Indo-Abrahamic alliance on the rise: How India, Israel, and the UAE are creating a new transregional order // Middle East Institute. 2021. July 28. URL: <https://www.mei.edu/publications/indo-abrahamic-alliance-rise-how-india-israel-and-uae-are-creating-new-transregional> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
 19. *Siddiqui Huma*. India-UAE to enhance defence cooperation, talk joint defence production and R&D // Financial Express. 2022. May 25. URL: <https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/india-uae-to-enhance-defence-cooperation-talk-joint-defence-production-and-rd/2537679/> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
 20. *Siddiqui Huma*. Middle-East countries could soon seal BrahMos Missile deals // Financial Express. 2022. November 30. URL: <https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/middle-east-countries-could-soon-seal-brahmos-missile-deals/2897142/> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
 21. ICOMM to partner with UAE's CARACAL to manufacture small arms in India // The Indian Express. 2023. February 22. URL: <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/icommm-partner-uae-caracal-manufacture-arms-india-8460789/> (accessed: 19.11.2023).

22. *Soliman Mohammed*. An Indo-Abrahamic alliance on the rise: How India, Israel, and the UAE are creating a new transregional order // Middle East Institute. 2021. July 28. URL: <https://www.mei.edu/publications/indo-abrahamic-alliance-rise-how-india-israel-and-uae-are-creating-new-transregional> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
23. *Alhasan Hasan and Solanki Viraj*. The I2U2 minilateral group // IISS. 2022. November 11. URL: <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2022/11/the-minilateral-i2u2-group> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
24. Joint Statement of the Leaders of India, Israel, United Arab Emirates, and the United States (I2U2) // The White House. 2022. July 14. URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/14/joint-statement-of-the-leaders-of-india-israel-united-arab-emirates-and-the-united-states-i2u2/> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
25. *Tanchum Michaël*. The India-Middle East Food Corridor: How the UAE, Israel, and India are forging a new inter-regional supply chain // Middle East Institute. 2022. July 27. URL: <https://www.mei.edu/publications/india-middle-east-food-corridor-how-uae-israel-and-india-are-forging-new-inter> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
26. Trilateral framework: India, France, UAE unveil cooperation plan // The Indian Express. 2023. February 5. URL: <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/trilateral-framework-india-france-uae-unveil-cooperation-plan-8424530/> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
27. *Shilpa Annie Joseph*. UAE join forces with India to launch third country projects in Africa // GCC Business News. 2022. August 22. URL: <https://www.gccbusinessnews.com/uae-join-forces-with-india-to-launch-third-country-projects-in-africa/> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
28. *Kumar Sachin*. Trade between Qatar and India set to increase this year // The Peninsula. 2016. February 2. URL: <https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/02/02/2016/Trade-between-Qatar-and-India-set-to-increase-this-year> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
29. Distribution of liquefied natural gas imported into India in 2021, by country of origin // Statista. 2023. August 25. URL: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1237488/lng-import-share-india-by-country/> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
30. *Sharma Sukalp*. How natural gas is central to ties between India and Qatar. The Indian Express. 2023. October 28. URL: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-economics/natural-gas-lng-india-qatar-relations-9002396/> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
31. *Carpenter Claudia, Elliott Stuart and Wang Herman*. Infographic: Where do Qatar's LNG exports go? // S&P Global. 2022. April 12. URL:

- <https://www.spglobal.com/commodityinsights/en/market-insights/latest-news/lng/041222-infographic-where-do-qatar-liquefied-natural-gas-exports-go-europe-asia> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
32. Trade Volume Between Qatar, India Increases to USD 17.2 Billion in 2021-2022. Qatar News Agency. 2023. July 13. URL: <https://www.qna.org.qa/en/News-Area/News/2023-07/13/0032-trade-volume-between-qatar,-india-increases-to-usd-172-billion-in-2021-2022> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
 33. India's trade with Gulf Cooperation Council increasing at rapid pace // Financial Express. 2022. June 6. URL: <https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/indias-trade-with-gulf-cooperation-council-increasing-at-rapid-pace/2550307/> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
 34. *Kaitibie Simeon, Irungu Patrick, Ng'ombe John and Missiame Arnold.* Managing Food Imports for Food Security in Qatar // *Economies*. 2022. Vol. 10. No. 168. DOI: 10.3390/economies10070168
 35. "Qatar's investments in India increase fivefold in two years" // *The Peninsula*. 2022. May 9. URL: <https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/09/05/2022/qatars-investments-in-india-increase-fivefold-in-two-years> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
 36. India shares robust economic partnership with Qatar: Venkaiah Naidu // *Business Standard*. 2022. June 6. URL: https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-shares-robust-economic-partnership-with-qatar-venkaiah-naidu-122060500941_1.html (accessed: 19.11.2023).
 37. India strengthening bilateral relations with Qatar // Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. 2023. February 6. URL: <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1896791> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
 38. Cafiero Giorgio and Miao Elaine. India's role in Qatar's food security crisis // *TRT World*. URL: <https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/india-s-role-in-qatar-s-food-security-crisis-10552> (accessed: 19.11.2023).
 39. India-Qatar Bilateral Relations // Ministry of External Affairs. Government of India. 2021. URL: https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Qatar_2021_new.pdf (accessed: 19.11.2023).

SECTION II. OTHER REGIONAL PLAYERS

Chapter 7. The War of Iron Swords: Continuity and Change in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Liudmila Samarskaia

The fourth sabbath of the new 5784 Jewish year, the Shmini Atzeret and Simchat Torah holiday, was marred by the start of a new round of the escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It took place the day after the 50th anniversary of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. The flare-up started with the launch of thousands of Hamas rockets into Israeli territory, accompanied by the invasion of its armed formations by land, water, and air. The unexpected nature of the Al-Aqsa Flood operation, along with its prolonged and meticulous planning, resulted in massive casualties on Israel's side, among them around 1200 dead, thousands injured, and more than 200 taken hostage. The brutality of the Hamas assault revived Israelis' traumatic memories of the Yom Kippur War and even the Shoah. The rapid success of the attack demonstrated the poor readiness of Israel's security forces to counter such threats. It took reinforcements several hours to reach Hamas-controlled areas and several days to secure them. The attack turned out to be unprecedented in another sense as well – Israel was forced to fight on its own land for the first time in decades, which fundamentally contradicted one of the core principles of its security doctrine.

The Causes of Escalation

Characteristically, the current escalation was unexpected, not only for external observers but also for Israel's political and military establishment. Yet, the attack is difficult to assess as totally unforeseen. On the one hand, the absence of any resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and any hope for its peaceful settlement in the nearest term, as well as the harsh living conditions in Palestinian territories, has inevitably resulted in radicalization on both sides and the prioritizing of violence as the sole effective instrument, or so it would seem. Since 2022, the terror wave implemented by Palestinians from the West Bank, sometimes by Israeli Arab citizens, and usually with no affiliation to any particular group, has not come to an end. In parallel, the Israeli security forces conducted several anti-terror operations in

the West Bank, which partially prevented the attacks, but at the same time have definitely not diminished the level of anti-Israel sentiments among the Palestinians. On the other hand, the politics of Israel's current right-wing government has additionally contributed to the escalation of tensions, with its pursuit of antagonistic rhetoric and increased settlement activity on the occupied territories.

According to some estimates, as well as claims coming directly from Hamas,¹ the movement carried out long and thorough preparations for this attack, which would explain the noticeable absence of Hamas' involvement in Israel-Gaza escalations since May 2021. The factors contributing to the timing of the attack could be the following: firstly, the prolonged Israeli political crisis, aggravated by the attempt of Benjamin Netanyahu's government to pass highly controversial judicial reform could have given the impression to external actors that the Jewish state was weak. An additional factor creating an illusion of Israel's weakness could be the refusal of numerous reservists to show up for volunteer reserve duty as part of their protest against judicial overhaul, which caused concerns over Israel's resilience in the face of external threats.² Secondly, the relatively successful negotiations on normalizing relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, accompanied by the deprioritization of the Palestinian issue (which still preserved its political importance), could be an additional factor that encouraged Hamas to attract international attention and return its relevance as a potential representative of Palestinian interests. According to a statement by a Hamas representative Ali Barakeh, the aim of the operation was "to free Palestinian prisoners, stop Israeli aggression on al-Aqsa Mosque, and to break the siege on Gaza."³

The reasons behind Hamas' "success" will certainly be the subject of a separate Israeli investigation. For now, it is only possible to make assumptions about the factors that became pivotal. Ronen Bar, the head of the Israeli intelligence agency Shin Bet, has already taken responsibility for miscalculations that made the attack possible.⁴ A potential reason, cited by some experts and considered one of the most significant, lies in Israel's underestimation of Hamas capabilities and misperception of its intentions. The Gaza front was considered "stable" and "controllable", while Hamas was deemed to be prioritizing economic stability over ideology, a presumption that proved to be wrong. Besides, heightened terrorist activity in the West Bank diverted a considerable part of Israel's security resources.

An additional factor could be the priorities of the ruling coalition which was focused on internal matters, including judicial reform. Apart from that, politically motivated public clashes between governmental officials and the military establishment could not but undermine mutual understanding and represent a serious security risk in this respect.⁵

Israel's Reaction

Israel's response included both an armed attack (neutralizing Hamas' infiltrators in the south of Israel and striking Gaza's territory from the air) and non-military measures to apply pressure on Hamas (cutting off electricity, fuel, water and food supplies to the Gaza Strip). Inhabitants of Gaza City were instructed to leave their homes and move to the south of the Gaza Strip. In a few days, water supply to the south was resumed, probably to encourage the population to change locations. All these measures were evidently part of the preparation for the current ground operation.

The proclaimed goal of Operation Iron Swords is the elimination of Hamas.⁶ To achieve this, Israel launched a ground offensive at the end of October. One of the purposes for such a decision was to demonstrate their strength and military capabilities, the image of which suffered a serious blow both inside and outside Israel on the 7th of October. The perspectives of a ground operation are, however, vague, both for tactical and strategic reasons. On the one hand, an invasion is fraught with a large number of casualties, even in the event of Israel's success, which is hardly guaranteed. On the other, the elimination of Hamas, which is essentially the ruler in the Gaza Strip, will inevitably raise the issue of who is going to control this territory in the future. Israel will probably not be prepared to take on this responsibility, as it had already disengaged from Gaza in 2005. The Palestinian Authority, already weakened, might be unable to rule both Gaza and the West Bank. There are other projects under discussion, but perspectives of their realization are still far from clear.

One could make the claim with a degree of certainty that as a result of the October 7 attack Israel will have to decisively change its approach toward Gaza's armed formations and to the Strip as a whole. According to the assessments of representatives of Israel's military establishment, they misinterpreted Hamas' intentions and the conclusions Hamas drew from previous escalations.⁷ As a result, the Israel-Gaza war can have a profound effect on the future development of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and

produce outcomes that neither side could have expected. The dynamic of the current escalation is also quite unpredictable. Sudden “black swans”, inevitable in such conditions, might have an impact that would be most difficult to foresee.

The Internal Israeli Context

The inability of Israel’s leadership to provide security for their citizens caused serious widespread criticism. As a result, the level of support for the current coalition dropped significantly. According to several polls conducted from October to December, the popularity of Likud has diminished by 40% (it would receive around 20 Knesset seats instead of 32), while the opposition’s National Camp increased almost four times. Besides, the level of Benjamin Netanyahu’s support has naturally plunged: just around 30% of those surveyed wanted to see him in his role as Prime Minister after the war.⁸

One of the most dangerous consequences of the Al-Aqsa Flood could be the drop-off in the public’s trust of the army, which has traditionally been quite high. For now, around 70% of Israelis remain sure of the IDF’s capability to counter threats, which is lower than before the war, but is still on a relatively high level.⁹

The political crisis in Israel is far from resolved. The escalation, however, has certainly helped in temporarily unifying Israeli society. When asked whether they felt “part of the State of Israel and its problems” in the beginning of November during a poll conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute, 94% of the Israeli Jews and 70% of the Israeli Arabs answered in the affirmative, which marked the highest percentage since 2003 (when the question was asked for the first time) and is up considerably since June 2023.¹⁰

Similar processes are taking place among the political establishment. Part of the National Camp party members, including its head Benny Gantz, who served as Minister of Defense in the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 coalitions, joined the emergency national unity government for the duration of the hostilities. Gantz entered the “war cabinet”, which also includes Prime Minister Netanyahu and current Minister of Defense Yoav Galant. The aim of this structure is to take consensus decisions that correspond to the interests of the popular majority. The passing of any reforms that are not related to the current crisis has been postponed.¹¹

International Context

The US, Israel's key ally, has demonstrated decisive support for the Jewish state both on official and practical levels. The week following the Hamas' attack, Washington sent several aircraft carriers to the Eastern Mediterranean.¹² It also announced that it would provide all the additional military aid that Jerusalem had requested (although financial aid was under discussion). The purpose of all these steps, as well as numerous recent trips by the official American representatives to the region, is to prevent further regional escalation and the opening of new anti-Israeli fronts, in particular by Iran and its allies and proxies.¹³

Several European countries, including Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, and many others, condemned Hamas' actions, while some of them have also demonstrated their readiness to implement their support for Israel in practice. Among regional players the reaction was somewhat mixed. Iran, Qatar, Algeria, Syria supported the Palestinian movement, while several other actors (such as Hezbollah and the Houthis) launched a range of attacks against Israel (of varying intensity). Turkey called on the sides to start negotiations and, at the same time, rhetorically supported the Palestinians by harshly condemning Israel's attacks. The majority of Arab countries, while denouncing Israel, took a cautious position. The UAE called the Hamas' actions "a grave escalation."¹⁴ Previously, they allegedly warned Syria's president Bashar Assad against interfering into the conflict.¹⁵ Besides, Muhammed bin Zayed was the first Arab leader to speak with Benjamin Netanyahu after the attack from the Gaza Strip.¹⁶ Additionally, the UAE's head also personally met with Israel's president Yitzhak Herzog during the climate summit in Dubai.¹⁷

Against the backdrop of escalation, the dialogue on normalizing relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, which had been perceived as quite successful, has been frozen.¹⁸ In this respect, the effect of the current round of hostilities on the regional normalization processes might be twofold. On the one hand, it can be significantly impeded as the Palestinian issue, still hardly resolvable, will again be in the limelight of the Middle Eastern agenda. On the other, the aggravation of the conflict might, conversely, bring on its ultimate resolution with the active involvement of regional actors that have contacts with both sides of the conflict, which would have a stabilizing effect on the Middle East as a whole.¹⁹

Old Conflict, New Rules?

The escalation of October 7 proved in many ways to be unprecedented. On the one hand, the number of Israeli victims and hostages was higher than ever before. The same can be said about Palestinian casualties, which amounted to around thirty thousand in almost half a year of fighting according to official data.²⁰ On the other, the regional context demonstrated significant changes. The criticism of Israel's actions was not as pronounced as it had been in the past. Besides, the USA and several of the European countries' support for Israel was stronger than usual – probably due to the character of the Hamas' attack against the Jewish state.

One of the factors that differentiates the current round of hostilities from previous ones is the apparent absence of any realistic “exit strategy” for Israel. It is not clear what can be called a victory in this context, especially for Israel. While previous escalations could be ended in truces more or less acceptable to both sides, this time a long-term ceasefire on similar conditions is highly unlikely. Israel is obviously opting for the destruction of Hamas' rule in the Gaza Strip, but hardly envisions “the day after”, as mentioned above.

The effect of the October 2023 Israel-Gaza war is twofold. On the one hand, the escalation and its nature have truly brought into the spotlight the Palestinian problem (as well as the Hamas problem in particular) and the fact that without its resolution peace in the region as a whole might be unattainable. On the other, it highlighted, rather than cut short, some of the trends that have been characteristic of the region in the last years. The normalization process, having seemingly lost all perspective, turned out to be partially frozen and not halted altogether. Proof of this came in the form of comments made by the former intelligence chief of Saudi Arabia, as well as former ambassador to the USA and UK, Prince Turki al-Faisal who, while harshly criticizing Israel and its current government, at the same time decisively condemned Hamas' actions,²¹ which sharply contrasted with, for example, Iran's statements of unequivocal support for the Al-Aqsa Flood operation. The UAE's position, discussed previously, is also quite telling.

* * *

10/7 is a date that will forever remain part of the tragic history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The causes of the large-scale tragedy that befell Israel in October 2023 will most probably be revealed only after the end of hostilities. There will certainly be a special investigation. The current events are bound

to have a profound influence on the balance of power on Israel's political landscape, which will witness a significant weakening of the right-wing parties (though not of right-wing ideology), Likud in particular, which finds itself leading the country at such a critical moment, but which was unable to prevent the invasion. Focused on other issues often unrelated to state security, the leaders of the ruling block only worsened the already deep social and political crisis in the country.

As a result, surprise escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict took on a scale that inevitably defined the way Jerusalem reacted to the attack, which might influence the region as a whole. The potential risk of the conflict spilling over and additional actors getting involved was assessed as being high. Later on, the large-scale participation of multiple regional players in the conflict seemed unlikely, although no scenarios could be potentially ruled out. The calls for a peaceful settlement, as usual, are highly relevant, although the perspectives for dialogue are still too vague. However, despite further progress of Operation Iron Swords, it is precisely diplomatic negotiations at the end of hostilities – probably with regional and extra-regional actors involved – that can promote long-term stabilization of the situation and bring on the conflict's ultimate resolution.

Notes

1. *Murphy Paul P., John Tara, Swails Brent, Liebermann Oren.* Hamas militants trained for its deadly attack in plain sight and less than a mile from Israel's heavily fortified border // CNN. 2023. October 12. URL: <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/10/12/middleeast/hamas-training-site-gaza-israel-intl/index.html> (accessed: 4.12.23).
2. *Michael Kobi.* A Sea Change and a Slippery Slope: When the Military Becomes a Political Actor. INSS Insight No. 1710 // INSS. 2023. April 18. URL: <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/idf-politics/> (accessed: 4.12.23).
3. *Rubin Shira, Dadouch Sarah, Hendrix Steve.* How Hamas's carefully planned Israel attack devolved into a chaotic rampage // The Washington Post. 2023. October 16. URL: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/10/16/hamas-attack-israel/> (accessed: 4.12.23).
4. *Fabian Emanuel.* Shin Bet chief: We were unable to thwart Oct. 7 onslaught, responsibility is mine // The Times of Israel. 2023. October 16. URL: https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/shin-bet-chief-

- we-were-unable-to-thwart-oct-7-onslaught-responsibility-is-mine/
(accessed: 4.12.23).
5. *Shelah Ofer*. The Attacks on Israel's Security Leadership: More than Populism and Bad Manners. INSS Insight No. 1764 // INSS. 2023. September 11. URL: <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/security-leadership-attacks/> (accessed: 4.12.23).
 6. Netanyahu: We will destroy Hamas, this is only the beginning // The Jerusalem Post. 2023. October 13. URL: <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-768204> (accessed: 4.12.23).
 7. *Khalil Zein, Duran Zeynep Hilal Karyagdi*. Top Israeli official admits mistake in thinking Hamas was conflict shy // Anadolu Agency. 2023. October 15. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/top-israeli-official-admits-mistake-in-thinking-hamas-was-conflict-shy/3020712> (accessed: 4.12.23).
 8. *Cohen Moshe*. Seker "Maariv": ha-koalitzia mitraseket, ha-Likud 19 bil'vad; Gantz nosek // Maariv. 2023. October 13. URL: <https://www.maariv.co.il/news/politics/Article-1044603> (accessed: 4.12.23) (in Hebrew); *Cohen Moshe*. Betzel shikhrur ha-khatufim: hit'osheshut shel ha-Likud ve-Netanyahu // Maariv. 2023. December 1. URL: <https://www.maariv.co.il/news/politics/Article-1056342> (accessed: 4.12.23) (in Hebrew).
 9. *Cohen Moshe*. Seker "Maariv": ha-koalitzia mitraseket, ha-Likud 19 bil'vad; Gantz nosek // Maariv. 2023. October 13. URL: <https://www.maariv.co.il/news/politics/Article-1044603> (accessed: 4.12.23) (in Hebrew).
 10. *Hermann Tamar, Anabi Or*. Flash Survey: Israelis support immediate negotiations to release the hostages while fighting continues // IDI. 2023. November 10. URL: <https://en.idi.org.il/articles/51431> (accessed: 4.12.23).
 11. *Keller-Lynn Carrie*. Knesset okays war cabinet; PM: Saturday 'most horrible day for Jews since Holocaust' // The Times of Israel. 2023. October 12. URL: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/knesset-okays-war-cabinet-pm-saturday-most-horrible-day-for-jews-since-holocaust/> (accessed: 4.12.23).
 12. *Lamothe Dan, Sands Leo*. Pentagon surging thousands of troops toward Israel amid Gaza war // The Washington Post. 2023. October 17. URL: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/10/17/us-deploys-sailors-marines-israel-hamas/> (accessed: 4.12.23).
 13. *Pamuk Humeyrai*. Blinken to Israel on Middle East mission to prevent a wider war // Reuters. 2023. October 11. URL:

- <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/blinken-headed-israel-show-us-solidarity-seek-deterrence-2023-10-11/> (accessed: 4.12.23).
14. *Waldo Cleary, Epstein Gabriel, Hilbush Sydney, Zelin Aaron Y.* International Reactions to the Hamas Attack on Israel // The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. 2023. October 11. URL: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/international-reactions-hamas-attack-israel> (accessed: 4.12.23).
 15. *Ravid Barak.* Scoop: UAE warns Syria's Assad not to get involved in Hamas-Israel war // Axios. 2023. October 9. URL: <https://www.axios.com/2023/10/09/israel-hamas-gaza-war-uae-syria-assad> (accessed: 4.12.23).
 16. *Bassist Rina.* Netanyahu speaks with UAE president in first call with Arab leader since Hamas attack // Al-Monitor. 2023. October 16. URL: <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/10/netanyahu-speaks-uae-president-first-call-arab-leader-hamas-attack> (accessed: 4.12.23).
 17. President Herzog attends the COP28 UN Climate Conference in the United Arab Emirates // Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Gov.il. 2023. December 1. URL: <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/president-herzog-attends-the-cop28-un-climate-conference-1-dec-2023> (accessed: 4.12.23).
 18. Saudis said to tell US they are halting normalization talks with Israel // The Times of Israel. 2023. October 14. URL: https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/saudis-said-to-tell-us-they-are-halting-normalization-talks-with-israel/ (accessed: 4.12.23).
 19. *Vakil Sanam.* MENA countries should lead the way de-escalating the Israel–Hamas war // Chatham House. 2023. October 11. URL: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/10/mena-countries-should-lead-way-de-escalating-israel-hamas-war> (accessed: 4.12.23).
 20. Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel – reported impact, 15 February 2024 at 15:00 // OCHA. 2024. February 15. URL: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-15-february-2024-1500> (accessed: 19.02.23).
 21. *Joffre Tzvi.* WATCH: Fmr. Saudi official: There are no heroes in Israel-Hamas war, only victims // The Jerusalem Post. 2023. October 20. URL: <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-769308> (accessed: 4.12.23).

Chapter 8. The Baloch Issue in Iran: From History to Present Day

Anastasia Bogacheva

The Baloch are a divided nation residing mainly in Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. In these countries, the Baloch have minority status and face several restrictions. The desire to overcome these restrictions encourages Baloch activists to defend their national rights. At the same time, understanding what these rights mean for the Baluchis and their leaders invites a wide range of opinions – from demands for improving the standard of living and respect for their ethnocultural identity, to the desire for self-determination and the formation of a free independent Balochistan, which was put forward by Baloch nationalists back in the second half of the 20th Century. Considering present-day geopolitical conditions, even the very existence of such a project is a challenge to the current regional configuration and inevitably leads to a conflict between the active Baloch minority and the various affected central governments. The Baloch activist movement has never been monolithic – it is represented by several groups of organizations. Among the most active are diaspora organizations (mostly secular), whose activities mainly involve promoting the Baloch issue and drawing the attention of the global community to the numerous human rights violations in Balochistan, mainly through peaceful demonstrations and engaging the media. Also noteworthy are the Baloch nationalist organizations of Iran and Pakistan, which are directly involved in the national liberation struggle but employing protests and terrorist actions. Baloch activism in Sistan and Baluchistan and the activity of diaspora organizations became a serious challenge for the Iranian leadership during the 2022-2023 protests. Discontent among the local population was caused by underdeveloped infrastructure, poverty, and insufficient government assistance in rebuilding cities and villages after earthquakes, floods, and droughts (2021-2023). At the same time, in 2023 the problem of clean water shortages remains acute due to the fact that the Taliban are blocking the reservoir at the border.

In Iran, the Baloch problem, which has internal and external dimensions, has traditionally (and not unreasonably) been viewed as a potential threat to the internal stability and territorial integrity of the country. Compared to other regions of Iran, Baloch territories are the least economically developed. This,

together with an unfavorable social situation, leads to an increase in the likelihood of protests and creates conditions favorable for external intervention. The government of the Islamic Republic is forced not only to confront challenges such as terrorism, the smuggling of drugs, weapons and fuel from the territory of “Greater Balochistan”, but also to take measures to prevent destabilization in Iranian Balochistan. The processes that took place in Iran’s Baloch areas, one way or another, were inevitably included in regional ones – the stirring up of activity in “Greater Balochistan” was met with the support of the Baloch in Iran, and vice versa. In present-day Iran, the controversy of the Baloch minority with the central government is not only ethnic (as in Pakistan and Afghanistan), but is also of a religious nature. For a long time, Iran’s leadership tried to act exclusively by force, which repeatedly proved its effectiveness, yet it failed to solve all its problems. In this regard, since the beginning of the 21st Century elements of “effective governance” began to be introduced into the policies of the Iran’s state authorities, which were aimed at promoting the development of depressed provinces inhabited by minorities, among which was the province of Sistan and Baluchistan.

Even though many foreign and domestic works are devoted to the issues of Iran’s national policies and the various ethnic movements (primarily the Kurds), the problem of the Baluchis in the Islamic Republic of Iran receives much less attention. The issue is more often considered in the framework of academic works devoted to the Baloch people and Baluchistan in general, primarily those written by authors of Baluch origin (Doshoki¹, Hossainbor², Baloch³, Boladai⁴, Dashti⁵). However, if the situation of the Baluchis of Pakistan is a much more popular topic, then the situation in Afghan Balochistan, for obvious reasons, is minimally covered.

In Russia, specialists in the field of Iranian studies (Nina Mamedova; Elena Dunaeva; Olga Zhigalina; Marina Kameneva; Lana Ravandi-Fadai; Vladimir Sazhin; Alexander Polishchuk) have directly or indirectly addressed the Baloch problem in Iran in the context of such topics as: socio-economic development Iran,⁶ ethno-national and religious,^{7,8,9,10,11,12} language and cultural policy,¹³ and security policy in Iran.¹⁴ And, of course, in the monograph by Mikhail Pikulin “The Baloch”¹⁵ (the first work on the Baluch, published in the USSR in 1959), several sections are devoted directly to the situation of the Baloch in Western (Iranian) Balochistan.

Baloch Minority: General Characteristics and Peculiarities of the Situation in Iran

The Baloch people are an ethnic group of Iranian origin, the number of which, according to various estimates, ranges from 10 to 20 million people, and are currently settled in the Iran-Pakistan border zone and neighboring areas of Afghanistan. The national language, “Balochi”, belongs to the northwestern group of Iranian languages of the Indo-European language family.¹⁶ By religion, the majority are Sunnis, but there are also a few followers of Shiism. Historically, the Baloch belong to a traditional nomadic culture and have developed tribal divisions. The Baloch tribes settled within the historical region of Balochistan, located in the southeast of the Iranian plateau. Most of the territories are desert-flat terrain with a small number of rivers and an arid, unfavorable climate for humans, dissected in various directions by mostly treeless mountain ranges.

Baluchistan is divided into three regions: Western (Iranian – with a Baloch population of about three million people), Eastern (Pakistani – about eight million people) and Central (Afghan – about 600 thousand people).¹⁷ Administratively, it is divided into provinces that are part of the following neighboring states: Sistan and Baluchistan (Iran); Kandahar, Helmand (Afghanistan) and Balochistan (Pakistan). In addition, medium and small Baloch communities live in Oman, the UAE and other Gulf countries,¹⁸ several villages of the Mary oasis in Turkmenistan, and in several Western countries.

As a people, the Baloch have been known since ancient times, with several versions about their origin in existence. Several authors are of the opinion that they descend from the Arabs, while others attribute to them Turkmen origin, while still others consider them descendants of Indian Rajputs.¹⁹ But still, the most scientifically substantiated and widespread version among all versions is that the Baloch come from the northern regions of Iran. Western (Iranian) Balochistan officially became part of the Qajar Empire in 1871-1873, and since then, despite numerous attempts at uprisings against the central government, was part of first Persia, then Iran (from 1935), and from 1979 the Islamic Republic of Iran. Nevertheless, the heads of the tribes of Eastern and Central Balochistan throughout the 20th Century periodically managed to achieve short-term independence. Sporadic uprisings of the Baloch in Iran, as a rule, either ended in nothing or provoked waves of retaliatory measures from the central government, which, however, did not

in any way cancel the inclusion of Western Balochistan in general Baloch and regional processes and contributed to the political activation of Iran's Baloch. At the same time, the "problematic" nature of the Baloch issue has always been inextricably linked with the national policy of the Iranian state and was one of the components of the "national question."

With the adoption of a new constitution after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the concept of the "community of the Muslim ummah" formed the basis of Iran's national policy.²⁰ In articles 11 and 12, the idea of a "community of Islamic peoples" is revealed. It is postulated that all Muslims of Iran represent a single ummah, and the government undertakes to pursue a policy focused on the "union of Islamic peoples" and must make every effort to realize the political, economic and cultural unity of the Islamic world.

Despite the fact that Jafarite Islam has been proclaimed the official religion, other movements and madhhabs of Islam are also recognized (in particular Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanbali, and Zaydi), the followers of which are "completely free to perform religious rituals in accordance with their religious norms, can practice religious upbringing and education, decide civil and personal matters and, on their basis, go to court in any place where followers of one of these Islamic movements constitute the majority of the population," and "local rules and regulations are established by councils based on the requirements of these religious movements, while showing respect for the rights of followers of other Muslim movements."²¹ In accordance with Iran's constitution, free use of local national languages in the media alongside Persian is allowed. It is also permissible to teach national literatures in schools. It is prohibited to expel someone from his place of residence, and it is also prohibited for a person to settle in a random place at his own discretion, except in cases provided for by law.²²

Unfortunately, these constitutional principles were not always implemented in practice. The revitalization of ethno-national problems within Iran's present-day society, in fact, indicates that the government's policy of consolidating all ethnic groups into a single nation has for more than three decades failed to solve the problems of its multi-ethnic community, and at present ethno-national policy is the most vulnerable component of domestic policy of the country.²³

In present-day Iran, the Baloch are the ethnic majority in the province of Sistan and Baluchestan, but also live compactly in the provinces of Khorasan, Kerman, and Hormozgan. At the same time, various members of

the Baloch are settled throughout the country, which can largely be explained by their natural desire to search for career opportunities (especially in conditions of rising unemployment) and improve their living conditions. The province of Sistan and Baluchistan is considered one of the least economically developed provinces of Iran. Thus, in 2011, per capita GDP there amounted to only 0.4% of the national level, and in 2014 – 0.2%.²⁴ Also, the province lags behind in terms of socio-demographic and environmental indicators. Average population density in the southeastern regions of province is only 0.5–2.0 people per square km (the lowest figure in the country: the average population density in Iran is about 32 people per square km). In addition, the areas belonging to the Dashte-Lut desert are practically deserted (inhabited only in individual oases or on the outskirts). The province suffers from a lack of clean water, and individual cities suffer from excessive air pollution.²⁵ According to the official statistics center of Iran, the urbanization coefficient of the Sistan and Baluchistan region is only 48.5%, which indicates an extremely weak level of urbanization.²⁶ As of 2016, the majority of the province's population (58.5%) belonged to the age group of 14-65 years, while only 3.2% were over 65 years old; the overall literacy rate in Sistan and Baluchistan was 76.03%, with a clear disproportion between the urban (literate 74.15%) and rural (literate 48.23%) populations.

Many of the problems listed above are not new to the province. The high level of unemployment, lack of water, air pollution, and general uneven socio-economic development of individual regions are nationwide problems and, further aggravated by economic sanctions, do not contribute to internal stability. Being dissatisfied with their standards of living has characterized most Iranians in recent years. In the case of the non-Persian periphery, this situation is further aggravated by the persistence of ethnic and religious heterogeneity. From this perspective, the nature of the Baloch issue can be tied precisely to this dissatisfaction, however, the (sometimes excessive) ambitions of the top of the Baloch elite and individual activists play an important role as well.

Baloch Activism: History and Modernity

The organized phase of Baloch resistance to the government began in the 1950s. The first Baloch organization in Iran was the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF). The Front's strategy was almost entirely based on armed

struggle and an active search for external support. In the 1960s and early 1970s (until 1975), the activities of the BLF were supported by the Iraqi Baathist regime,²⁷ which, in turn, was a response to Iran's interference in the affairs of Iraqi Kurdistan and its support of local Kurdish activists. The example of political and armed resistance of the Baloch people of Pakistan played a major role. Moreover, many of the political activists who participated in the "resistance campaign" in Western Balochistan at this time were originally refugees from Eastern Balochistan. They moved to Iran and Sindh (one of Pakistan provinces) and subsequently became part of Iranian Baloch organizations. BLF was active until 1975, after which it was forced to curtail its activities. There were several reasons for this: the cessation of support from Iraq; intensifying repression directed against participants and supporters of the Front, both in Western Baluchistan and beyond; and, exacerbation of personal and ideological differences among external leaders of the BLF. In addition, the struggle for influence within the BLF itself, which unfolded between tribal leaders and middle-rank activists, called into question the prospects for the survival of the BLF as a leading resistance organization.²⁸

Even though the goals of the national liberation movement through armed resistance were not achieved, BLF activities still contributed to the Shah's regime adopting a few political and economic measures aimed at reducing "Baloch violence". In particular, the powers of tribal elites were expanded, after which they became more willing to interact with the regime. In addition, several economic and social projects were launched in Balochistan. Schools were opened in many villages, and government scholarships for higher education began to be available to Baloch students.²⁹

The only Baloch political party associated with the national struggle during the Pahlavi period was the Balochistan National Movement, founded in 1971. It advocated the creation of Baloch autonomy within a federal Iran, but towards the end of the 1970s, like the Front, it lost its effectiveness and remained inactive until 1983, when, a few years after regime change in Iran, it was revived.³⁰

Beginning in the late 1970s³¹ the educated Baloch youth of Iran and Pakistan began to create their own organizations. In 1978-1979 among activists there were often hopes for the transformation of Iran into a democratic federal state, within which Western Baluchistan would have autonomous status.³² The popular idea was that favorable conditions would then emerge for a new

armed uprising against the Persians, after which the Baloch could occupy a more privileged position in the new political system. However, the majority had no illusions about the new government's readiness to neglect the interests of the territorial integrity of the state (and this is what ultimately happened).

After the Islamic revolution, Baloch activism and the national liberation struggle acquired a religious component. Baloch organizations began to resort to a combination of political and military methods in their activities. Many Baloch nationalists' leaders were forced to leave the territory of the Islamic Republic. At the same time, some of those who went to Pakistan, Afghanistan, or Arab countries in the 1980s subsequently emigrated to Europe and practically lost ties with their homeland.³³ Gradually, a nationalistically-minded Baloch diaspora emerged, which saw as its main task the preservation of their political parties and organizations. The question of the need for reforms and adjustments to their strategies was not raised until the 1990s, after which modern parties and unions began to form. The main organizations during this period were: Jombesh-e Milli-e Balochistan (National Movement of Balochistan); Bam-e Istar (Peak of Resistance); Nabard-e Baloch (Organization of the Baloch Struggle); Sazman-e democratic-e Mardom-e Balochistan (Democratic Organization of the People of Baluchistan); Sazman-e Inqilabi-e Rahkargir (The Worker's Path).

A split among Baloch activists in exile in terms of ideology and values predetermined the collapse of the Balochistan National Movement. By the beginning of the 2000s, a significant part of its members left the organization. In 2003, many of them reunited and formed Hizb-e Murdom-e Balochistan, also known as the Balochistan People's Party. At the same time, to coordinate the activities of disparate Baloch groups, parties, and organizations, the "United Front of Balochistan" was formed. The goal of its creation was to unite all the forces of Baloch nationalists into a single movement and, despite the refusal of the Baluchistan People's Party to join it, this became a serious step towards the unification of all Baloch political organizations operating in the West.

Currently, the most notable of the currently active external Baloch organizations are: "Balochistan People's Party", represented by Nasser Boladai and "Balochistan National Movement",³⁴ represented by Abdullah Siyakha. Both organizations distance themselves from using violent methods in their struggle, and their primary activities boil down to highlighting

numerous cases of non-compliance with human rights in Balochistan and the promotion of the Baloch problem among “Western audiences” and in international organizations. Thus, thanks to the efforts of the People’s Party, since 2005 Baluchistan has been a member of the Unpresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO).³⁵ Another area of activity of Baloch organizations is their close interaction with nationalist organizations, groups, and individuals in Eastern Balochistan, primarily with those whose work is also aimed at drawing attention to the “Baloch problem” and human rights violations in Balochistan.

In addition, there are other Baloch diaspora organizations (not particularly active in recent years): Jib-e Mardom Balochistan (People's Front of Balochistan), Jib-e Muttahida Balochistan (United Front of Balochistan); Jamhori-ye Khuahan (Republic Faction); Jib-e Muttahida Azadsazi Balochistan (United Liberation Front of Balochistan); Jublish-e Mubarizin-e Balochistan (Balochistan Fighters Movement); Sherkat-e Mostafel-e Balochistan (Company for an Independent Balochistan); and Itihad-e Milli (Diligence of the Nation). Many Baloch nationalists refuse to lose hope that they will be heard by the global community and organize peaceful rallies, flash mobs, and campaigns to support the “Baluchistan project” on social networks. For a long time, their main source of hope was the international isolation of Iran due to the country’s nuclear program issue. After the nuclear deal was reached in 2015, expectations for a Baloch national liberation movement dropped significantly. But after the agreement’s failure in 2018, freedom expectations began to rise again. Baloch nationalists can now only invoke the internal problems of the Islamic Republic and the low socio-economic indicators directly in the province of Sistan and Baluchistan.³⁶ During the years of the Iranian nuclear program crisis, Baloch activists appreciated its potential for drawing the attention of the world community to the Baloch problem. Baloch political parties and organizations that were once disunited have found common ground on which to form a coalition of sorts.

Religion became a major component of Baloch activism in Iran after the Islamic Revolution. Emigration of secular Baloch leaders created an open space for mullahs. At the same time, the resistance forces of Baloch religious were well aware of the secular nature of the national liberation struggle. Therefore, they added the “national rights protection” slogan to their major idea of “religious rights protection” on behalf of Baloch minority. Moreover,

unlike secular leaders, they did not demand the secession of Western Balochistan and that independence be granted. The main Baloch religious organizations active in the period 1970-2000 were: Hizb-e Ittehad al-Muslemin (Muslim Diligence Party); Shura-e Mili-e Ahle Sunna (National Council for the True Sunnah); Wahdat-e Baloch (Baloch Unity); Baloch Fedayin (Baluch Fedayeen”);³⁷ and Jundullah (Army of Allah).

At present, highlighting the religious component of Baloch activism is still justified. Led by Abdul-Malik Rigi,³⁸ (Baloch by origin), the terrorist Islamist organization Jundullah emerged in 2003, and conducted separatist and armed activities.³⁹ In one interview Rigi called himself an Iranian and claimed that his main goal was “to improve the quality of life of the Iranian Baloch” and “to fight for the rights of Sunni minority in Iran.” The most active Jundullah was between 2005 and 2010, when the following actions were carried out: an attack on the motorcade of President Ahmadinejad in December 2005, as well as a number of terrorist attacks in 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2012.⁴⁰ Rigi was arrested and executed in 2010.⁴¹ Under the leadership of a new leader – Muhammad Jahir Baloch, Jundullah became localized in Pakistan. He made an attempt to rid the movement of its image as a terrorist organization. “Baloch nationalism” was included in the organization’s main slogans, which changed its name to Jombesh-e Estegamat-e Murdom-e Iran (Popular Resistance Movement of Iran).⁴²

In 2012, Jundullah split into Jaish al-Adl (Army of Justice) and Harakat-e Ansar-e Iran (Guerrilla Movement of Iran). Harakat-e Ansar-e Iran, (peak activity fell on the period 2012-2013) subsequently merged with Hizbul-Furqan (Selection Party) and changed its name to Ansar Al-Furqan (Selection Guerillas). Jaish al-Adl still exists. During the period 2012-2018 many terrorist attacks against Iranian security forces were carried out, including kidnappings and the murders of Iranian officials. The organization was responsible for a wave of protests in 2022-2023. At this time an explosion killed 41 people, including both military personnel and civilians. What’s more, armed Baloch groups in Iran coordinated their activities with formations and Baloch organizations in Eastern Balochistan. The main Baloch military bases now are situated in Pakistan.⁴³

Resolving the Baloch Issue: Government Policy

The phenomenon of cross-border Baloch activism, naturally, does not include the involvement of all Baloch people living in Iran in the liberation

struggle. Baloch activists who commit crimes against the Islamic Republic are punished to the fullest extent of the law. However (contrary to popular Western view), punishments and executions are not applied without grounds established by law.

Armed groups are concentrated mainly in the areas of the Pakistan-Iran and Afghan-Iran borders. Therefore, the principal means for preventing terrorist attacks and ensuring security are concentrated there. Thus, the border with Afghanistan is one of the most fortified borders of Iran. In 2007, a project was launched to build a reinforced concrete wall along the border with Pakistan, and since the 2010s, construction of a network of fortifications has been actively underway. This program involves the creation of hundreds of kilometers of ditches, numerous watchtowers, and border fortifications. Unmanned aerial vehicles and helicopters are now used to control the border. Along with units of the border service of the Islamic Republic, ground forces of the IRGC are also involved, which, despite the situational successes of individual militant groups, makes it possible to keep the situation under control. Iran's government is also making special efforts to prevent crime and maintain stability in the Sistan and Baluchistan province.

Another serious problem of the province is the smuggling of drugs, fuel, and weapons. Due to economic backwardness of the Baloch provinces, smuggling is one of the traditional ways to earn a living. Taking advantage of their knowledge of the area and their tribal ties throughout the "Greater Balochistan", the Baloch are actively involved in illegal trade. The route of opiate trafficking travelling through the Baloch territories is one of the preferred ones and undoubtedly contributes to the criminalization of the Iranian Balochistan. From the territory of Afghanistan, drugs are transported first to Pakistan (Eastern Baluchistan), from there to Iran (Western Baluchistan), and then from Iran they reach the MENA region. At the same time, the problem of drug trafficking in Iran manifests itself in two ways. On the one hand, the fight against drugs is one of the most important provisions of Iran's concept of national security, an area in which the country's authorities are making serious efforts. On the other hand, Iran still demonstrates a very high level of opiate consumption.⁴⁴ The scale of the illegal import of weapons into Iran and the export of petroleum products is not overwhelming, but it is large enough to give rise to increased control in border areas. In turn, according to UNPO data, since the beginning of the 2000s units of the Mersad special forces have been deployed in the cities of

Kerman and Zahedan with the personal support of Rahbar office.⁴⁵ In 2013, a special committee to suppress fuel smuggling was formed.⁴⁶ In addition, starting with the government of Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005), the province of Sistan and Baluchistan, as well as the rest of the “lagging” provinces, have been the targets of a policy to reduce the gap in overall development. In particular, targeted loans are being allocated by state coffers. Under Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013), the Majlis adopted a law on the allocation of 2% of oil revenues for the development of oil-producing provinces and depressed areas, which include areas inhabited by minorities.¹³ This policy, aimed at the overall transformation of Sistan and Baluchistan, was continued by the Hassan Rouhani (2013-2021) administration. In particular, the practice of government sessions being held in various locations was continued, and provincial funding was increased.⁴⁷ Due to the growth of socio-political instability and extremism in the region in 2016, by personal decree of the country’s leader Rahbar Ali Khamenei, \$500 million was allocated from the reserves of the National Development Fund to the province. In addition, the Majlis approved attracting \$1.2 billion in foreign investment to Sistan and Baluchistan for the implementation of five projects.⁴⁸ In 2016-2017 Iran’s authorities also carried out a campaign to develop the province of Sistan and Baluchistan. In 2016-2018, about 700 thousand foreign tourists visited the province.⁴⁹ The port city of Chabahar⁵⁰ continues to develop rapidly and is currently a free trade zone, one of the key points in the framework of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

The Baloch Problem as Part of the Issue of Minorities in Iran: the Main Strategies for a Solution

The national policy of Iran has always been defined by its characteristic pluri-ethnicity, which for more than two centuries has boiled down to the prevention of separatist tendencies and the preservation of the country’s territorial integrity. The country’s course, which entails the consolidation of all ethnic groups into a single nation and, at the same time, the partial (at times complete) ignoring of the ethnic characteristics of the peoples inhabiting Iran, adopted after the Islamic revolution of 1978-1979, and followed for more than forty years, was unable to succeed at solving problems of ethnicity. Now ethnic and national politics are one of the most vulnerable components of the internal politics of the Islamic Republic. This

is also evidenced by the actualization of ethnic and social problems in modern Iran. Both Iran's leadership's policy towards the Baloch minority and the national policy in general prioritize security, cohesion, and stability of the regime in the country (power strategy – an approach from point of view of ensuring security, “Negah-e amniati”). In accordance with this strategy, the status quo in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities can and is only assessed from the perspective of the security of the Islamic Republic, even though about the same time the activities of non-governmental organizations to prevent ethnic discrimination became legal in the country. This was largely due to increased fears of interference from external factors. The Islamic Republic's entry into the 21st Century was marked by events that provoked a reemergence of ethnic factors and an increase in the number of protests and terrorist events in the territories of ethnic minorities, not only in Iran but also in the region as a whole. Iran at this time experienced first-hand the intensified activities of underground national parties, whose tactics to instill separatist sentiments, and observed how representatives of external terrorist groups began penetrating the country.⁸ Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's rise to power (2005-2013), signaled changes in national politics. In the first two years of his presidency, there was an unprecedented stepping-up of protests by minorities against imperial approaches to the problems of interethnic relations not seen since the time of Islamic revolution.⁵¹ The natural reaction of the conservative government was to outright suppress any opposition sentiments. Government actions often took the form of repression, which included not only the representatives of banned “national” parties but also ordinary figures of professional and cultural-educational organizations, the same people who actively collaborated with the Khatami administration and reformist parties.

All this contributed to the fact that after 2007 the public consciousness gradually began to have a clear understanding: instead of approaching ethnic problems only from a security perspective, an approach that considers the cultural diversity and multi-ethnicity of Iranian civil society is more preferable. The period after 2007 is characterized by an observed increase in the number of people interested in studying national minorities' cultures and languages, which nevertheless began to be considered as an integral part of all-Iranian culture. And so, gradually effective management approaches and methods were introduced to Iran's national strategy.

Almost immediately after the transfer of presidential powers to the administration of Hassan Rouhani, a special program was developed on the national issue, which included:

- preparing legislation for the full implementation of the Constitution (especially articles 3, 12, 15, 19, 22) and building a “state of hope and prudence”;
- expanding public participation (regardless of linguistic and religious affiliation) in governing the country at all levels;
- appointment of competent local representatives to leadership positions in local and regional authorities;
- teaching the Kurdish, Azerbaijani, and Arabic national languages in schools and universities in accordance with article 15 of the Constitution;
- raising the level of culture and developing literature of various ethnic groups of Iran in order to maintain and preserve Iran’s ancient cultural heritage;
- respect for the rights of representatives of religious minorities, and non-interference in their religious affairs;
- development of long-term and short-term programs (cultural, economic, and social), especially in disadvantaged areas and border provinces affected by any natural disasters;
- allocation of compensation from the budget for the development of these areas;
- eliminating discrimination in all its forms and types;
- changing the approach to the problem of national minorities from “negah-e amniyati” (“from a security point of view”) to “effective scientific management”.⁵²

In essence, this program became a continuation of the national policy of the administration of President Khatami. And again, due to opposition from conservative forces, none of the above points were ever fully implemented. Appealing to the difficult situation in the region and security interests, the conservative camp continues to oppose any attempts to liberalize society and calls for strengthening the position of security forces in the settlement areas of national minorities.⁵³ And the fact that protests took place in 2022-2023 proved once again to the predominantly conservative elites that the forceful strategy against the Baloch is justified.

Nevertheless, several reform projects were launched. For example, since 2014, media and television broadcasting in the Kurdish, Azerbaijani, Arabic, and Turkmen languages have been expanded. Like Ahmadinejad, Rouhani regularly visited the nation's outskirts. In minority areas, government meetings were held periodically before protests in order to become more familiar with the problems of the regions and provide urgent assistance. The Ministry of Education is developing curricula that undertakes to teach national languages in primary schools and, in turn, are sharply criticized by the Academy of Persian Language and Literature as "a threat to the significance of Farsi."⁵⁴ As for everything else, nothing moves beyond public statements.

Each strategy is characterized by its own specific principles and methods, which can then determine the general course of the state's policy towards minorities, and it is in accordance with this that state policy towards the Baloch minority has been, and is currently pursued. However, it would be incorrect to assume that in Iran's history only one of these strategies was used. Perhaps we should instead talk about how they were mixed and matched, and in what proportion. At the same time, it is still impossible to deny that the majority of the authorities involved in the development of Iran's national policy continue to use exclusively the security point of view approach. The so-called good governance approach, which recognizes the cultural diversity and multi-ethnicity of Iran's pluri-ethnic society, is popular, but does not resonate among the majority of the senior clergy, who are the ones that actually hold all the power in the country. In present-day Iran this can be expected as it has been brought on by the general conservatism of the Iranian political system and the slow rotation of personnel within it.

* * *

While the Islamic Republic of Iran is today a strong regional player, it is also the second (after Afghanistan) country in the region in terms of ethnic complexity. Despite the long-term domestic policy of building a "united Iranian nation" and a "united Islamic ummah," ethnic and religious heterogeneity still remains in Iran. This, along with the uneven regional economic development characteristic of the Islamic Republic, is one of the factors of internal destabilization and, therefore, requires special attention from state authorities. Despite the country's leadership implementing since the beginning of the 21st Century elements of "good governance", national

policy as a whole seems to be one of the most vulnerable components of Iran's political course. At the same time, the problematic nature of national politics, among other things, is largely associated with the general specifics of Iran's political system, and is clearly manifested in the slow rotation within the political elites and their chaotic nature. However, both the first and second are starting points, not only in the formation of national policy but also for all internal processes in present-day Iran, which, when taken together with the external factor, completely define today's reality in the Islamic Republic.

Hence, the consequence of this (among other things) is the periodic manifestation of tendencies towards an increase in protest sentiments, not only among minorities, but also in society overall. The outskirts of the country and the minorities living there, being the most limited in benefits and rights, pose a serious security challenge under the existing state system. This was demonstrated during the protests of 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023, when these same outskirts (the provinces of Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Khuzestan, Sistan and Baluchistan) protested most actively. Even though the main waves of protests have subsided, the degree of public discontent continues to grow. There remains a high probability of new protests, and therefore increased security measures in Iranian Balochistan (as well as in all national outskirts) are absolutely justified.

The relationship between the Baloch problem in Iran and the processes in the adjacent Baloch areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan also primarily boil down to the issue of ensuring security. In conditions when the Afghanistan-Pakistan space continues to be a source of both regional instability and trans-regional threats (such as terrorism and drug trafficking), and that the territory of "Greater Balochistan", due to how the borders are interpreted, is almost a single space, the Islamic Republic is forced to take the main blow. At the same time, the problem of refugees and illegal immigration to Iran from Afghanistan and Pakistan remains no less pressing.

In recent years, Iran's leadership could not afford to neglect its own security. Thanks to a pragmatic political course, one that combines a power strategy with elements of effective governance in relation to the Baloch minority, as well as in the context of Iran's striving to maintain a stable and strong (compared to Afghanistan and Pakistan) state, when the government still holds all the main levers of influence over the situation in the country, the internal aspect of the Baloch problem (as a threat to internal stability) is

much less serious for Iran than for neighboring Afghanistan and Pakistan. Relative to the entire Baloch population of the Islamic Republic of Iran, activists who openly oppose the government or members of terrorist organizations are clearly in the minority. In turn, from the point of view of regional security, the Baloch problem is still a potential factor for destabilization. It has yet to fully manifest itself, but if the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan worsens, or if the US-Iran contradictions were to intensify, the Baloch problem has significant potential for coming to a head and may have regional or even international repercussions, even comparable in scale to the Kurdish problem.

Notes

1. *Doshoki A.* Vicious circle of violence // Deutsche Welle. 16.07.2010. URL: <http://dw.de/p/ONU1> (accessed 31.03.2019). (In Persian).
2. *Hossainbor M.H.* Iran and its nationalities: the case of Baloch nationalism // Karachi : Pakistani Adab Publication. 2000. p. 68
3. *Baloch M.S.* History of Baloch Race and Baluchistan (Baloch Balochistan). Dubai : Nisa Traders. 1984. p. 298
4. *Boladai N.* The Baloch in Iran. // A Forum on Human Rights and democracy in Iran. 2006. URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20160417054354/https://www.gozaar.org/english/articles-en/The-Baloch-in-Iran.html> (accessed 01.12.2023).
5. *Dashti N.* The Baloch conflict with Iran and Pakistan. Aspects of National Liberation Struggle. Bloomington : Trafford Publishing. 2017. p. 362
6. *Mamedova N.M.* Socio-economic model of Iran (to the issue of regional unevenness of economic development) // Nations and nationalism in the Muslim East. Moscow : Institute of Oriental Studies. 2015. pp. 35-45. (In Rus.)
7. *Mamedova N.M.* Inter-confessional relations in Iran and their influence on the situation in the region. Uchenye Zapiski Kazanskogo Universiteta. Seriya Gumanitarnye Nauki, 2017, vol. 159, no. 6, pp. 1509–1517. (In Rus.)
8. *Dunayeva E.V.* Iran: modern single-national discourse (approaches of the government and visions of the elites) // Iran in the second decade of the XXI century: challenges and prospects. Moscow : Institute of Oriental Studies. 2016. pp. 58-74. (In Rus.)
9. *Zhigalina O.I.* Ethnosocial Evolution of Iranian Society. Moscow : "Oriental Literature" RAS. 1996. 264 p. (In Rus.)

10. *Ravandi-Fadai L.* To the issue of the situation of national and religious minorities // *Iran: History and Modernity*. Moscow : Institute of Oriental Studies. 2014. pp. 271-274. (In Rus.)
11. *Ravandi-Fadai L.* Ethno-Confessional Problems in Modern Iran. Iran under M. Ahmadinejad // *Moscow : Institute of Oriental Studies*. 2013. pp. 172-182. (In Rus.)
12. *Ravandi-Fadai L.* Ethnos, Nation and Nationalism: The Iranian View, Nations and Nationalism in the Muslim East. Moscow : OSI RAS, 2015. pp. 193-207. (In Rus.)
13. *Kameneva M.S.* National Traditions and Language Policy in Iran (1920s – early 1980s) // *Foreign East: Religious Traditions and Contemporaneity*. Moscow : Nauka, 1983. pp. 140-145. (In Rus.)
14. *Sazhin V.I., Bondar Y.M.* Military power of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Moscow ; Moscow University Press, 2014. - 544 p. (In Rus.)
15. *Pikulin M.G.* Baluchi. Moscow: "Oriental Literature". 1959. 213 p. (In Rus.)
16. Balochistan. Balochi language and literature. // *Encyclopedia Iranica*. URL: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/baluchistan-iii> (accessed 01.12.2020).
17. CIA World Factbook 2017. [Электронный ресурс] URL: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook> (accessed 01.12.2023).
18. *Jabani C.* The Baloch as an Ethnic Group in the Persian Gulf Region. // *The Persian Gulf in Modern Times. People, Ports, and History*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan. 2014. pp. .267-297.
19. *Pikulin M.G.* Op. cit.
20. *Ravandi-Fadai L.* Op. cit. pp. 271-274.
21. *Sazhin V.I., Bondar Y.M.* Op. cit.
22. Ibid.
23. *Dunayeva E.V.* Op. cit. pp. 58-74
24. Statistical Report 1396 (In Persian). // *Management and Planning Organization of IRI*. URL: <http://www.mpo-sb.ir/mpo-sb/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/حساب%۸۰%۸Cهايمنطقه%۸۰%۸Cای.pdf> (accessed 01.12.2023).
25. Environment. Iran statistical yearbook 1394. // *Statistical Center of Iran*. URL: <https://www.amar.org.ir/Portals/1/yearbook/1394/02.pdf> (accessed 01.12.2023).
26. Population Census 1935 (In Persian). // *Statistical Center of Iran*. URL: <https://www.amar.org.ir/Portals/0/News/1397/n-koli-95.pdf> (accessed 01.12.2023)

27. *Bahgat G.* Security and bilateral issues between Iran and its Arab neighbours. Cham: Springer International Publishing A&G. 2017. p. 245, pp. 86-87
28. *Dashti N.* Op. cit.
29. Ibid.
30. Population Census 1935. Op. cit.
31. *Akbar M.S.* The redefined dimensions of Baloch nationalist movement. Bloomington: Xlibris Corporation. 2011. p. 345
32. Aliev S.M. History of Iran. XXth century. Moscow, 2004. 605 p. (In Rus.)
33. *Yunas S.* Understanding the insurgency in Balochistan. // Commonwealth and Comparative Politics. 2014. Vol. 52. No. 2. p. 29
34. Baloch National Movement. URL: <https://www.thebnm.org> (accessed 01.12.2023)
35. West Balochistan. // Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization. 22.08.2017. URL: <http://unpo.org/members/7922> (accessed 01.12.2023)
36. Challenges and sustainable security strategies in Sistan and Balochistan province (In Persian). // Center for Political Studies of Iran. 2011. pp. 1338-1343.
37. *Dashti N.* Op. cit.
38. *Shay S.* Iran and the terror in Sistan–Baluchistan province. // International Institute for Counter-Terrorism. Herzliya: IDC. 2018. p. 15
39. *Souri R., Heidari J.* Iran and the threat of Salafism. // Iran Review. 31.08.2016. URL: <http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Iran-and-the-Threat-of-Salafism.htm> (accessed 01.12.2023); Iran and the threat of Salafism (In Persian). // Iranian Diplomacy. 9.09.2016. URL: <http://www.irdiplomacy.ir/fa/page/1962244/ان+ایران+و+تهدیدی+به+نام+سلفی+E%20%80%8Cگری.html> (accessed 01.12.2023)
40. Terrorist attacks in Iran. Chronology. // TASS. 07.06.2017. URL: <http://tass.ru/info/4320784> (accessed: 01.12.2023) (In Rus.)
41. Abdul Malik Rigi an accomplice of the USA and Great Britain was executed this morning // Fars News. 30.06.2010. URL: <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8903300048> (accessed 01.12.2023). (In Persian).
42. *Dashti N.* Op. cit.
43. *Lyamin Yu.Yu.* Iran's struggle with internal threats // Periscope 2. 2017. Special issue. URL: <http://periscope2.ru/2017/08/11/8709/> (accessed: 01.12.2023) (In Rus.)
44. Afghan drug trafficking. Joint Threat Assessment. The U.S.-Russian Working Group on Afghan Drug Trafficking. // EastWest Institute. 2014. 40 p. URL: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/163246/JTA-russian.pdf> (accessed 01.12.2023). (In Rus.)

45. Balochistan: Balochistan People's Party address Canadian parliament. // Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization. 28.09.2006. URL: <http://unpo.org/article/6115> (accessed 01.12.2023)
46. Iran has established a special committee to suppress fuel smuggling // Iran.ru. 01.04.2013. URL: https://www.iran.ru/news/economics/86749/Iran_sozdal_speckomitet_po_presecheniyu_k_ontrabandy_topliva (accessed 01.12.2023). (In Rus.)
47. *Ravandi-Fadai L.* Op. cit.
48. *Mamedova N.M.* Op. cit.
49. Sistan and Baluchistan become popular destinations for tourists // Iran Today. 21.01.2018. URL: <http://iransegodnya.ru/post/view/2398> (accessed 01.12.2023). (In Rus.)
50. Inside Chabahar, the Iranian port city that borders Pakistan and where alleged spy Kulbhushan Jadhav was based. // The Economic Times. 14.05.2017. URL: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/inside-chabahar-the-iranian-port-city-that-borders-pakistan-and-where-alleged-spy-kulbhushan-jadhav-was-based/articleshow/58663212.cms> (accessed 01.12.2023)
51. *Dunayeva E.V.* Op. cit.
52. *Ravandi-Fadai L.* Op. cit.
53. *Dunayeva E.V.* Op. cit.
54. Ibid.

Chapter 9. Turkey's Cultural and Humanitarian Relations with Post-Soviet States

Irina Svistunova

In recent years, official Ankara has paid particular attention to ways in which it can create a positive image for Turkey in other countries. For several years now, the Foreign Minister's annual address to Turkey's Parliament clearly reflects the country's strategy in the international arena. Entitled "Initiative and Humanitarian Foreign Policy", the address punctuates the importance that Turkey's leadership attaches to the humanitarian component of its foreign policy.

Humanitarian programs serve as one of Turkey's strategic foreign policy instruments in the post-Soviet space. Today, Ankara has an entire set of state institutions that contribute to the implementation of humanitarian policy abroad. At the same time, Turkey actively participates in international development assistance programs. Turkey's programs are unique in that they primarily address Turkic and Muslim peoples of the former Soviet republics. A number of projects are currently ongoing in Azerbaijan, the Turkic republics of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan), Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, in countries with Turkic minorities (Meskhetian Turks, Crimean Tatars, Gagauz), as well as in Tajikistan through Islamic solidarity. By taking a closer look at Turkey's humanitarian policy, which is based on similar principles across different countries, we can gain a better understanding of Ankara's strategy in the post-Soviet space.

Official Development Assistance

Turkey engages in international development assistance in the former Soviet republics through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA). The agency, through which the bulk of Turkey's projects are implemented, is a key instrument of Ankara's humanitarian policy. TIKA was established under the Turkey's Foreign Ministry back in 1992 with the official aim of helping those Turkic republics that had gained independence develop their market economies, industrial and social infrastructure, cultural cooperation, and establish a national identity. In addition, TIKA focused on training specialists and managerial staff, and has played the role of an

intermediary in linking post-Soviet countries with Western and international financial and economic structures.

In 1999, TIKA was transferred to Turkey's Ministry of Culture and Tourism and began focusing its activities on socio-cultural programs. Owing to its ethno-confessional proximity to Turkic peoples and its wide network of established contacts on the ground, Ankara can easily compete with other international players in this area. Humanitarian initiatives and aid programs contribute to the formation of a positive image of Turkey in the eyes of its kindred peoples.

After the Justice and Development Party (AKP) under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan came to power in Turkey at the end of 2002, the country's foreign policy intensified in all directions, including in the post-Soviet space. According to TIKA, 90 percent of the projects implemented since the agency's establishment in 1992, and up to the present day, have been carried out during Erdoğan's rule.¹ The geography of the agency's work has expanded considerably and now covers Turkic and Muslim peoples in regions outside the former Soviet republics, such as the Balkans, Africa, and Southeast Asia. TIKA's leadership claims to be forming a "Turkish model of development assistance,"² which involves grant projects in the fields of education, health, and culture, and includes the creation and repair of social infrastructure such as hospitals, medical and educational centers, schools, kindergartens and historical monuments, and the provision of technical support. TIKA's activities also cover such spheres as agriculture, water supply, transport, industrial production, trade, tourism, as well as the construction and repair of social infrastructure facilities.

In the first decade of TIKA's mission in the post-Soviet space, 2,506 projects were implemented. Turkey has long sought to develop a common Turkic culture to unite the Turkic peoples of different countries and so, from its onset, TIKA has prioritized education and culture. The largest number of projects was implemented in Kazakhstan, with 31.3 percent, while Kyrgyzstan accounted for 10 percent, Azerbaijan 9.9 percent, Turkmenistan 8.8 percent, and Ukraine 7.4 percent.³

Starting in 2004, TIKA began modifying its programs and projects to accommodate Turkey's participation in the international official development assistance system. Ankara's total funding has gradually increased, allowing it to channel aid to different regions of the world. In 2004 Turkey allocated \$488,000,000 to development assistance, but by 2019 this figure had reached

\$8,751,000,000.⁴ Unlike Western countries, Turkey does not link the provision of aid with the fulfilment by recipient countries of any requirements to implement political reforms. The peculiarity of Turkey's approach is that Ankara seeks to use the provision of aid as an opportunity to deepen interstate relations.⁵

In accordance with Turkey's international obligations, TIKA's work in recipient countries aims to ensure the development of a market economy, the provision of humanitarian assistance in the event of natural disasters, internal or external conflicts, the creation of conditions for institutional cooperation, and, among others, the transfer of knowledge and technology.⁶ At the same time, the primary mission of the agency, which was approved by the President in 2018, still includes the implementation of educational programs, the promotion of Turkish culture abroad, the preservation of common (i.e. Turkic) historical and cultural heritage, and the provision of assistance to countries related to Turkey by common history and culture, regardless of their level of development. In TIKA's report on its activities for 2020, education is denoted as "a strategic area of development."⁷

TIKA's coordination offices are responsible for the implementation of its projects on the ground. To date, TIKA has opened offices in the post-Soviet space in Baku, Tbilisi, Nur-Sultan (Astana), Bishkek, Ashgabat, Tashkent, Kiev, Kishinev, Dushanbe, and Simferopol. The Agency works closely with other state institutions of the Republic of Turkey, primarily the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of National Education, the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities.

In 2021, Turkey's development aid to post-Soviet countries was allocated in the following manner: Azerbaijan - \$44.2 million, Kazakhstan - \$24.1 million, Kyrgyzstan - \$19.2 million, Uzbekistan, - \$3.7 million, Moldova - \$3.4 million, Georgia - \$2.9 million, Tajikistan - \$1.8 million, Ukraine - \$1.2 million, and Turkmenistan - \$.5 million.⁸

In 2020 in Central Asia and Transcaucasia Turkey rolled out 194 development assistance projects and 16 projects to preserve the common historical and cultural heritage of the Turkic world. Development assistance included a wide range of specific projects, including the construction, repair, and equipping of educational centers and medical institutions, the roll-out of educational programs, and support of exhibition and fair activities. In addition, the project pursued free medical treatment, the digging of wells in

rural areas, as well as the delivery of humanitarian aid to disaster areas and poor families.

After the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020, the reconstruction and development of the Nagorno-Karabakh region was declared a new strategic direction of TİKA's work in Azerbaijan.

The largest TİKA projects in the post-Soviet space are the Kazakh-Turkish Hodja Ahmet Yasavi University in Turkestan and the Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University in Bishkek. These institutes of higher learning are managed and financed by the two parties on a parity basis. In 2020 - 2021 academic year, the student enrollment of the Kazakh University reached 12,000, while the Kyrgyz University reached an enrollment of 5,500.⁹

In January 2022, the Ministry of Higher Education of Uzbekistan and the Higher Education Council of Turkey announced plans to establish an Uzbek-Turkish university in Tashkent.¹⁰

The agency's activities cover a wide range of areas, including those with a religious component. One of the traditional forms of TİKA's humanitarian activities in the post-Soviet space has been the annual organization of charity iftars (dinners during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan). In April 2022, such events were held in Kyrgyzstan and Georgia. In addition, the Ramadan Program provided food aid to 110 Kyrgyz families with disabled family members.¹¹

TİKA also contributes to the development of Turkey's cultural relations with post-Soviet countries. Thus, in November 2023, with the support of TİKA, the Fifth Congress of Writers of the Turkic World was held in Ankara, which was attended by writers from Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Moldova.

Education and Culture

TİKA, which is involved in numerous foreign policy objectives of Ankara, and participates in the international official development assistance program, is not the only organization engaged in humanitarian activities in the post-Soviet space. A number of others, which mainly focus on education and culture, are also quite active. Any possibility for cultural cooperation with Turkic peoples is considered an important event in Turkey. The Turks spent most of the 20th Century trying to achieve such cooperation, and as a result have been able to develop their own studies of Turkic history and philology. As Firat Purtaş and Abzal Dosbolov write, "the establishment of social and

cultural contacts between Turkey and the Turkic republics was the beginning of a period that can be called a Turkic renaissance.”¹² Established in 2004, the International Organization of Turkic Culture (Turksoy), has become a space where not only independent Turkic states but also autonomous regions of Russia are represented. Ankara devotes increasingly more attention to the development of this sphere, as evidenced by the emergence of new state structures designed to implement the humanitarian policies of Turkey.

In 2010, the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities was established under the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. It was entrusted with the management of the humanitarian program called “Türkiye Bursları” (Turkish Scholarships), which allows foreigners to receive free higher education at a Turkish university and defend their theses. Turkey also pays for the student’s air travel, tuition fees, dormitory accommodation, and provides a monthly stipend. Students are also given the opportunity to complete a year of Turkish language training before the start of their primary study program.

One of the strategic goals of the program is to turn the Turkish language into the primary language for interethnic communication among Turkic peoples. According to 2015 data, out of 50,000 foreigners who received higher education in Turkey over the twenty years of the scholarship program, more than 19,000 were citizens of Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.¹³ When distributing scholarships, priority is given to candidates from Central Asian and Transcaucasian republics. Thus, in 2020, 10,365 applications for scholarships were submitted from these regions, which accounted for 6.55 percent of the total number of applications. Scholarships were awarded to 793 natives of Central Asia and Transcaucasia, which accounted for 21 percent of all scholarships awarded.¹⁴ More than 200 Turkish universities participate in scholarship programs for foreign students, which are also allocated by the Turkey’s Higher Education Committee and non-governmental organizations. According to data from the Supreme Education Committee, overall, more than 185,000 foreign students were studying in Turkey in the 2019 - 2020 academic year. Among these countries Syria leads the way in terms of numbers of its citizens enrolled (37,237), which is due to mainly to the fact that almost four million Syrians have taken refuge in Turkey. In second place were citizens from Azerbaijan (21,069), while citizens of Turkmenistan (18,016 people) occupied third place.¹⁵

The Yunus Emre Institutes, which serve as cultural centers of Turkey in various countries, have also become an instrument for promoting the Turkish language and culture in the post-Soviet space. Following the example of other countries that have established a system of language courses with unified standards all over the world, the Yunus Emre Foundation was established in 2007 with the aim of organizing a network of language institutions abroad. Yunus Emre, who lived in the Middle Ages and is considered the father of Turkish poetry, was chosen as the “face” of the Turkey’s new system. Institutes have been opened in Baku, Tbilisi, Nur-Sultan, Kiev, and Comrat. These Turkish language programs are designed for different age groups, the youngest of which are children from the ages of four to six years old.

The populations in Turkic republics are particularly interested in learning Turkish at the courses of the Yunus Emre Institute. In March 2021, in Kazakhstan the number of people wishing to enroll in language courses (which were held in an online format due to the pandemic) reached 8,000.¹⁶ To encourage interest in the Turkish language, the institute announced that the top 30 students would receive prizes in the form of free air tickets to and from Turkey.

In addition to language courses, the Yunus Emre Institutes organizes numerous events to promote Turkish culture and support local research and initiatives related to Turkey. The institutes regularly present translations of Turkish literature into other languages and published works by Turkologists from the former Soviet republics. Despite the constraints stemming from the COVID 19 epidemic, a number of cultural events were held in 2020 - 2022: in Kazakhstan a Turkish Tea Festival and an exhibition of Turkish-themed paintings painted by students; in Georgia, an archery tournament, an exhibition “Traces of Turkic Culture”, and the presentation of an anthology of Turkish poetry translated into Georgian; and, in Moldova, an exhibition “Ninety Years of Cultural Ties between Turkey and Gagauzia”. In December 2021, the presentation of the project “Heritage of Civilization: Common Past, Common Future” was held in Azerbaijan. The project’s program, which is planned to be extended to other countries, included an exhibition of the same name and a seminar on the civilizational consciousness of Turkic society.

Another significant Turkish organization operating in the post-Soviet space is the state-owned Maarif Education Foundation (Maarif), which was

established in 2016 after a failed coup attempt in Turkey. The Foundation's mission is to build new educational institutions in the former Soviet republics and Turkey's authorities have achieved some success in this direction. In 2017, Kazakhstan handed over to the Turkish Maarif Foundation a lyceum in Almaty. In 2018, kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, as well as lyceums were established in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. In September 2021, the foundation opened a new educational complex, which was constructed by Turkish nationals living in Bishkek. That same year, Turkey and Azerbaijan agreed to open a Maarif office in Baku and establish Turkish language schools.

In addition to educational institutions, the foundation is also involved in offering courses, as well as in opening research and cultural centers. Speaking at the Education Forum in November 2021, organized by the Maarif Foundation in Istanbul, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan noted that Maarif educational institutions bring world-class educational standards to different countries and promote equal access to education and technology. According to the President, through Maarif's activities, Turkey is contributing to quality education for sustainable development in line with the UN's Agenda 2030.¹⁷

These schools not only contribute to the popularization of the Turkish language, but also introduce to students to the idea of pan-Turkic unity. The Foundation's secondary school curricula include "Turkic Culture and Civilization" and "Turkey and Turkish Culture" as elective subjects. The Foundation aims to "tell students about the contribution of the Turks to the universal cultural heritage."¹⁸

Turkey's humanitarian policy is bearing fruit not only in individual countries but also internationally. In 2020, schools in Turkey, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan launched the subject "General History of the Turks", a textbook prepared by the International Turkic Academy, which can be taken as an elective subject. The Turkish Anatolian Agency reported that some 30,000 students have attended lectures on this topic, with 15,000 hailing from Kazakhstan, 10,000 from Azerbaijan.¹⁹ Plans to create textbooks on general Turkic geography and literature were also announced. In 2022, the Scientific Council of the International Turkic Academy approved school textbooks on such subjects as "Geography of the Turkic World" and "General Literature of Turkic Peoples". Schools in the three countries have already begun teaching using these textbooks.

* * *

In the thirty years following the collapse of the USSR, Turkey has achieved significant results in the implementation of its humanitarian programs in the post-Soviet space. The country has established a system of practical promotion of the idea of Turkic brotherhood and, with this, the formation of a positive image of Turkey. Turkey's leadership has accomplished this through educational and cultural activities, as well as targeted social and humanitarian aid. In the foreseeable future, Ankara will continue to be active in this area, which will allow it to expand relations with the former Soviet republics and participate in the formation of the national identity of new generations of Turkic peoples.

At the same time, an effective humanitarian policy in the post-Soviet space will also contribute to the strengthening of Turkey's international image, positioning it as a donor country and a state with the ability to participate in solving the problems of other countries and regions. Of course, not all of Turkey's humanitarian projects and specific cases of assistance are large in terms of scale. However, their multiplicity, consistent implementation, and the information campaign that accompanies them, all bring Ankara tangible dividends, allowing it to promote its interests in the Turkic world and on the world stage.

Notes

1. TİKA 1992'den Bu Yana 5 kıtada Yaklaşık 30 bin Proje Gerçekleştirdi. URL: https://www.tika.gov.tr/tr/haber/tika_1992_den_bu_yana_5_kitada_yaklasik_30_bin_proje_gerceklestirdi-55491 (accessed: 15.11.2023). (In Turkish).
2. Ibid
3. *Urazova E.I.* Turkey Today: Economic Cooperation with the Countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Moscow, 2012. p. 60. (In Rus.)
4. *Tüyyloğlu Y.* Turkish Development Assistance as a Foreign Policy Tool and Its Discordant Locations. SWP Working Paper. April, 2021. p. 12. URL: https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/arbeitspapiere/CATS_Working_Paper
5. Ibid. p. 14.
6. *Urazova E.I.* Turkey Today: Economic Cooperation with the Countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Moscow, 2012. p. 92. (In Rus.)

7. Turkish Development Assistance Report 2020. URL: https://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/old/2022/TurkiyeKalkinma2020ENG_Web.pdf p. 37.
8. Development Assistance Report of Turkey 2021. URL: <https://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/2023/2021%20Kalkinma%20Yardimlari%20Raporu/TurkiyeKalkinma2021ENGWeb.pdf> p. 29.
9. *Purtaş F., Dosbolov A.* Türkiye ile Türk Cumhuriyetleri arasındaki ilişkilerin diplomatik, ekonomik ve toplumsal boyutu. Türkiye Günlüğü. Sayı 146. Bahar 2021. p. 92. (In Turkish).
10. Özbek-Türk Üniversitesi kurulması çalışmaları. URL: <https://www.haberler.com/guncel/ozbek-turk-universitesi-kurulmasi-calismalari-14693392-haberi/> (accessed: 15.11.2023). (In Turkish).
11. TİKA'dan Kırgızistan'daki Görme ve İşitme Engelli Ailelere Ramazan Yardımı. URL: https://www.tika.gov.tr/tr/haber/tika_dan_kirgizistan_daki_gorme_ve_isitme_engelli_ailelere_ramazan_yardimi-68950 (accessed: 15.11.2023). (In Turkish).
12. *Purtaş F., Dosbolov A.* Op. cit. p. 91
13. Türkiye Bursları'ndan en çok kimler yararlandı? Hürriyet Gazetesi. URL: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/egitim/turkiye-burslari-ndan-en-cok-kimler-yararlandi-28548637> (accessed: 15.11.2023). (In Turkish).
14. Türkiye Bursları. 2020 Yıllık Raporu. URL: <https://arsiv.turkiyeburslari.gov.tr/Content/Upload/files/TB%20Rapor-2020.pdf> pp. 34-35.
15. Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları için bir Rehber. Türkiye'de Uluslararası Öğrenciler. Ankara, 2021. URL: <https://tgsp.org.tr/tr/frontend/storage/documents/Nht4IIP8irLLadySQIdXNo4PCxfFMENi95PZp6IE.pdf> p.23.
16. Kazakistan'da Türkçeye Yoğun İlgisi. URL: <https://www.yee.org.tr/tr/haber/kazakistanda-turkceye-yogun-ilgi> (accessed: 15.11.2023). (In Turkish).
17. İstanbul Eğitim Zirvesi Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'ın Konuşmasıyla Başladı. URL: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/post/7-istanbul-egitim-zirvesi-cumhurbaskani-erdoganin-konusmasiyla-basladi-1807?lang=tr> (accessed: 15.11.2023). (In Turkish).
18. Türkiye Maarif Vakfı Dünyaya Türkçe Öğretiyor. URL: <https://al.maarifschool.org/post/1745> (accessed: 15.11.2023). (In Turkish).
19. *Rehimov R., Abdülkerimov B.* Ortak Türk Tarihi ders kitabı okutulmaya başlandı. Anadolu Ajansı. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/egitim/ortak-turk-tarihi-ders-kitabi-okutulmaya-basladi/1740358#> (accessed: 15.11.2023). (In Turkish).

SECTION III. NEIGHBORS. THE CASE OF AFGHANISTAN

Chapter 10. The Stages of the Formation of Afghanistan's Armed Forces

Ilya Guzhev

The socio-economic and politico-military trends that emerged in 2021 amid the Taliban's rise to power were relevant in 2023. Factionalism within the Taliban, which continues to be a paramilitary movement, periodically escalated over ideological issues, such as the potential opening of schools for girls. The armed forces (under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Interior, and the General Directorate of Intelligence) have been replaced by a variety of Taliban militia groups led by young charismatic commanders. To contain centrifugal tendencies within the movement, the Taliban's clerical leader has created special forces led by commanders who are loyal to him. However, a high degree of factionalism has been a common characteristic of Afghanistan's military throughout its existence, even when foreign governments were involved in building the country's armed forces.

In the 20th Century, armies in the Afrasian region are a symbol of national sovereignty, an unconditional "patriotic force" tasked with protecting the country from internal social conflict at a time when civilian authorities are discredited. Military leaders feel substantiated in their claims to power as they recognize themselves as an "advanced" political institution. In situations where the army interferes in political processes, the military's intelligentsia (its officer corps), play a key role.¹ Georgiy Mirsky explained the high degree of military officers' participation in the political life of Eastern countries as primarily being caused by, among other causes, the underdevelopment of the "main classes" that are ordinarily required to form a capitalist civil society. He noted that almost everywhere armies in the East can become the first, if not the only national institution in which "family, clan, tribal, and regional" ties, so vital in traditional societies, recede into the background.²

The Peculiar Features of Afghanistan's army

These conclusions are largely true for the armed forces of Afghanistan, which came into existence after the country gained its independence in 1919. At the same time, reflecting the general trends in the development of armed forces in the East, Afghanistan's army possessed a number of peculiarities that largely predetermined the tragic fate of the country in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Firstly, Afghanistan's army has not yet shed its traditional consciousness, where family and clan identity is dominant. In the opinion of Afghan people, belonging to large social structures (clan, tribe) is much more important than national identity.³ In Afghanistan, factionalism is an inherent feature of any power structures, with the army being no exception. It is also worth noting that in the 21st Century, the army in Afghanistan has essentially and definitively ceased to be an "advanced institution", and has instead become a tool for corruption and political intrigue.

Secondly, an external factor played a special role in the process of building Afghanistan's armed forces – the assistance the USSR provided (from the mid-1950s to the early 1990s) and the United States' venture in Afghanistan (2001-2021). The latter was often provided without considering local conditions and was reduced to rearmament rather rebuilding the army as a full-fledged institution. The way in which Afghanistan's armed forces are currently developing, whereby they rely primarily on domestic resources, can be traced back to the Taliban's rise to power in 2021.

Thirdly, the civil-military conflict in Afghanistan, which has been ongoing since the late 1970s, has had a critical impact on the army. External intervention triggered a reaction from the most conservative part of Afghan society, which was expressed in the desire to drive away the "invader" as soon as possible. Society was split between the minority "modernists" who relied on foreign aid, and the ordinary population living according to the paradigm of clan-tribal relations. Under these conditions, the army was unable to act as a unifying force, but rather served as a special institution with its own approaches toward developing Afghanistan's state. With the Taliban coming to power in the country, and following the end of foreign interference, Afghanistan's armed forces began to resemble disparate formations bound by ties of personal loyalty to specific commanders rather than an "impersonal institution".

The 20th and 21st centuries in Afghanistan were largely marked by modernization, and the Taliban at the time of their seizure of power also declared their commitment to these ideas. But the question arises: to what extent did any of these statements carry any weight? The protracted civil conflict during its next iteration in the early 2020s (and the Taliban's rise to power) led to the virtual complete deconstruction of modern political institutions in Afghanistan, including the army. This article endeavors to describe how Afghanistan's new Taliban authorities view their armed forces' mission statement and path for development – both currently and in the future.

The First Attempts at Forming the Armed Forces

From 1919 until the early 1980s, Afghanistan's army was formed with the direct involvement of external forces, the leading role of which, however, remained with the national government. The military-technical cooperation of the Kingdom (later Republic) of Afghanistan with the Soviet Union beginning in the early 1950s played a crucial role in this process.⁴ Amir Amanullah Khan (1919-1929), who sought to modernize the country, transformed the army into a loyal institution (on the advice of the first president of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk)⁵, in essence making the armed forces a locomotive for reform. Kemal Pasha, a former member of the Young Turk government who had ties with Soviet Russia, came from Turkey to assist Afghanistan's leader in restructuring the army.

Relations between Afghanistan and Russia during the Amanullah Khan era were ambivalent. The young Soviet republic was the first to recognize Afghanistan independence in 1919 and provided it with military aid and support for its progressive reforms. On the other hand, Amanullah Khan supported the anti-Soviet Basmachi movement and gave shelter in his country to many of its natives after Soviet power became firmly established in Central Asia.

Before Amanullah's reforms, the army consisted of tribal militias and recruits, often enlisted by force, which could only call into question the loyalty of the army's rank and file. What's more, most soldiers and officers were illiterate. Instead of engaging in active training, these soldiers spent much of their time trading at the bazaar, or toiling as indentured labor to support themselves. Under the amir's reforms, the rudiments of ideological

work in the armed forces were introduced – relative uniformity in military uniforms and standardized training.⁶

However, Amanullah's reforms in the military sphere failed. The amir ran up against a conservative society, the negative reaction of which was fueled by the propaganda advanced by the mullahs and, among the power layer, the so-called Old Afghans, who opposed administrative, political, and economic reforms. In 1929, Amanullah Khan was overthrown after the army refused to come out in support of the reformist amir.

The next amir, Nadir Shah (1929-1933) devoted much time to reorganizing and strengthening the army. According to his ideas, the officers were to be entrusted with protecting "religion, the homeland, the government, and the country's new foundations." Officers were recruited among young men from the upper Pashtun tribes to satisfy the aspirations of the Afghan nobility, which wanted representation in power structures in order to strengthen the amir himself.

Under the young Zahir Shah (1933-1973), Hitler's agents gained influence in Afghanistan, infiltrating the country under the guise of providing instructors to train Afghan soldiers and officers. For the sake of rapprochement with Nazi Germany, ideas about the "Aryan" origin of Afghans were promoted among the officers.⁷ The target of such propaganda were the most reactionary elements – Pashtun maliks and khans, as well as clergy who were dissatisfied with the strengthening of the Shah. It was practically impossible for non-Pashtun ethnic groups to rise above the lower ranks of officers. However, the realization that their promotions were unjustly being held back by ethnic minorities became one of the most important factors influencing the internal policy and morale of the army.⁸

Military-technical cooperation between the Kingdom of Afghanistan and the USSR began in the mid-1950s.⁹ Middle and lower-ranking officers were shipped off to the Soviet Union for training, which predetermined the largely "leftist" orientation of this part of the officer corps, among whom were many representatives of ethnic minorities. In contrast, Afghanistan's top generals also received their training and/or consultations abroad, but not in the USSR.¹⁰

In 1964, with the adoption of Afghanistan's new Constitution, social organizations could be established and actively began participating in politics. These organizations included the Marxist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA, established in 1965) and the Shoala-ye Javid

("Eternal Flame", established in 1964), various progressive liberal socio-political movements, and the right-wing radical organization Muslim Youth. At this time, the army, influenced by the widening political spectrum in the country, was also becoming politically engaged and factionalized. The junior and middle Afghan officers trained in the USSR, in line with trends common to the East, sought to become the vanguard in reforming the country. The state's "reaction" was to intensify special programs and develop methodologies to "neutralize advanced ideas and views,"¹¹ including Islamic extreme right-wing views.

After overthrowing his cousin King Zahir Shah in 1973, Mohammad Daud Khan (1973-1978) relied on a stratum of lower and middle-ranking officers to consolidate his regime, having understood that the country's top generals expressed only narrow interest in clans. Mohammad Daud's success during the coup d'état he organized in the summer of 1973 was largely due to his reliance on leftist forces in the army, mainly supporters of the more moderate Parcham faction of the Marxist PDPA party. As the Russian researcher Victor Korgun noted, a political deal was struck between Daud and this faction in the second half of the 1960s whereby not-so-radicalized leftist officers agreed to support the coup d'état in return for receiving various posts in the new government.¹²

After the coup, the army, which was dominated by representatives of "leftist forces, became a full-fledged actor in the political process. The new ruler put forward the thesis of "unity of thought and action" for Afghanistan's society as a whole, which included the army. This thesis became the practical embodiment of the theory of "people's" or "national revolution", which combined Pashtun nationalism, Islam, and the personality cult of the head of the Republic, Sardar Mohammad Daoud.¹³ The theory that the revolution was "national" and led by the Afghan people relied on consciously emphasizing the merits of the Pashtun people in the formation of the state, elevating and strengthening the role of the Pashtuns in the development of modern Afghanistan under the careful supervision of the Sardar, and in accordance with the norms of Islam, as interpreted by the pro-government traditionalist mullahs.

By the second half of the 1970s, the internal situation in the country, and in the army, which had become a particularly politicized part of society, was now once again heating up. The supporters of the PDPA, who had pinned their hopes on the Sardar to carry out full-fledged reforms of a socialist

nature, became disillusioned with the Daud regime. On the other hand, right-wing Islamists, whose interests were expressed by Hekmatyar's Islamic Party and Rabbani's Islamic Society, assumed an extremely aggressive position against the regime.

In April 1978, a prominent PDPA figure, Mir Akbar Khaybar, was assassinated by unknown assailants. Discontent had brought Afghanistan to the boiling point, which pushed fellow party members of the deceased to turn his funeral into the largest anti-government demonstration. Daud's supporters tried to "rein in" the Marxists, but their actions only exacerbated the conflict and resulted in the overthrow and brutal assassination of the head of state. These events went down in history as the "Saur Revolution". It was the army, represented by active members of the PDPA, that played the leading role.¹⁴

Thus, in 1978-1979 the army ensured that the progressively-minded "leftist" forces would come to power. However, from the very beginning, the new government was not characterized by internal stability due to complex inter-factional struggles. This instability was in turn reflected in the mood of the armed forces.

The USSR's Participation in the Formation of Afghanistan's Armed Forces

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) were ideologically disoriented and demoralized both by two factors: the introduction of a limited contingent of Soviet troops in December 1979; and, by regular purges and repressions that the party leadership had arranged in its ranks.¹⁵

The introduction of a limited contingent of Soviet troops, although it happened at the invitation of Parcham leader Babra Karmal (1979-1986), caused internal protest among ordinary Afghans, as it was perceived as an invasion from abroad. The ideas of rapid socialist modernization, which Karmal intended to carry out, resonated with only a small number of officers. The de facto "dispossession" of Afghanistan's landowners, not always large ones, became a powerful irritant for the people, especially in rural areas. Against a backdrop of radical and inept socialist reforms, inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts erupted with renewed vigor in the army.¹⁶ The need to improve the combat readiness of Afghanistan's army, especially in the face of the military threat posed by Iran and Pakistan, and, most

importantly, by the internal Islamic opposition, had once again become urgent. This task fell mainly on the shoulders of Soviet advisers working in all branches of the DRA's armed forces. Their mission was to overcome factional friction in the army and to organize the regular replenishment of personnel, which, taken altogether, resulted in the overwhelming need to form a "new revolutionary army, one whose primary mission was to protect the interests of the people." At the same time, the army was entrusted with the "educational function" of training personnel to run the country.¹⁷

Initially, Karmal's regime hoped to win with its own army, but due to the unpopularity of the PDPA's actions, particularly on the land issue, and also to the weakness of the Afghan Armed Forces, over time the responsibility for fighting "armed counterrevolution" fell on the shoulders of Soviet troops.¹⁸ Scattered mujahideen detachments took advantage of the Afghani landscape and could easily destroy Soviet military equipment with modest weapons.¹⁹ Moreover, the rural population supported the mujahideen movement and remained its most important resource. The United States actively joined the financial and military-technical support of the Islamic opposition, which considered the introduction of a limited contingent of Soviet forces into Afghanistan as a direct threat to its positions in the region.²⁰

By the mid-1980s, the civil-military conflict in Afghanistan had become progressively more internationalized and, as a consequence, protracted. Party leadership, represented by the Parcham faction, was primarily concerned with strengthening its administrative and political positions and promoting its supporters. All this could not but affect the army, which became even less capable and less effective.

At the same time, from the very beginning of the conflict in Afghanistan, Soviet leadership realized that its solution was purely political.²¹ When Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the USSR and Mohammad Najibullah took over in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (1987-1992), a political solution to the Afghan conflict began to emerge. In 1987, Najibullah put forward the doctrine of National Reconciliation, which envisioned the PDPA giving up its monopoly on power, agreeing to a cease-fire, and inviting opposition parties to negotiations. However, this doctrine was never put into practice: it alienated Najibullah from the Parcham and Khal'q factions, which dominated the armed forces and special services (army, interior ministry, state security). At the same time, the established dialogue with ethnic clan elders and tribal khans contributed to his becoming more

reliant on local tribal formations, the so-called *arbakis*, whose combat capabilities were higher than those of regular formations.²²

During the 1988-1989 Soviet withdrawal of its troops, Najibullah was left with virtually no armed support in many parts of the country and local militias became his primary support, albeit unreliably. He did, nevertheless, have assistance in maintaining control over Afghanistan's territories: Abdul Dustum, a DRA army general and commander of Uzbek militias, was one such source; the other was Seyed Naderi, the leader of the Afghan Ismailis, who in exchange for his loyalty to Najibullah enjoyed complete freedom of action.

When Najibullah's regime did eventually fall, all his achievements were reversed. On April 25, 1992, the Peshawar Accords were signed by the mujahideen parties, according to which the state institutions of the previous government, including the "army, police, and gendarmerie" were to be disbanded. The newly created forces were, in fact, scattered units of the mujahideen. Jihadist and national liberation slogans became irrelevant after the withdrawal of Soviet forces. Their departure set the stage for a classic ethnic feud in Afghanistan.

In this manner, during the period when Soviet forces were present in Afghanistan, the country's armed forces gradually lost their ability to counter external and internal threats, despite the best efforts of Soviet advisors. The various agencies controlling Afghanistan's armed forces became entwined with the PDPA party factions and became the most persuasive instrument in the struggle for power. Due to the deepening divisions in society during Afghanistan's civil war, as well as the country's lingering tribal mindset, the policy of political inclusiveness during "National Reconciliation" was unsuccessful. The armed forces, once the "vanguard of development", became the factor in the collapse of the DRA government.

US Involvement in the Formation of the Afghanistan's Armed Forces

The socio-political and socio-economic processes prevalent in period of the Islamic Republic in Afghanistan (2001-2021) were called "reconstruction". While under the control of the U.S. government, in accordance with the George Bush administration's National Defense Authorization Act of 2008, a special position of inspector for Afghanistan reconstruction was created by John Sopko, who was obliged to provide quarterly reports. on the effectiveness of financial resources spent on reconstruction programs in this

country, the essence of which was state-building. This period in many respects repeated the characteristic features of the previous one: for example, the main combat tasks were performed not by Afghanistan's army, but by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) as represented by NATO countries and other US allies.

This U.S.-backed nation building mostly focused its efforts on the institution of the armed forces – the army. According to General James Jones, commander of NATO forces (2003-2006), the rebuilding of the army is the pillar on which the reconstruction of the entire country rests.²³ Despite the fact that for almost 20 years the U.S. attempted to build an army in the image of its own, one that could successfully counter external and, more importantly, internal threats (mainly in the form of the Taliban and other anti-government forces), this project ultimately failed. According to some experts,²⁴ this was caused by a sharp decline in the combat effectiveness of the air force, which was the main threat to the Taliban. Its deterioration is most often attributed to a lack of knowledge in equipment maintenance and repair, as well as a dearth of trained personnel. However, there are other, deeper, and more fundamental reasons for the rapid degradation of the armed forces.

Firstly, there was a moral and ideological unpreparedness for confrontation. Most of the Afghan National Army (ANA) personnel saw serving in the army as a way to make a living – a way to feed their families in the poorest country in the world. Some Afghans were not shy about saying, “There is no ideology in this country other than syphoning money off the Americans.” Corruption within the army was well known to the rank-and-file, generals, and ordinary people alike.²⁵ According to U.S. advisers,²⁶ the Taliban fought in the name of their faith and did not fear “going to paradise by defeating the infidels” while the ANA were hired hands who were paid very little.

Secondly, there was a problem of “dead souls” in the army: in order to pocket extra money, officers would send their superiors huge lists of personnel who did not in fact exist. The stated strength of the entire armed forces was about 300,000, but the actual number of military personnel was hardly half that number.²⁷

The purpose of the ANA was stated in its charter as the “defense of the people of Afghanistan,” but this wording sounded too broad, and the real goals of the national army were limited to learning to fight next to the ISAF, but mostly as an auxiliary force.²⁸ In this light, ANA soldiers' commitment to

defend their homeland and fellow citizens was obviously questionable. The Taliban (a terrorist organization banned in Russia), unlike the regular army, positioned itself as participants in the national liberation movement to defend the country from American foreign expansion, which undoubtedly attracted the Taliban's supporters.²⁹

Everything seemed to suggest that Afghanistan's foreign curators deliberately chose not address issues of ideological and political work in the army. Evidence of this could be seen in the statement of former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry during Afghanistan's early "reconstruction" phase in 2007: "We can help train [Afghanistan's] army, we can help arm and equip it, we can help with infrastructure, but only the Afghans themselves can breathe 'soul' into their army."³⁰

Thus, in the first quarter of the 21st Century, the ANA was still a hostage to the country's ever-enduring tribal consciousness, as well as the mistakes of the U.S. administration, which was engaged in the "reconstruction" of the country. The armed forces were most likely perceived as an ineffective appendage of a corrupt government. The army, which never became the "vanguard of development and exaltation of the country," was an ineffective and corrupt institution unable to fulfill its primary mission.

The Taliban's Attitudes toward Building the Armed Forces

With the departure of the US-led international coalition and the Taliban's subsequent rise to power, the ideological appeal of the jihad against foreign invaders, which has always been successful in Afghanistan, exhausted itself. Building a regular armed force will now require developing new ideas, as well as thoughtfully formulating specific goals and objectives. At the same time, the ideas of building a world caliphate and all-Islamic solidarity resonate with the rank-and-file members of the movement, as evidenced by the reaction of Taliban media activists to the October 2023 escalation of the Arab-Israeli conflict.³¹ At the same time, the Taliban armed forces are obviously not planning to join the global jihad, focusing instead on threats from within, either from the armed opposition represented by the Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) or the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan (NRFA), or even from the opposition within the movement itself.³²

Given that the Taliban is itself a paramilitary movement, it is extremely difficult to separate the institutions of civilian authority and the military from one another. However, the new Taliban government is aware of the need to

build a new military force, as stated by spokesman Wahidullah Hashemi in August 2021.³³

During its rise to power, the Taliban set the potential size of the army at 150,000 men (350,000 including the Interior Ministry and the General Directorate of Intelligence), but in the period of 2021-2023 the Taliban faced problems recruiting the required number of men for the army, the same problem the ANA confronted. A Taliban spokesman said that the Taliban would welcome former ANA soldiers into their ranks.³⁴ Some media outlets, however, confirmed cases when Republican Army soldiers joined the ranks of the Taliban's forces, either voluntarily or by force, but faced repression or were killed during active military service for the Taliban.³⁵

The formation of a regular armed forces usually requires the introduction of uniform arms, ammunition, and equipment. However, despite the large stockpiles of ammunition left behind by Western forces in 2021, the Taliban's armed forces are, in this aspect, a diverse array of units, all with different types of weapons. Also, sources report that the weapons left behind in the summer of 2021 by Western forces in Afghanistan, through the Taliban's jihadist connections, fell into the hands of other regional fighter groups, such as Lashkar-e Taiba or Jaish-e Muhammad in Kashmir. Most recently, U.S.-Afghan-originated weapons were seen in the Gaza Strip in 2023. Most of the black-market exports were light small arms and ammunition, as well as U.S. night vision equipment. Repair and maintenance of U.S. assault rifles are extremely difficult in Afghanistan's environment, so despite the abundance of U.S.-made weapons in Afghanistan, Taliban fighters prefer homemade AK-47 assault rifles. U.S. Army HUMVEE SUVs and a few artillery pieces have also joined the Taliban's motley fleet.³⁶

The Taliban as an opposition force was an extremely heterogeneous paramilitary organization, comprised of different centers of influence and factions. The minimum operational unit was a "detachment" (*sar* in Pashto) of about 20-25 men. Several *sars* were united into "fronts" (*mahaz* in Pashto) of 100 men or more, which operated in a particular district. *Mahaz* commanders (amirs) reported directly to the Shura's Military Commission, the highest authority in the Taliban (*Shura* is Arabic for council).³⁷

However, for a long time, the so-called *loy mahaz* ("big fronts"), that were subordinate to individual charismatic Taliban commanders (rather than to the Military Commission), enjoyed strong influence within the Taliban. Mullah Dadullah (until his death in 2007), Mullah Abdul-Ghani Baradar, and several

other commanders led *loy mahaz*. Sirajuddin Haqqani, one of the key figures in the Taliban, has views that differ from the movement's spiritual leadership concerning the development of the country, and yet he heads one of the Taliban's largest factions, the "Haqqani network," whose membership has reached 15,000, a number larger than the largest *loy mahaz*.

Among the factors behind the success of the Taliban offensive in the summer of 2021 experts point to the fact that the centrifugal tendencies coming from the *loy mahaz* in the movement were offset by the creation of special elite military forces by the Taliban with direct subordination to Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhundzada (so-called "Red Brigade" or *Sara Qat'a* in Pashto).³⁸

At the same time, however, ideological divisions within the movement since its rise to power have periodically become exacerbated. In 2023, in addition to the Red Brigade, the Taliban added a special personal unit of commandos for Amir Haibatullah Akhundzada, amid his deteriorating relations with acting Defense Minister Mullah Yaqub and acting Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani.³⁹

Thus, despite the Taliban's claims about needing a modern military force and an institution with a clear hierarchy, in 2023 the movement continued to be a highly heterogeneous entity with often warring factions. There are attempts by the Taliban's spiritual leadership to contain centrifugal tendencies by force – by creating additional special forces. That is, the Taliban leaders realize that the military threat to the Taliban comes from within: either from the opposition within the movement; or from other armed opposition groups (such as the NRFA or IS-K).

Notes

1. *Strel'tsov D.V.* Armies in The Modern Orient. Moscow, Aspekt-press, 2018. p. 7. (In Rus.)
2. *Mirskii G.I.* 'The Third World': Society, Power, Army. Moscow, Nauka, 1976. pp. 4, 8-9. (In Rus.)
3. *Plastun V.N.* Afghan War: A Look from Within 1979-1989: Participant's Diary Notes and Comments. Moscow, Institute of Oriental Studies. 2016. p. 732. (In Rus.)
4. *Konarovsky M.A.* Afghanistan at the Turn of the Century: New Crossroads of Fate. Moscow, MGIMO-University, 2020. 355 p. (In Rus.)
5. *Giustozzi A.* The Army of Afghanistan. A Political History of a Fragile Institute. London, Hurst & Company, 2016. p. 9.

6. *Korgun V.G.* History of Afghanistan in XX Century. Moscow, Institute of Oriental Studies. 2004. pp. 99, 123. (In Rus.)
7. *Teplinsky L.B.* 50 Years of Soviet-Afghan Relations 1919–1969. Moscow, Institute of Oriental Studies of AS of USSR. p. 103. (In Rus.)
8. *Gankovsky Y.V.* The History of the Afghanistan Armed Forces, 1747–1977. Moscow, Nauka, 1985. pp. 194-221. (In Rus.)
9. *Konarovsky M.A.* Op. cit. p. 205.
10. *Teplinsky L.B.* The Problem of Pashtunistan in the Foreign Policy of the Modern Afghanistan. Brief Reports of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Moscow, Institute of Oriental Studies of AS of USSR, 1960. Iss. XXXVII. pp. 9-17. (In Rus.)
11. *Gankovsky Y.V.* Op. cit. p. 133.
12. *Korgun V.G.* Op. cit. p. 374.
13. The Speech of the Head and Premier Minister of the State Muhammad Daud Devoted to the New Year 1355 (1977). The Journal of Army, 1977, no. 1 (In Pashto)] Available at: <https://ketabton.com/book/14145> (accessed 24.11.2023).
14. *Sands C., Qazizay F.* Night Letters: Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and the Afghan Islamists Who Changed the World. London, Hurst Publ, 2019. p. 108.
15. *Gankovsky Y. V.* Op. cit. p. 412.
16. *Lyakhovsky A.A.* The Tragedy and Valor of Afghanistan. Moscow, ISKONA, 1995. p. 222 (In Rus.)
17. *Arunova M.R., Basov V.V., Korgun V.G.* Actual Problems of Afghanistan Revolution. Moscow, Nauka, 1984. p. 427 (In Rus.)
18. Ibid.
19. *Khristoforov V.S.* Afghanistan. The Ruling Party and Army (1979–1989). Moscow, Institute of Russian History Studies. 2009. p. 172 (In Rus.)
20. *Arunova M.R.* Afghan Policy of the USA during 1945–1999. Moscow, Institute of Israel and Middle East Studies, Institute of Oriental Studies. 2000. p. 26 (In Rus.)
21. *Khristoforov V.* The Afghan Events 1979–1989: From Knowing to Comprehension and Acceptation. Rabkrin, 24.04.2020. URL: <https://rabkrin.org/hristoforov-v-afganskije-sobytiya-1979-1989-gg-ot-poznaniya-k-osmysleniyu-i-priznaniyu-2019-statya/> (accessed 24.11.2023). (In Rus.)
22. *Borhan O.* Enemy Number One: How the Taleban Deal with the ALP and Uprising Groups. Afghanistan Analysts Network, 19.07.2017. URL: <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/reports/war-and-peace/enemy-number-one-how-the-taleban-deal-with-the-alp-and-uprising-groups/> (accessed 15.08.2022).

23. *Chan S.* Sentinels of Afghan Democracy: The Afghan National Army. URL: https://dr.ntu.edu.sg/bitstream/10356/90461/1/RSIS-WORKPAPER_105.pdf (accessed 02.04.2022).
24. *Shashok L.A.* Why Did Afghanistan Air Forces Collapse Before Taliban Siezed the Power? Part 1. Institute of Middle East Studies. 15.01.2022. URL: <http://www.iimes.ru/?p=82800&print=1> (accessed 02.04.2022). (In Rus.)
25. *Giustozzi A., Quentin P.* The Afghan National Army: Sustainability Challenges beyond Financial Aspects. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. February 2014. URL: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/537c4d264.pdf> (accessed 03.04.2022).
26. *Gen. Petraeus speaks about Afghanistan collapse, U.S. withdrawal.* NBC News, 17.08.2021. Available at <https://www.nbcnews.com/nightlynews/video/gen-petraeus-speaks-on-afghanistan-collapse-u-s-withdrawal-118822981576> (accessed 28.07.2022).
27. *Chas D.* Why Afghanistan's Security Forces Suddenly Collapsed. *Intelligencer*, 17.08.2021. URL: <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2021/08/why-afghanistans-security-forces-suddenly-collapsed.html#:~:text=Biden%20and%20others%20have%20sought,and%20managed%2C%20poor%20military%20planning%2C> (accessed 15.08.2022).
28. Kandak COIN Checklist. URL: <https://info.publicintelligence.net/ANA-3-24-4.pdf> (accessed 28.07.2022).
29. Zamir Kabulov: the Interests of Taliban to Fight with ISIS Correspond with Russian Ones. *Interfax*, 23.12.2015. URL: <https://www.interfax.ru/interview/486757> (accessed 03.04.2022). (In Rus.)
30. *Chan S.* Op. cit.
31. Pakistan, Afghanistan show support to Palestine, calls for "cessation of hostilities". *The Economic Times*, 09.10.2023. URL: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/pakistan-afghanistan-show-support-to-palestine-calls-for-cessation-of-hostilities/articleshow/104245296.cms> (accessed: 25.11.2023).
32. *Lindsay Maizland.* The Taliban in Afghanistan. Council on Foreign Relations, 19.01.2023. URL: <https://www.cfr.org/background/taliban-afghanistan> (accessed: 25.11.2023).
33. Exclusive: Council may rule Afghanistan, Taliban to reach out to soldiers, pilots. *Reuters*, 18.08.2021. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/exclusive-council-may-rule->

- afghanistan-taliban-reach-out-soldiers-pilots-senior-2021-08-18/
(accessed: 25.11.2023).
34. Ibid.
 35. 200 former Afghan troops, officials killed since Taliban takeover: UN. Al-Jazeera, 22.08.2023. URL: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/22/over-200-former-afghan-troops-officials-killed-since-taliban-takeover-un> (accessed: 25.11.2023).
 36. *Lynne O'Donnell*. The Taliban Are Now Arms Dealers. Foreign Policy, 05.07.2023. URL: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/07/05/taliban-afghanistan-arms-dealers-weapons-sales-terrorism/> (accessed: 25.11.2023).
 37. *Giustozzi A*. Op. cit. p. 38.
 38. *Shawn Snow*. Red Group: The Taliban's New Commando Force. The Diplomat, 12.08.2016. URL: <https://thediplomat.com/2016/08/red-group-the-talibans-new-commando-force/> (accessed: 25.11.2023).
 39. Taliban's Leader Appoints New Commander For His Special Forces. Afghanistan International, 30.10.2023. URL: <https://www.afintl.com/en/202310308336> (26.11.2023).

Chapter 11. Political Islam in Afghanistan: Origins and Ideology

Evgeniy Belkov

The issue of how Islamic norms and principles were applied under the Taliban, both when they first came to power and again in 2021, is one of the key problems in studying the latter's social system and evaluating their time in power. To understand the specifics of Islam in Afghanistan and its political role today, it is necessary to turn to its origins, the basic principles of which are still preserved.

Political Islam played a key role in the history of Afghanistan in the second half of the 20th Century and largely predetermined current events. The Islamist movement is in fact a modern phenomenon – and not only for Afghanistan but also for many other Muslim countries where this movement took shape ideologically. Political Islam in the most general terms means the use of religion to find an alternative to the capitalist and socialist models in order to counter the influence of alien global ideologies on public life in Muslim countries.

In Afghanistan political Islam is characterized by its nostalgia for the caliphate, condemnation of social injustice, increased emphasis on *ijtihad* (from Arabic – “diligence”, “great endeavor”; in Shari’ah – labor, diligence in making legal rulings and solving various religious problems or issues on the basis of the ayat of the Qur’an, hadith, *qiyas*, and *ijma*) and attempts to find the most suitable form of organization of society. At the same time, the high level of traditionalism in Afghanistan’s society, followed by many years of war, which regularly caused the greatest damage to the country’s modernized social strata, led to the fact that political Islam in Afghanistan has been losing touch with high Islamic culture and present-day realities. The Taliban became an example of how Islamic ideas in their most primitive form were adopted by those who used them to mobilize society against a backdrop of external and internal confrontation.

The topics of political Islam in Afghanistan and its origins have been discussed to one degree or another by both domestic and foreign researchers, both Afghanists and Islamic scholars. Among foreign authors, this issue was most thoroughly covered by the British orientalist Olivier Roy in his fundamental work “Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan,” in which the author asked the question: “What are the sources of Islamic fundamentalism,

expressed in the massive emergence of Islamist-type parties during the anti-Soviet jihad?” The work shows for the first time the connection between medieval tribal leaders and Afghan field commanders with their slogans of fighting under the banner of Islam.

The monographs of Victor Spolnikov, “Afghanistan. Islamic opposition. Origins and Goals” and Anton Lavrov’s “Political Islam in Afghanistan” are valuable in this regard. Both works focus primarily on the contemporary formation of Islamic fundamentalist movements, pointing to ideas that immediately preceded the emergence of political Islam in Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, it can be said that a comprehensive and chronological description of the presumed foundations and origins of political Islam in domestic Afghan studies has not been undertaken. The history of the emergence and activities of various quasi-political and political movements of the Middle Ages and modern times, as well as their ideologies, are described in quite detail. However, an assessment of the possible relationship and interdependence of these movements is not given. In this work efforts have been made to fill these gaps. In addition, an attempt has been made to show that the perception of different ideas differs depending on the social status of the subject. The views held by the illiterate majority did not find understanding among representatives of the intelligentsia and differed significantly from those that the educated part of society found appealing.

In general, several factors determined the features of political Islam in Afghanistan: the traditions of tribal leadership; the ideological and religious influence of Deobandism; pan-Islamism; and, the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Tribal Factor

The primary internal derivation of political Islam in Afghanistan was the tradition of tribal leadership, the leading driving force of which was fundamentalist Islam, which implied bringing life into conformity with Sharia and the subordination of all spheres of public life to religion.¹ This tradition manifested itself in two types of conflicts. The first type might be in the form of a large-scale confrontation with an external invader, or internal forces that, in the opinion of one of the parties, posed a threat to the entire society. Such was the case with the three Anglo-Afghan wars, in which religious leaders (sheikhs) could, under the banner of a holy war (jihad),

raise the population to resist. This is illustrated by an episode of the Second Anglo-Afghan War, when in 1879 Mullah Din Mohammad, also known as Mushk-i-Alam, and Abdul Ghafur Langari managed to send troops belonging to different tribes and clans to fight against their British invaders, declaring jihad against them.² This endeavor ended in failure, but the fact that the clergy and the population could be unified if needed was now obvious.

The second type, an internal confrontation, could be the result of dissatisfaction of the religious class with the policies pursued by state leaders and its demands to bring them into line with Islamic norms. If the rulers resisted, spiritual leaders could declare jihad against the unfaithful sovereign. This was the case with the progressive reforms of Amanullah Khan when in 1924 Mulla-i-Lang from Khost rebelled against them (reforms). Another example is the influential religious leader Hazrat-e Shur Bazar's support of rebels during the Bacha-i Sakao uprising (1928-1929), which led to the overthrow of Amanullah. A similar fate befell the leaders of socialist Afghanistan during the Afghan war of 1979-1992.³

The tradition of tribal leadership and, accordingly, the wars associated with it, are not synonymous with holy war. On the one hand, it can be assumed that inter-tribal feuds can be justified by religious motives. However, as a rule, such motives are used in the event of large-scale confrontations, which require ideological justification for the unification of large forces. In such confrontations, unification can occur both along tribal lines and on purely confessional grounds. An important difference between the two options is a leader's status. In the event of a clash between tribes, the khan of the tribe remains the head, not necessarily a religious leader. On the contrary, with larger-scale confrontations, the need for unifying principles arises, the bearers of which throughout history have been precisely religious figures: sheikhs, seyids, hazrat, imams, and mullahs. The difference between them, according to Roy, is that the tribal leader, khan (or even the head of state) is primarily interested in maintaining intra-tribal solidarity based on the authority of the leader as the head of the hierarchy, while the religious leader, as a rule, attempts to go beyond the boundaries of the tribal structure and lead the fight against an external aggressor on the basis of religious tenets and his authority.⁴

Therefore, it can be said that the religious factor played its role mainly at moments when unification against the main enemy was necessary. Such an

enemy for Afghans throughout history has been external forces – the British, Russians, and Americans.

At the same time, the importance of religious authority has not always been paramount. In the case of the Anglo-Afghan wars, one can see that the population could be led to fight the invader by a non-religious leader – more precisely, by a person for whom the spiritual function is not predominant. This was, for example, the case with Dost Mohammad, who led the fight against the British in the first Anglo-Afghan War; or, with Amanullah Khan, who initiated the war for independence from the British Empire in 1919.⁵ At the same time, of course, the head of state can wage war under religious slogans, while enjoying the approval and support of the clergy.

Deobandism

Afghanistan has always been at the crossroads of the Indian subcontinent, Iran, and Central Asia. Although the tradition of popular uprisings originates in Iran's Khorasan, the religious movements responsible for “flinging” Afghanistan from the 16th to the 20th Century, came from India. And it was in the east of the country, on the border, where the largest uprisings took place. Afghanistan, being on the doorstep of the Indian subcontinent, has repeatedly invaded India. Many dynasties in North India, including the Mughals, were founded by princes who originated from Afghanistan. The cultural similarities between the countries are very significant and Persian has long been the language of business in Delhi. What's more, until 1947 India was the primary educational center for Afghan ulama theologians, who studied alongside representatives of other religions (Hinduism, Sikhism, Christianity) and local heresies (Akbar's syncretism), which eventually served as the driving force behind various reforms in Afghanistan.

Religious reform movements in India at the time shared some similarities with Islam in Afghanistan: fundamentalism, the desire to return to Sharia and the Holy Scriptures, being one; and Sufism, the predominant movement of which was Naqshbandi, being another; and, finally, political agendas, which have played an increasingly important role and set the ideological direction of the Islamist movement in this century. Despite a general lack of agreement among modern authors, most agree that all of the aforementioned phenomena had an impact on the Afghan ulema and the reform of religious thought.

One of the main external sources of political Islam in Afghanistan can be considered the school of Deobandism, which was founded within the walls of the Deoband Madrasah, a suburb of Delhi. The Madrasah was established by certain Islamic theologians who did not accept British rule in India and who were committed to the struggle for independence. Most of the most influential Afghan ulema received their education here.⁶ The curriculum, which took ten years to master, included 106 books related to theology, commentaries on the Koran, Hanafi Fiqh, and Hadith. It also included Arabic and Persian grammar, literature, Greek and Arabic philosophy, astronomy and medieval geometry, logic, as well as a section on medicine, known as “Greek”.

Deoband was the second university established in the Muslim world after Al-Azhar. The Deoband school rejected innovation (*bid'at*), adhered to strict orthodoxy, and did not allow the cult of saints; nevertheless, the school accepted Sufism. In fact, many of the school's teachers were representatives of the Naqshbandiyya or Qadiriyya brotherhoods, which itself demonstrated the differences between the fundamentalism of the Deoband school and that of the Saudi Wahhabi school. This connection between fundamentalism and Sufism has become a distinctive feature of the orthodox ulema in the Indian subcontinent, including Afghanistan.

The Deobandists were especially active from pan-Islamic positions, taking the side of Turkey at the onset of the World War I and calling on Muslims to unite and support the caliphate. Actually, it is Indian pan-Islamism that lies at the core of religious and political movements for the preservation of the caliphate. In Afghanistan, the newspaper “*Siraj al-Akhbar*”, published by the Afghan educator and public figure Mahmoud Tarzi, became the mouthpiece of the ideas of this movement.⁷

The Concept of Pan-Islamism

An important factor in religious resistance in Afghanistan was the concept of the unity of the ummah, or Muslim community – in this context a separate state. As a religious and political doctrine, this idea took shape in the ideology of pan-Islamism, the founder of which was the Muslim reformer originally from Afghanistan, Jamal ad-din al-Afghani (1839-1897).⁸ Even though Pan-Islamism, in its original form, was a plan to unite Muslim states, it could also be used to unite more limited communities. During moments

when communities are under threat, Pan-Islamism becomes one of the fundamental guides for religious leaders in justifying the need for resistance. The very idea of unity on a religious basis is intrinsic for the clergy of any Muslim country and does not depend on any external circumstances. However, it was the rulers who were the first to use the unity-of-the-umma discourse in Afghanistan, attempting in this manner to unite society against an external enemy. Among them is Amanullah Khan, who used the ideology of pan-Islamism to justify his active foreign policy, which he used to win the country's independence. Amanullah's views were formed under the influence of the Young Afghan movement, in the ideology of which national issues were closely linked with Islam and pan-Islamism.⁹ As a rule, it was not difficult for rulers to win the loyalty of a deeply religious population by appealing to their religious feelings and Muslim solidarity.

At the same time, these leaders sought only a limited wave of religious enthusiasm, up to a certain point, for once the wave reached its peak control could be lost. If the authorities felt that the mood of the population was beginning to pose a danger to itself, and the spiritual leaders at the head of the resistance were becoming too popular and uncontrollable, they would attempt to counter this wave by reducing the authority of the clergy, who, as a rule, advocated more decisive action against invaders. There are many examples of this in Afghanistan's history: in 1857, when the Indian (or, as it is also called, the Sepoy) uprising began, Emir Dost Mohammad refused to send troops to help the rebels, despite pressure from the clergy and sardars;¹⁰ and, in 1914, during the First World War, Habibullah did not support calls to oppose the British just when pan-Islamist slogans were on the rise and were enthusiastically received by the clergy and the population. In the end, even Amanullah, who most embraced the pan-Islamist agenda, especially in the early years of his reign, was ultimately hesitant to support the Basmachi movement, which was proclaimed to be fighting for the cause of Islam against the godless communists.¹¹

Muslim Brotherhood

Another ideological source of political Islam in Afghanistan is the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. The organization was founded in 1928 by the Egyptian politician and religious reformer Hassan al-Banna. According to the Russian Islamic scholar Magomedali Razhbadinov, "political Islam in Muslim countries cannot be imagined without the oldest Islamic

organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, which emerged in Egypt at the end of the 1920s. The ideology and political philosophy of the Muslim Brotherhood greatly influenced the development of modern Islamism.”¹² According to the founder of the organization, its purpose and functions include “a Salafi message, a Sunni path, a political organization, a sports group, a cultural and educational union, an economic enterprise, and a social idea.”¹³ The main provisions of the Muslim Brotherhood movement were formulated at the fifth conference dedicated to the tenth anniversary of its founding. They document the understanding of Islam as a comprehensive, self-sufficient system based on two main sources – the Revelation of the Koran and the life of the Prophet, i.e., Sunnah. The relevance of Islam being everywhere and at all times was also considered immutable. In fact, this approach can be considered fundamentalist, since according to it, it is religion that should determine all spheres of human life, relying on two main pillars – the Koran and the Sunnah.

The ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood infiltrated Afghanistan’s religious and political thought immediately after the founding of the movement. At the end of 1929, after the authoritative theologian Nadir Shah came to power, the head of the Naqshbandiyya Sufi order, Mohammad Sadeq Mojaddedi, was appointed Afghanistan’s first ambassador to Cairo. After Jamal ad-din al-Afghani, Sadeq became the second leading representative of Afghanistan in the Arab world. In addition to his connections in Egypt, he had good relations with representatives of the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, including with the first King of Saudi Arabia Abd al-Aziz and his son, the future King Faisal.¹⁴ It is known that in Cairo he met the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al-Banna, with whom he established friendly relations. Mohammad Sadeq became a staunch supporter of the Brotherhood’s ideology.¹⁵

Subsequently, Sadeq’s children, Mohammad Harun and Sebghatullah Mojaddedi, both educated in Al-Azhar in Cairo, joined the movement. According to information from the Soviet historian Mikhail Slinkin, members of the Mojaddedi family took an active part in the activities of the movement, “including in the preparation of the attempt on the life of Gamal Abdel Nasser” in Alexandria in October 1954.¹⁶ Returning in 1954 to Afghanistan (according to Slinkin, previously the entire Mojaddedi family has been expelled from the country), Sebghatullah Mojaddedi sent Prime Minister Mohammad Daoud “a written warning about the danger of growing

Soviet influence in Afghanistan.” Daoud, who was known to harbor hostility towards clerical circles, ignored this letter. In 1960 Sebgatulla was arrested for participating in an assassination attempt on members of a Soviet government delegation that was in Afghanistan. He was later convicted and spent four and a half years in prison, after which he was expelled from the country for two years. He presumably spent this time in Saudi Arabia.¹⁷

According to Olivier Roy, the greatest influence on the emergence of political Islam in Afghanistan had precisely the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, which, unlike the Deoband school, represented a rather strong break with the Afghan cultural tradition.¹⁸ This was mainly explained by the fact that future Islamists and their ideology were formed as a result of the development of modern enclaves within traditional society that appeared in Afghanistan only in the 20th Century (lyceums, universities where science was taught in a form that was relevant for that time) – these were so-called intellectuals who were educated within government structures. According to the Afghan historian Mohammed Kakar, the new leaders of the Islamic resistance, unlike their traditional predecessors, were already educated representatives of an Afghan society already in the process of modernization, who organized into political parties and movements starting in the 1960s, thus becoming a product of the transition from traditional to modern society.¹⁹ That is why most of them identified themselves not as ulemas, but as *raushanfekrs* (*Raushanfekr* is Persian for intellectual, enlightened).

This new religious intelligentsia, despite its similarities with the old, “scientific” intelligentsia, developed under the influence of and taking into account modern, Western ideas. Borrowing all the essentials from these ideas, these enlightened planned to build a new political ideology based on Islam. This is exactly how they intended to become on par with the modern Western world, or at least not to completely lag behind the West in the scientific and technological spheres.

Mohammed Kakar himself, confirming the above sources of Islamic fundamentalism, names three main authors whose works influenced the worldview of Afghanistan’s Islamists. These are Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (1914-1999), Abul Ala al-Maududi (1903-1979), and Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966).²⁰ It is noteworthy that for all three, power is the main goal of the struggle, mainly because the state can and should be an instrument for carrying out reforms. Thus, according to Abul Ala al-Mawdudi, the state is an ideological construct, in the life and management of which people should

participate, following this ideology (Islam) and the divine laws that the state should promote.²¹ Therefore, the desire to build a state on the foundation of Islamic ideology arose – the Koran and Sunnah, including tribal militias led by local spiritual leaders. The role of the new fundamentalist or revolutionary groups was not only to repel invasions, but also to transform society and the state to new principles of Islamic ideology, which were borrowed from the largest Muslim thinkers of the modern world.

Peculiarities in the Relationship Between Government Leaders and the Clergy

If we analyze the history of Afghanistan from the 19th Century, when unified and stable power structures and social systems took shape in the country, we can find that short periods of unity between the supreme power and the clergy were followed by periods of long rivalry between them, when the clergy's primary complaint against the government was its conciliation or lack of zeal in the fight against infidels.²² Nevertheless, popular movements led by religious leaders have not always been in opposition to state policies aimed at strengthening national sovereignty. Coups and revolutions were not necessarily reactionary or traditionalist in nature. The 20th Century demonstrated that such movements can be led by political and religious leaders of very different ideological views. However, the role of religion in each conflict remained dominant for one, or even both, sides; religion served to justify the expediency both of the struggle and its methods.

The 1928 uprising of Bacha-i Sakao serves as the most striking example of the peculiarities that exist when state power and religious movements interact. The son of a water carrier, who participated in the Second Anglo-Afghan War, Bacha-i Sakao became an Afghan Robin Hood of sorts, taking property and money from the rich and giving it to the poor. Naturally, for state authorities, in the person of Amanullah Khan, this character was an ordinary outcast criminal. When, at the end of 1928 in the Jalalabad region, the Shinvari tribe, which was dissatisfied with the progressive reforms of Amanullah, rebelled, Bacha-i Sakao successfully took advantage of the concentration of regular troops in the east of the country and attacked Kabul from the Kuhistani region in the north, which was initially under his control.²³ It seems obvious that for such a successful demarche the rebel had to have the clergy as an ally. It is not surprising, therefore, that, despite the openly illegal nature of his actions, Bacha-i Sakao chose to proclaim his

campaign as one of liberation from the godless government in the person of the reformer Amanullah²⁴ – a trick that will be used more than once in Afghanistan by others who were dissatisfied with the actions of the government.

The rebel commander did indeed manage to gain the support of the clergy, who called him “a servant of God, the nation, and an ardent defender of the true faith of the Prophet and the creed of Hazrat Sahib.”²⁵ Hazrat Sahib was a representative of an influential religious clan of Arab origin and was considered the spiritual leader of the population of one of the commercial districts of Kabul. This clan, also called the Mojaddedi clan (whose prominent representatives we have already mentioned), was one of the most influential at the court of the Afghan emirs and at some point actively supported them, especially in the fight against England’s influence.²⁶ Amanullah initially enjoyed the full support of the clergy, since in the first half of his reign he positioned himself as the leading and successive defender of the Islamic ummah, when, according to the American researcher Vartan Gregorian, he adhered to a policy of “militant pan-Islamism.”²⁷

However, already in the mid-20s, pan-Islamist rhetoric began to fade away, not least because, as Soviet researcher Ruslan Sikoev rightfully asserts, by that time the major partners of Afghanistan (Turkey and Iran) had chosen a secularist path of development, abandoning the political slogan of pan-Islamism.²⁸ At the same time, in the wake of dissatisfaction with insufficiently active opposition to Great Britain in the second half of Amanullah’s reign, as well as with his reforms, the leaders of the Mojaddedi clan sided with the rebels, justifying this by claiming a need to return to truly Islamic rule.

Ultimately, Amanullah was overthrown, and after the short reign of Bacha-i Sakao, the new ruler of Afghanistan became a distant relative of the former monarch, Mohammad Nadir, who completely followed the line of the clergy in matters of upbringing and education and returned to the religious authorities all the positions they had lost in the fields of justice and education during the reign of Amanullah.

In responding to the question why the clergy, as represented by the authoritative Mojaddedi clan, ultimately decided to support Nadir and not Bacha-i Sakao, one is inclined to think that the dominant role in this decision can be attributed to tribal and ethnic factors. After all, Bacha-i Sakao was a Tajik, which could not satisfy the Pashtun majority, to which the

aforementioned clan belonged. As for Nadir, he, too, needed the support of the clergy to legitimize his rule, and here one of the decisive factors was his willingness to make concessions.

This turn towards clericalism was reflected at the legislative level as well. In the Constitution of 1931, all spheres of societal life were brought into line with the Hanafi Islamic faith, to the point where the main condition for inheriting power in the country was the need for the monarch to comply with Islamic laws.²⁹

The Formation of the Islamist Opposition in Afghanistan

The ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the school of Deobandism, with its inherent bias towards the ideology of pan-Islamism, as well as its tradition of waging war, both against inter-tribal and external invaders, using religion as a justification, became the ideological foundation for the organization of the Islamic opposition.

Among the processes designed to modernize society, one of the most important was increasing the level of education and its accessibility to the masses. This, in turn, allowed those who would later lead the Islamic opposition to the government of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan to participate in political activities. Considering that political parties had a quasi-legal status, and most often simply operated underground, the chief means of propaganda remained the press, which in the 1960s was not censored.

One of the foremost reasons for the emergence of Islamic political parties was the dissatisfaction of religious and clerical circles with the modernization policies carried out by Zahir Shah (in power 1933-1973), more specifically by Prime Minister Mohammad Daoud (1953-1963). Such reforms have always led to a decrease in the role of traditional structures of public self-government and to an increase in the role of the state. Against the backdrop of the strengthening role of the state during Daoud's premiership, the clergy lost the positions that had been previously won under Nadir Shah, especially in the field of justice and education. Such modernization in the country inevitably led to the weakening of the role of the clerics. A distinctive feature of Daoud's reign was its focus on encouraging national, rather than religious aspects of societal life. Daoud's place in history is secure as a staunch Pashtun nationalist and, hence, his constant confrontation with Pakistan over border territories. His feelings towards religious rhetoric

cooled considerably, and his rejection of the clerics' positions regarding the danger of Soviet influence, which we mentioned above, suggests that he had become quite the ideological opponent of theirs.

Islamic fundamentalists, on the contrary, advocated the primary role of Islam in the life of the state and the individual. And they called religion, not nationality or ethnicity, the most important factor determining a person's identity.³⁰ Moreover, according to the ideas of Sayyid Qutb and Maududi, Islam cannot coexist with any other political or social system.³¹

In the period from the 1950s to the early 1960s, Daud actively collaborated with the Soviet Union and understood that in the light of modernization this cooperation was the only way to elevate the country to a higher economic level. Strengthening the role of the clergy, on the contrary, would slow down this process, while religious leaders were unable to offer any clear alternative to working with the USSR. At the same time, neither the United States nor any other country for that matter played, or could have played a role similar to the USSR's in boosting the technological and social progress of Afghanistan in those years.

Thus, supporters of fundamentalist transformations in Afghanistan in the 1950s and 1960s were in the same position as like-minded people in Egypt during the reign of Gamal Abdel Nasser, whose politics were dominated by the ideas of nationalism, people's democracy, and socialism. Of course, Afghanistan under Daoud was not a democracy, much less a socialist state, but statements proclaiming that his ideas found more approval than right-wing extremist ones are absolute fact.

It is worth noting that even after Daoud's first premiership in the second half of the 60s, there was no cooling in relations with the USSR. Authorities behaved quite tolerantly towards the left opposition, with the exception of the case of the closure of the Khalq newspaper in 1966, and the arrest of two members of the Parcham group in 1969. Otherwise, the communists had almost complete freedom of action, which they took advantage of, going into open confrontation with right-wing radicals.³²

As Russian researcher Victor Spolnikov noted, tracing the history of the emergence of an organized fundamentalist movement, or political Islam, or Islamism, is quite difficult. First of all, this is due to the fact that the leaders of this movement (or movements) were themselves underground until the 1980s. As such, they were guided by the rules of secrecy and suppressed any information about their organization and structure.³³ Only when their

activities became completely open and public did each of the participants and leaders of movements and parties begin to extol their role in their origin and development, turning it into an instrument of political struggle.

Olivier Roy, like Mohammed Kakar, claims that the ideological inspiration for the fundamentalist movement was Gholam Mohammad Niazi (1932-1979), a theologian and the future dean of the faculty of theology at Kabul University. Like most of the movement's founders, Niazi graduated from Al-Azhar University in Cairo, where there was a quota for Afghan students,³⁴ as was the case for students from other Muslim countries. Here he began perceiving the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood as close to his beliefs. Many of his companions, such as Burhanuddin Rabbani, Syed Musa Tawana, Abdurrasul Sayaf, and Sebghatullah Mojaddedi were students or teachers of the Faculty of Theology at Kabul University. According to the famous field commander and founder of the Islamic Party of Afghanistan, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the origins of the first Islamic political parties were students who invited professors to join their ranks. However, in most cases they refused. As an example, he cites Niazi, who expressed support for the movement but did not dare to join it officially, knowing that he would have to publicly criticize the state, which, in his role as a professor, was his employer.³⁵

However, apparently, Hekmatyar is talking about the late 1960s, when the Muslim Youth movement was formed through the merger of several university circles. This is confirmed by his words: "... when Daoud carried out a coup d'etat, our party was very young. Only four years have passed since its founding."³⁶ Since the coup took place in 1973, it is logical to assume that the party was founded around 1969. According to Kakar, the circle, modeled after the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, was initially founded by Mohammad Niazi in Paghman in 1957, immediately after his return from Egypt.³⁷ Dedicated teachers and professors of conviction were invited to the circle. Roy adheres to the same point of view, arguing that the circle, without a specific structure, acted underground in the context of a conflict between religious circles and the government in the person of Daoud. The conflict especially escalated in 1958, when many clerics, including Sebghatullah Mojaddedi, were arrested.³⁸

Presumably, the newly formed circle was named the Islamic Society, which was mainly involved in distributing translations of the works of Islamic reformers, such as the aforementioned Sayyid Qutb and Maududi, and, naturally, had to promote their views. In addition, members of the first

Islamic Society had to fight the spread of leftist and democratic ideas in the country. After all, it was national-democratic and leftist organizations that took shape in Afghanistan before others, such as “Vesh Zalmiyan” in 1947, “Hezb-e Watan” and “Hezb-e Khalq” in 1951. So, in 1966 Mohammad Yunus Khalis, who in the future would become one of highest-ranking field commanders, published the first translation of the works of Sayyid Qutb, entitled *Islam and Social Justice*.³⁹ Perhaps the theme of labor was in fact brought on by the need to rebuff left-wing ideas regarding the issue of social inequality.

Lavrov also raises the matter concerning the founding of the first political (or proto-political) Islamic organization in Afghanistan, which he dates back to 1957. However, according to his version, the circle was created either by students of the Abu Hanifa madrasah, among whom was Burhanuddin Rabbani, or by students of the theological faculty of Kabul University.⁴⁰ According to the testimony of Abdurrasul Sayaf, a participant in the events described above, the founder of the circle was Mohammad Niazi. However, it emerged not in 1957, but rather in 1964-65, and its members were both students and teachers of Kabul University. The circle included such figures as Burhanuddin Rabbani, Syed Musa Tavana, Burrahim Niazi, Abdurrasul Sayaf himself, Maulana Habib-ur-Rahmen, and medical student Mohammad Omar. The circle’s participants discussed plans for the “revival” of Islam and the future state structure of the country, criticized the socio-political order in the country, “read and discussed Arab sources,” and developed policy documents and the charter for their future organization. The circle limited its activities to the university, although its members also participated in demonstrations and rallies in opposition to the government, “even those led by communists, in order to work among the demonstrators and ultimately turn them away from communism.”⁴¹

According to Kakar’s assumption, Hekmatyar might not have known about the highly secretive organization of teachers, which officially began to take shape only in early 1973 when a council (shura) was formed. However, it seems rather doubtful that, while studying at the same university, albeit in different faculties (Hekmatyar was a student at the Faculty of Engineering), he did not know about the existence of such an organization. The only thing that can lead to such an idea is the fact that Hekmatyar was a student, and the majority of the members of the first Islamic organization were teachers and professors.

Lavrov gives a slightly different version, which, on the contrary, reconciles the above. According to his information, in 1969 two circles merged: the first, led by Niyazi and Rabbani; and the second, a student group, led by Hekmatyar himself.⁴² On the one hand, this does not contradict Hekmatyar's words that their organization took shape four years before Daoud's coup, i.e. in 1969, while on the other hand, until that time Hekmatyar might not have really known about Niyazi's circle.

And so, in 1969 a meeting took place between representatives of both circles: from the theological faculty – Abdurrahim Niazi, nephew of Mohammad Niazi, and from the engineering faculty – Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Saifuddin Nasratyar. As a result, both circles merged and the “Muslim Youth” organization was created – the first Islamic fundamentalist organization in Afghanistan. Two other fundamentalist organizations would subsequently emerge on the basis of Muslim Youth – the Islamic Party of Afghanistan, and the Islamic Society of Afghanistan, which formed the main backbone of the resistance to the Marxist regime.⁴³ Judging by the fact that the association was carried out by students, it can be assumed that the participation of teachers and professors in the organization was truly secret and was limited mainly to ideological leadership.

It has been repeatedly noted that the leaders of the movement were inspired by the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood. The pamphlet “Who We Are and What is Our Purpose” published by the Islamic Society talks about their primary goal: to free the people from tyranny and revive religion. Hekmatyar, developing this position, spoke of the need to “overthrow the existing system and replace it with an Islamic one, as well as the application of Islam in political, economic, and social spheres.”⁴⁴ Author Gulzarak Zadran, who was close to the movement, while denigrating liberal democracy and the socialist system (completely in the spirit of Sayyid Qutb) stated that no other laws, traditions, procedures, or ideologies have a place in Islam, because Islam itself is a perfect religion and the application of the above concepts in an Islamic society is contrary to its fundamental principles.⁴⁵ Mohammad Yunus Khalis went even further, rejecting not only the republican form of government but also the institution of elections. In his opinion, the leader of the state should be chosen by a special Council for Decision and Order (shura-e ahl-e hal va aqd) based on competence and religious education.⁴⁶

Thus, the views of Sayyid Qutb and other Muslim thinkers, mainly the ideologists of the Muslim Brotherhood, significantly influenced the worldview of the founders of political Islam in Afghanistan. In addition, it is known that professors of theology from Egypt, who could also be affiliated with the “Brothers”, were invited to teach and preach their ideas at the faculty of theology at both Kabul University and at the Abu Hanifa madrasah. In the 1970s many even considered the Muslim Youth to be a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, and representatives of government forces and the leftist opposition called their members “Ikhwan,” which indicated the latter’s commitment to the ideas of Egyptian fundamentalists. At the same time, within the framework of Afghanistan’s society, the Ikhwans were considered more opponents of progress, and that their ideology itself was alien to local traditions and religious ideas.⁴⁷

* * *

The influence of political Islam on Afghan society has been significant and varied. On the one hand, political Islam served as a source of identity and unity for many Afghans, especially during anti-Soviet resistance in the 1980s. Political Islam also played a role in the establishment of the Taliban regime in 1996, which introduced a strict interpretation of Islamic law, one that surpassed in its conservatism anything preached by the first ideologists of political Islam in Afghanistan. On the other hand, the Taliban’s rule was opposed by many Afghans, especially women and ethnic minorities who suffered greatly under this regime. After the defeat of the Taliban in 2001, political Islam remained an important factor in Afghan society, and a number of Islamist political parties were actively involved in the political process until the Taliban’s second rise to power.

Notes

1. According to Anton Lavrov, fundamentalists, unlike traditionalists, do not separate politics from religion and thus represent the idea of “political Islam”. *Lavrov A.Y. (2010). Political Islam in Afghanistan. Moscow : Institute of Orient Studies. 179 p. (In Rus.)*
2. *Romodina V. A. (1990). Afghanistan in the Second Half of XIX - the Beginning of XX. Moscow : Nauka. p. 79. (In Rus.)*
3. *Dupree L. Afghanistan. Princeton, New Jersey : Princeton University Press, 1980. pp. 449-453.*
4. *Roy. O. Islam and resistance in Afghanistan. New York : Cambridge University Press, 1990. p. 61.*
5. *Ibid. p. 64.*

6. Ibid. p. 57.
7. *Gregorian V.* Mahmud Tarzi and Saraj-ol-Akhbar: Ideology of Nationalism and Modernization in Afghanistan. *The Middle East Journal*, 1967. pp. 345-368.
8. *Stepanyants M. T.* Muslim concepts in philosophy and politics of the 19th – 20th centuries. Moscow : Nauka, 1982. pp. 118-119. (In Rus.)
9. *Saidov H.* On the question of the influence of Amanulli reforms on ethno-national processes in Afghan society // *Bulletin of RUDN University. Series: "Political Science"*. 2010. No. 3. p. 105. (In Rus.)
10. *Khalfin H. A.* (1960). Russia 's Policy in Central Asia (1857-1868). Moscow : Izdatel'stvo vostochnoy literature, 1960. p. 58. (In Rus.)
11. *Gregoryan V.* The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan. Politics of Reform and Modernization, 1880-1946. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1969. p. 238.
12. *Razhbadinov M. Z.* (2004). Egyptian Movement of the Muslim Brotherhood. Moscow : Institut izuchenija Izraelia i Blizhnego Vostoka. p. 14. (In Rus.)
13. *Mitchell R.* The Society of Muslim Brothers. New York, 1993. p. 14.
14. *Mohammad Sadeq al-Modjadedi.* (1396). From Cairo to Kabul. Qahera: bakhsh-e farhangi-e seforat-e jomhuri-e Afghanistan. pp. 12-13. (In Dari).
15. *Slinkin M. F.* Afghanistan: opposition and power (60-70s of 20th Century). Moscow : "IBA Publishing House", 2020. p. 344. (In Rus.)
16. Ibid. p. 345.
17. *Spolnikov V. M.* Afghanistan. Islamic opposition. Origins and goals. Moscow : "Science", 1990. p. 59. (In Rus.)
18. *Roy. O.* Op. cit. p. 69.
19. *Kakar M. Hassan.* The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982. University of California Press, California, 1995. p. 121.
20. Ibid. p. 124.
21. *Mohammad Hasan Kakar.* A Trip to the Homeland. The Taliban and Islamic Fundamentalism. Germany: Danesh khparendoya tolana, 2010. p. 247. (In Pashto).
22. *Roy. O.* Op. cit. p. 63.
23. *Dupree L.* Op. cit. p.452.
24. *Gregoryan V.* Op. cit. p. 265.
25. Ibid. p. 276.
26. *Korgun V. G.* (2004). History of Afghanistan in 20th Century. Moscow : "Craft+". p. 159. (In Rus.)
27. *Gregoryan V.* Op. cit. p. 234.

28. Sikoev R.R. (2010). Pan-Islamism: Origins and Modernity. Jamaluddin Afghani and his religious and political followers of the 20th – early 21st centuries. Moscow: Aspekt-Press. p. 180. (In Rus.)
29. *Korgun V. G.* Op. cit. p. 221.
30. *Mohammad Hasan Kakar.* Op. cit. p. 254.
31. *Choueiri Y. M.* Theoretical Paradigms of Islamic Movements/ Political Studies (1993), Vol. 41, No. 1. pp. 108-116.
32. *Korgun V. G.* Op. cit. p. 353.
33. *Spolnikov V. M.* Op. cit. pp. 14-15.
34. *Thomas Ruttig.* Islamists, Leftists – and a Void in the Center. Afghanistan's Political Parties and where they come from (1902-2006). Kabul/Berlin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2006. p. 8.
35. *Gulbedin Hekmatiyar.* (1988). Gulbuddin Hekmatiyar 's interview to Turkish television. Peshawar: Hezb-e eslomi-e Afghanistan. p. 23.
36. Ibid. p. 24.
37. *Kakar M. Hassan.* Op. cit. Pp. 130 -131.
38. *Roy. O.* Op. cit. P. 70.
39. Ibid.
40. *Lavrov A.Y.* (2010). Political Islam in Afghanistan. Moscow: Institute of Oriental Studies. p. 16. (In Rus.)
41. *Spolnikov V. M.* Op. cit. p. 16.
42. *Lavrov A.Y.* Op. cit. p. 17.
43. *Spolnikov V. M.* Op. cit. p. 16.
44. *Kakar M. Hassan.* Op. cit. pp. 131-132.
45. *Zadran Gulzarak.* (1983) The History of Afghanistan. 1747 -1982. V. 1. Peshawar. 1983. p. 129.
46. *Mohammad Yunus Khalis.* (1998). A Message to the Selfless People of Afghanistan. Peshawar: da hezb-e islami chapzay. 1988. p. 12.
47. *Lavrov A.Y.* Op. cit. p. 20.

SECTION IV. FOREIGN POWERS

Chapter 12. Why Support for Israel Has Become Hostage to Political Strife in Washington

Alexey Davydov

The events of October 7, 2023, turned out to be the most dramatic in Israel's modern history – at a minimum over the last few decades, and more likely since the beginning of the Yom Kippur War in October 1973. The tragic death of over a thousand civilians was a shock to Israel's society and leadership, which failed to prevent the catastrophe and began a military operation in response to Hamas' attack from the Gaza Strip.

Despite the already well-known sequence of events over the current escalation of the conflict, it is fair to say that the conflicting reaction of the international community, various states from different regions of the world, and non-governmental organizations was not unexpected. The complex history of the Palestine-Israel and larger Arab-Israeli conflict has divided countries around the world on these issues for many decades, often irrespective of their affiliation with military, political, or ideological blocs.

Observers were surprised and often puzzled by contradictions that arose among the political class of their main ally – the United States – at such a sensitive historical moment for Israel. It would seem that the issue of providing emergency foreign aid to their primary, perennial, and strategically significant ally in the Middle East in such a difficult situation should not have become a subject of disagreement within the American establishment. Nevertheless, it did. Moreover, the contradictions arose not only between Democrats and Republicans, whose weeks-long battles led to a two-month delay in the process of allocating aid to Israel in the US Congress after the tragedy on October 7, but the split over the Palestinian-Israeli issue also became evident among Democrats, which may turn out to be a serious challenge for them in the upcoming 2024 elections.

Why did this happen? What processes in America's political life led to such a strong slowdown, if not a complete closure, of US foreign policy mechanisms? Is it possible that we are seeing signs of a systemic transformation or even the failure of the decision-making process in the US concerning this issue? Or is this of a more temporary nature?

“Special Relations”

Many states on the United States’ political map of the world are arranged according to a certain hierarchy, their place in which depends on their proximity and interconnectedness with Washington. According to the formal political-legal principle, those countries that enjoy the closest relations with the US are member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Major Allies outside NATO (which include 31 and 19 countries, respectively). Although Israel has been part of the latter group since it was created in 1987, due to the degree of interdependence and level of bilateral relations, Israel’s relations with the US often surpass those of America’s allies in NATO. This fact alone explains why ties between the two countries are often referred to as “special” in the expert and political community (as are US-UK relations).

The rare status assigned to US-Israel relations is determined by several systemic factors. Perhaps the most important is that there are millions of citizens living in the United States for whom the fate of Israel as a country is of great importance. The Jewish community is primarily included in this group, the population of which, according to the latest US census in 2020, is 7.5 million people (slightly more than 2 percent of the total population).¹ This group is primarily represented by a wealthy, educated, financially and politically influential layer of urban Americans. Historically, the Jewish community has predominantly voted for Democrats, but only with the decrease of existential threats to Israel and the polarization of American parties have their representatives’ views become less homogeneous and increasingly critical of Israel’s authorities.

The second, more numerous group of citizens in American society for whom the fate of Israel carries much weight is the religious community of Protestants, primarily evangelicals. According to expert estimates, this second group includes about a quarter of US citizens, mainly from the right-conservative electorate of the Republican Party of the United States. For them, the existence of Israel as a country is of high religious significance and intersects with their biblical stories about the Promised Land and represents a direct embodiment of theological prophecies.

The opinions of these influential groups in American society on various issues affecting Israel represent strong talking points for both parties during each electoral cycle. And the matter not only concerns the number of votes cast. Often, various organizations belonging to the pro-Israel lobby group

(the most famous of which are AIPAC, J Street, the American Jewish Committee, and the Republican Jewish Coalition), often financially support certain external projects and election campaigns of Republicans and Democrats in exchange for their support on significant issues for these groups (for example, J Street lobbyists expressed their support for the ratification of the NEW START treaty between Russia and the United States).

Polarization of Strategies in the Run-up to the Elections

Paradoxically, despite the military, political, and even interpersonal closeness between the United States and Israel, there is no legally binding defense treaty between the two countries. One reason for the absence of a formal alliance with Israel throughout the history of US Middle East policy has been justified concerns about the sudden deterioration of Washington's relations with neighboring Arab countries. The historical memory of when many of these countries shifted their attention to the Soviet camp in the period after World War II and the Arab-inflicted oil embargo of 1973 (due to US support for Israel in the Yom Kippur War) demonstrates that forming an alliance would only worsen the prospects for a diplomatic resolution to the Palestinian crisis, neutralizing the Arab-Israeli conflict, and maintaining US military, political, and economic presence in the region.

This traditional US approach has created a wide field of play for the implementation of fundamentally different approaches by both Democrats and Republicans. The Obama administration's Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran, the lifting of sanctions against it, and the US's abstaining in the UN Security Council when adopting a resolution condemning Israel's settlement construction, not only led Israel to conduct reconnaissance on the progress of US-Iran negotiations and attempt to play on Washington's inter-party contradictions but also to a sharp backlash from Republicans. This was evidenced by the Trump administration's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel with the subsequent transfer of the American embassy there, the US's withdrawing from the Iran deal, the UN Human Rights Council, and UNESCO, as well as the US finally recognizing the Golan Heights as belonging to Israel.

It is at this point we see the genesis of the complex situation in which the question of providing assistance to Israel finds itself today. Amid these contradictions, the issue of resolving the Palestinian problem has also

become embroiled in inter-party disputes. Republican skepticism towards the allocation of multilateral foreign aid to international organizations is particularly acute in regards to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the ineffective work of which, according to conservatives, placed international aid in the hands of Hamas. As a result, according to the US Agency for International Development, annual US aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip territories under the Republicans decreased by 19 times (!) – from \$630 million per year under Barack Obama to \$33 million under Donald Trump. Moreover, the so-called “Deal of the Century”, developed by the latter’s administration as a last-ditch attempt to offer any plan to resolve the Palestinian issue, proved simply unworkable.²

The return of Democrats and Joseph Biden to the White House has not fundamentally changed the situation. The US has resumed funding for UNRWA, returned to UNESCO and the UN Human Rights Council, but levels of foreign aid to Palestinian territories have barely reached a third or even a quarter of previous volumes under Barack Obama. Moreover, against the backdrop of an overall reorientation of the White House’s attention towards China and Russia under the Democrats, the United States for the first time since the beginning of the 21st Century has not formulated its own comprehensive vision or strategy regarding the Middle East region and resolving the Palestinian-Israeli problem. And with the start of the special military operation in Ukraine and full concentration on priorities for military and economic aid to Kiev, the Palestinian issue, let alone searching for practical ways to achieve a long-term resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli problem, has been relegated to the periphery of Democratic leaders’ attention.

Such disregard for this problem has led to the emergence of a new divide within the Democratic Party. Trump’s unilateral support for Israel from the beginning of his presidency sparked a gradual increase in sympathy for Palestine among Democrats, particularly among young people, who brought a completely new quality to American domestic politics. According to Gallup,³ in March 2023 the share of Democrats sympathizing with Palestine exceeded (!) the share of supporters of Israel for the first time in at least 20 years – 49 percent versus 38 percent, respectively. Moreover, sympathy for the Palestinian people among America’s youth from both parties has solidified in recent years: according to Pew Research Center,⁴ in 2022 61

percent of US citizens aged 18-29 favored Palestine, while 56 percent favored Israel.

In this context, the blow delivered to Israel on October 7 was exceptional in terms of its impact. From this moment on, a year before presidential and parliamentary elections, time began to work sharply against the Democrats, who were suddenly faced with three challenges at once: the dilemma of providing assistance to both Ukraine and Israel, as well as overcoming two internal divides – inter-party and intra-party. With this understanding of the situation, the White House’s decision to link the requested aid from Congress to Israel, while aid to Ukraine on the battlefield stagnates, as well as with other positions that are attractive to Republicans (such as increasing funding for security at the US-Mexico border and security programs for Taiwan), are all a difficult attempt to navigate between the hammer of strategic failure in foreign policy and the anvil of ignoring the electoral preferences of their own voters before the elections.

That the political process has elevated to such a degree, whereby strategically important state priorities come into conflict with the electoral interests of individual political forces, presents very significant risks for US foreign policy in the Middle East over the next few years. It is then very likely that a series of foreign policy crises related to Afghanistan, Ukraine, and now the US’s closest ally Israel, which occurred under the Biden administration’s watch, will be used by Republicans during the growing election campaign in the United States. They already criticize their political opponents for their inefficiency in providing aid to Ukraine and their lack of prompt support for Israel. The potential return of Donald Trump and/or his supporters to the White House, a scenario that no longer seems unrealistic, is likely to lead to another blatant departure of the new owners of the White House from the policies of the Democrats and a shift of the United States towards a more rigid and less diplomatic foreign policy in the Middle East post-election – a phenomenon which we already witnessed when Obama transferred power to Trump.

Therefore, if the Biden administration fails to demonstrate tangible effectiveness in resolving the Palestinian-Israeli crisis in the coming months, taking into consideration strategic, party, and electoral interests simultaneously, then one of the most significant achievements in America’s Middle East policy over the past decades – the process of establishing diplomatic relations between regional countries and Israel – may be dealt a

serious blow, or even become a victim of the inter-party disputes between Democrats and Republicans.

Notes

1. *Tighe, E., Saxe, L., Parmer, D. et al.* According to their Numbers: Assessing the Pew Research Center's Estimate of 7.5 Million Jewish Americans. *Cont Jewry* 43, pp. 201–224 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12397-022-09472-9>
2. The complete ForeignAssistance.gov dataset // ForeignAssistance.gov. 15.12.2023. URL: https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.explorer.devtechlab.com/us_foreign_aid_complete.csv (accessed 25.12.2023).
3. Democrats' Sympathies in Middle East Shift to Palestinians. Gallup, 16.03.2023. URL: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/472070/democrats-sympathies-middle-east-shift-palestinians.aspx> (accessed 25.12.2023).
4. Modest Warming in US Views on Israel and Palestinians. Pew Research Center, 26.05.2022. URL: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/05/26/modest-warming-in-u-s-views-on-israel-and-palestinians/> (accessed 25.12.2023).

Chapter 13. Germany's Policy in the Middle East: 2023 as a "Turning Point"?

Philip Trunov

The world's emerging (rising) powers are a category of states that are located, first and foremost, outside the collective West. But, as we know, every rule has exceptions. Germany is one of these emerging powers, yet belongs to the club of Western democracies (even the non-official club of "Western powers"). Since the beginning of the 21st Century, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) has been trying to become one of world powers (a full-fledged global player) and the process continues to this day. Hence, Germany is very noticeably sensitive to every rather important change in the international arena. Its goal, to secure a rather powerful positions in the world arena, cannot be achieved without the establishment and strengthening of Germany's position in the Middle East. Germany began making claims as an external security and stability provider for the region beginning in the mid-2000s. FRG has tried to present itself as balanced player, primarily in its use of military force and in how it resolves armed conflicts. From the 2000s into the 2010s, politically and military, Berlin attached great attention to three areas of conflict: the "Iraq problem" (and also the ongoing since the early 2010-s crisis in Syria), the Arab-Israel conflict, and the confrontation between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

During the military-political crisis of February-March, 2003, and the coalition of the willing's (led by the US and UK) invasion of *Iraq*, Germany distanced itself from, and even criticized these actions. But beginning in the middle 2000s, Germany started to support the newly organized (under the watchful eye of Western democracies) power structure in Bagdad. In 2014 Berlin established its military presence (military instructors) in North Iraq, positioning Germany as being cooperative in nature, working simultaneously both with Iraq's government and local Kurds. ¹ Beginning in 2015 the Luftwaffe started using their reconnaissance and refueling aircrafts on missions in Iraq.² But, overall, the results of this policy were rather unsuccessful. The key goal, critically weakening international terrorist structures, has yet to be achieved. The "Islamic State" *(IS)⁴ lost control over key towns in Iraq (first of all in Mosul after a battle that lasted from March

* Forbidden in Russia.

2016 to July of 2017). But the key reason for these setbacks was the fact that the best battle-prepared IS* forces were redirected to the Syrian theater of war where Russia, Iran, and official Damask were waging a successful fight against the IS*. By the end of 2010s the IS* in Iraq has regrouped, returned to terrorist (irregular) combat tactics, and began structuring its combat forces horizontally (rather than vertically).³ As a result, the situation in the North of Iraq noticeably began deteriorating. The change was so dramatic that in 2019 the Bundeswehr military instructors were forced to suspend their activities in the country for several months. The new strengthening of the IS* coupled with the ineffectiveness of Germany's and other Western democracies' fight against it in the early 2020s resulted in the growing popular support in Iraq for Iran (the parliamentary elections in Iraq in 2021 demonstrated this).⁴ Germany's support for the Kurds in Iraq was unable to prevent a referendum for proclaiming Kurdistan's independence (2017, September), and what's more, Germany's policies even de-facto supported such independence.⁵ Berlin has since corrected this course and is now focusing on the deepening its cooperation with official Bagdad.

Furthermore, FRG heavily criticized, but was unable to stop Turkey's military incursions in the North of Iraq (for example, in 2022), and had no practical means to prevent them. In aggregate, these failures ensured the presence of current and future problems for Germany's standing in Iraq, a locality that is rather significant for Germany's continued strategic presence in the Middle East.

In *Syria*, the situation was even more difficult for Germany. After the beginning of the conflict in the country, Berlin took a more tactically balanced approach than did the other "Western powers". For example, FRG practically excluded the use of the Bundeswehr during the military-political crisis in Syria (2013),⁶ and in January of 2022 was forced to halt the use of all auxiliary aviation (reconnaissance and refueling aircrafts), the only type of military presence that had been in the arena since 2015. Strategically Germany rather actively supported so called "moderate" opposition as the internal Syrian agent of rapprochement with the West.

The rapid strengthening of the IS in Syria and in Iraq in 2014-2015 was the key reason of the crisis's migration (the uncontrolled movement of masses of illegal migrants and refugees) and also the growing instances of terrorist activities in the EU by the mid-2010s. Around that time, Germany had turned from being an active political subject in the Middle East to the *object* for

projecting threats of instability from the region. It was a challenge for Germany's leading ambitions in the EU (where FRG positioned itself as non-official leader), in the Middle East, and in the world. Germany was unable, either politically, diplomatically, or especially militarily, to make effective efforts to weaken the IS. Success in this area was reached by Iran and Russia when these countries began their military antiterrorist operation in Syria on September 30, 2015. It was Russia, Iran, and official Damask's forces that began defeating IS militant groups in Syria and liberating the country from occupation. This military defeat if IS became the de-facto key reason for the end of the migration crisis in the EU, the very issue that was so vital for Germany.

Another reason was the signing of the EU-Turkey agreement on migration on March 18, 2016. However, if the first of these two factors solved the problem as such (the defeat of IS meant eliminating the cause of the mass exodus of civilians from their permanent residence and created conditions for their return) and was *proactive*, the second one could only reduce the severity of the problem, being *reactive* in nature. But Germany was very critical of the successes of Russia and Iran in Syria, and these two non-Western powers instead were accused by FRG of creating a humanitarian disaster in Aleppo (2016).⁷ In fact, Germany had gone to great lengths to prevent the defeat of the "moderate" opposition militant groups and ignored the fact that a number of them had a symbiotic relationship with the IS and Jabhat al-Nusra*. By the end of the 2010s, Germany began cooperating with the powers of "Astana Triangle" (Iran, Russia, Turkey), in order to ensure that it had built-in control over the triangle's actions in Syria.⁸ But these tactics were rather unsuccessful. As a result, Germany failed to become a full participant of the resolution of the Syrian armed conflict and was forced to reduce its strategic presence there to a bare minimum.

Predictably, this failure was one of the key reasons for the degradation of Germany's relations with each of the three powers. **Turkey** always demonstrates its distinctiveness from the majority of "Western" democracies' positions on many issues, first of all in the Middle East (in Syria and Iraq, on the Kurdish issue, also on the Arab-Israel conflict) and in North Africa (in Libya). Germany criticized Turkey's policy⁹ but really has very few practical opportunities to influence Turkey's military presence in the North of Syria and in Libya.

Germany-Iran dialogue by the end of 2010s had become rather controversial. From one side, FRG was rather worried about the strengthening of Iran's strategic positions in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon (Germany positioned itself as a consistent opponent of Hezbollah), and Yemen.¹⁰ At the same time, official Berlin was the key advocate among Western powers for sealing the nuclear deal with Iran in 2015, especially after Donald Trump's administration elected to leave it on May, 8, 2018). Germany was the non-official leader of "E3" (also France and the UK) which tried to preserve the deal up until the end of the 2010s.¹¹ Also, FRG tried to exercise influence over Saudi Arabia and its partners among the monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula concerning their use of military force in Yemen against the Houthis. In 2019, Germany abandoned its military exports to Saudi Arabia¹² and limited its contacts with the Kingdom at the highest level in order to prevent the "cold war" between Saudi Arabia and Iran¹³ from escalating into a full-fledged military conflict. By the early 2020s we can recognize distinct changes in Germany's attitude towards Iran, which were determined by FRG's growing participation in deterring Russia and containing the most active players of the non-West. In a situation where the new world order has already started to form, Germany, as a rising *Western* power, more negatively perceived the emergence of *non-Western* powers, including Iran. Firstly, this tendency characterizes FRG's approach to Iran's strategic positions in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen.¹⁴ After the defrosting of the Arab-Israel conflict (as of October, 7, 2023) Chancellor Olaf Scholz repeatedly emphasized the absolute necessity to exclude Hezbollah and Iran's interference in the conflict.¹⁵ Secondly, Germany has mostly discontinued its work to preserve the JCPOA with Iran and, together with the USA and other Western powers, now accuses Iran of failing to observe the agreements. Thirdly, official Berlin in no certain terms supported attempts to normalize relations and bring about rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The scenario was too profitable for the non-West (China has instead been the external moderator of the process) and rather unprofitable for West. Germany was really more interested in "cold peace" between Iran and Saudi Arabia, than in their full cooperation. In 2022-2023 Germany's interest in cooperating with the monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula increased. Initially, Germany focused on deepening cooperation with Qatar.¹⁶ But Qatar cannot become an alternative to Saudi Arabia. That is why the Kingdom became the first point of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's diplomatic trip to the subregion of the Arabian Peninsula in

September 2022,¹⁷ during which the Chancellor emphasized maximum respect for the figure of Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi Prime Minister.¹⁸ The second goal of the trip was to demonstrate rather trusting relations with the UAE (the middle point of the diplomatic trip). And the last, but not least, objective was the strengthening of cooperation with Qatar, which again had become the most important partner for Germany among the monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula following the first weeks after the defrosting the Arab-Israel conflict (which began October, 7, 2023).¹⁹

The latter process has had a much larger effect on Germany's policy in the Middle East than the beginning of the Russian Special Military Operation (on February 24, 2022). Since the early 2020s, FRG has focused its efforts on ensuring rapprochement with key regional partners with Western democracies. If before the October 7, 2023 Germany had carried out these tactics with multiple regional players, now, following the date in question, Germany is fixated on implementing its relations with Israel.²⁰

FRG has been a participant in the resolution of the Arab-Israel conflict since 2006, directly following the end of so called "33-Day War" between Israel's armed forces and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Germany has focused on participating in the naval component of the *UNIFIL* mission²¹ and has offered training and technical equipment to the coast guard forces of official Beirut.²² This rather active support to reform the security sector of Lebanon was aimed at indirect containment of Hezbollah. In this manner Germany tried to avoid the negative perception of its military presence in Lebanon by Israel. As a result, in 2008 the German-Israel format of intergovernmental consultations was established and has consistently assembled every two years for a decade.²³

On one side of the conflict, Germany supported the creation of an independent Palestinian state, in close contact with the Fatah movement in the West Bank. Also, Germany strengthened its strategic links with official Beirut and Jordan. Intermediate success in reaching rapprochement between these actors was demonstrated during the diplomatic trip of Chancellor Angela Merkel to the region in June of 2018.²⁴ However, on the other side of the conflict, official Berlin has been motivated to deepen cooperation with Israel. Germany has stressed its historical calling (due to the Nazis' role in the Holocaust) to provide security to the state of Israel. In this regard, Berlin has recognized a way to strengthen Israel's defense through the creation of the Palestinian state and maintaining regional stability, including the

implementation of the JCPOA with Iran.²⁵ Israel has shown restraint regarding the line that FRG has chosen in respect to Palestine and Iran.

For the first time the contradictory nature of Germany's dual policy manifested itself in 2017-2018. Germany did not support Donald Trump's administration's idea to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and thus recognize the jurisdiction of Israel over all of Jerusalem. FRG stated outright that its policy, to support the creation of a Palestinian states, has remained unchanged – coming a full 360 degrees.²⁶ As a result, the functioning of the format of bilateral intergovernmental consultations between Germany and Israel was suspended.

By the early 2020s Germany tried to prioritize its policy goals towards the Arab-Israel conflict. They were finally formalized after the events of October, 7, 2023. On the second day after the attacks, Chancellor Olaf Scholz called Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and underscored that "Germany stands firmly and unwaveringly on Israel's side in the face of this terrible attack,"²⁷ and that he supports the realization of Israel's right to self-defense.²⁸ Germany has been a supporter of Israel politically to prevent a sharp deterioration in relations between Israel and other regional actors, which have been rather friendly to Germany and Western democracies as a whole. Chancellor Olaf Scholz had contacts with Emir of Qatar (October 12), received the King of Jordan in Berlin (October 17), visited the President of Egypt (October 18), finally having a call with President of UAE (October 25).²⁹ The key elements of all negotiations with FRG's participation on Arab-Israel conflict were contacts with Israel itself. Olaf Scholz visited Israel on October 17 and was the first of the leaders of key European states to do so. At the same time the head of German government had no official contact with Palestine nor with official Beirut.

* * *

During the last two decades FRG has devoted much attention to the situation in the Middle East. Official Berlin has tried to present itself as external security and stability provider for the region, while in parallel it has developed relations with Israel and focus partners among Arab states. Before the beginning of the 2020s, Germany maintained a fine balance between these two goals. However, with the onset of 2023, preserving relations with Israel took precedence. The reason for this was not only due to the situation surrounding the events of October 7, 2023, but also due to Germany's willingness to strengthen links between Israel and the West under conditions

when a new world order is beginning to form. The process has both influenced and was influenced itself by the degradation of relations between Germany and Iran, as well as a number of difficulties in German-Turkey dialogue. Another problem stems from official Berlin's failure to become an effective fighter against the IS in the region. All these facts point to the fact that at present FRG's strategic positions in the Middle East are rather weak and that the country needs a new regional strategy.

Notes

1. Antrag der Bundesregierung. Ausbildungsunterstützung der Sicherheitskräfte der Regierung der Region Kurdistan-Irak und der irakischen Streitkräfte. Deutscher Bundestag, 18. Wahlperiode. Drucksache 18/3561, 17.12.2014. S. 2-5.
2. Antrag der Bundesregierung. Einsatz bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte zur Verhütung und Unterbindung terroristischer Handlungen durch die Terrororganisation IS. Deutscher Bundestag, 18. Wahlperiode. Drucksache 18/6866, 01.12.2015. S. 2-5.
3. Antrag der Bundesregierung. Fortsetzung des Einsatzes bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte – Stabilisierung sichern, Wiedererstarken des IS verhindern, Versöhnung in Irak fördern. Deutscher Bundestag, 20. Wahlperiode. Drucksache 20/408, 12.01.2022. S. 6-10.
4. Ibidem.
5. Antrag der Bundesregierung. Einsatz bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte zur nachhaltigen Bekämpfung des IS-Terrors und zur umfassenden Stabilisierung Iraks. Deutscher Bundestag, 19. Wahlperiode. Drucksache 19/1093, 07.03.2018. S. 2-8.
6. Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Dr. Angela Merkel in der vereinbarten Debatte: Zur Situation in Deutschland vor dem Deutschen Bundestag am 3. September 2013 in Berlin. 3.09.2013. Bundeskanzleramt. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/service/bulletin/rede-von-bundeskanzlerin-dr-angela-merkel-794298> (accessed: 03.11.2023).
7. Außenminister Steinmeier zur Lage in Aleppo. 15.12.2016. Auswärtiges Amt. URL: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/161215-bm-lage-aleppo/286298> (accessed: 03.11.2023).
8. Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel, Präsident Erdoğan, Präsident Putin und Präsident Macron zur Lage in Syrien in Istanbul. 27.10.2018. Bundeskanzleramt. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/pressekonferenz-von-bundeskanzlerin-merkel-praesident-erdo%C4%9Fan-praesident-putin-und-praesident-macron-zur-lage-in-syrien-1542886> (accessed: 03.11.2023).

9. Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten S. Dağdelen, A. Hunko, I. Latendorf, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion die Linke. – Drucksache 20/364 – Die Besetzung der Türkei in Syrien und die Außenpolitik der Bundesregierung. Deutscher Bundestag, 20. Wahlperiode. Drucksache 20/592, 31.01.2022. S. 3-10.
10. *Leemhuis R.* Iran's Destructive Regional Policy // Federal Academy of Security Policy. Security Policy Working Paper. 2018. No 27. pp. 1-4.
11. E3 statement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action: 14 July. Pressemitteilung 14.07.2019. Auswärtiges Amt. URL: <https://teheran.diplo.de/ir-de/aktuelles/-/2233350> (accessed: 03.11.2023).
12. *Waderphul J.D., Schmid N.* Waffenembargo gegen Saudi-Arabien. Pro und Contra. 1.03.2020. // Internationale Politik. URL: <https://internationalepolitik.de/de/waffenembargo-gegen-saudi-arabien> (accessed: 03.11.2023).
13. *Steinberg G.* Kalter Krieg im Nahen Osten: Der iranisch-saudische Konflikt dominiert die Region // Bundesakademie für Sicherheitspolitik. Arbeitspapier Sicherheitspolitik. 2021. No 1. S. 1-4.
14. Auswärtiges Amt zu Angriff in Saudi-Arabien durch die Huthi-Rebellen. 25.03.2022. Auswärtiges Amt. URL: <https://www.auswaertigesamt.de/de/newsroom/huthi-saudi-arabien/2519482> (accessed: 03.11.2023).
15. Pressestatement von Bundeskanzler Scholz anlässlich seines Besuchs im Staat Israel am 17. Oktober 2023 in Tel Aviv. Bundeskanzleramt. Bundeskanzleramt. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/pressestatement-von-bundeskanzler-scholz-anlaesslich-seines-besuchs-im-staat-israel-am-17-oktober-2023-in-tel-aviv-2230822> (accessed: 03.11.2023).
16. Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzler Scholz und dem Emir Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani am 20. Mai 2022 in Berlin. 20.05.2022. Bundeskanzleramt. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/pressekonferenz-von-bundeskanzler-scholz-und-dem-emir-tamim-bin-hamad-bin-khalifa-al-thani-am-20-mai-2022-in-berlin-2042200> (accessed: 03.11.2023).
17. Drei Golfstaaten in zwei Tagen. 25.09.2022. Bundeskanzleramt. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/bk-reise-golfstaaten-2129104> (accessed: 03.11.2023).
18. Pressestatement von Bundeskanzler Olaf Scholz am 24. September 2022 in Dschidda. 24.09.2022. Bundeskanzleramt. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/pressestatement-von-bundeskanzler-olaf-scholz-am-24-september-2022-in-dschidda-2129372> (accessed: 03.11.2023).

19. Bundeskanzler Scholz trifft den Emir von Katar. 12.10.2023. Bundeskanzleramt. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/bundeskanzler-scholz-trifft-den-emir-von-katar-2229956> (accessed: 03.11.2023).
20. Sicherheit Israels ist deutsche Staatsräson. 18.10.2023. Bundeskanzleramt. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/bundeskanzler-israel-reise-2230714> (accessed: 03.11.2023).
21. Antrag der Bundesregierung. Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an der United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Deutscher Bundestag, 16. Wahlperiode. Drucksache 16/2572, 13.09.2006. S. 2-5.
22. Antrag der Bundesregierung. Fortsetzung der Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an der United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Deutscher Bundestag, 17. Wahlperiode. Drucksache 17/5864, 18.05.2011. S. 2-4.
23. Deutsch-israelische Regierungskonsultationen. 2023. URL: <https://embassies.gov.il/berlin/Relations/Deutsch-israelische%20Regierungskonsultationen> (accessed: 03.11.2023).
24. Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel und dem Präsidenten des libanesischen Ministerrats Saad Rafiq Hariri in Beirut. 22.06.2018. Bundeskanzleramt. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/pressekonferenz-von-bundeskanzlerin-merkel-und-dem-praesidenten-des-libanesischen-ministerrats-saad-rafiq-hariri-1140766> (accessed: 03.11.2023).
25. Außenminister Maas zum 55. Jubiläum deutsch-israelischer Beziehungen. 12.05.2020. Auswärtiges Amt. URL: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/maas-israel/2340222> (accessed: 03.11.2023).
26. 360 grad Jerusalem. 12.12.2017. Bundeskanzleramt. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/service/archiv/alt-inhalte/360-grad-jerusalem-431372> (accessed: 03.11.2023).
27. Pressestatement von Bundeskanzler Scholz zur Lage in Israel am 8. Oktober 2023 in Berlin. 8.10.2023. Bundeskanzleramt. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/pressestatement-von-bundeskanzler-scholz-zur-lage-in-israel-am-8-oktober-2023-in-berlin-2228218> (accessed: 03.11.2023).
28. Ibid.
29. Regierungserklärung von Bundeskanzler Olaf Scholz zum Europäischen Rat am 26./27. Oktober 2023 vor dem Deutschen Bundestag am 19. Oktober 2023 in Berlin. 27.10.2023. Bundeskanzleramt. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/regierungserklaerung-von-bundeskanzler-olaf-scholz-2231564> (accessed: 03.11.2023).

Научное издание

MIDDLE EAST SURVEY. YEARBOOK 2023

Edited by Irina Zvyagelskaya

Ежегодник

На английском языке

ISBN 978-5-9535-0625-0



9 785953 506250

Подписано в печать 06.03.2024

Формат 70×100/16. Печать офсетная.

Объем 15,6 усл. п.л., 10,9 а.л. Тираж 300 экз. Заказ № 1/27-02

Издательство ИМЭМО РАН

Адрес: 117997, Москва, Профсоюзная ул., 23

Отпечатано в цифровой типографии "Спринтер"

www.printbooks.ru

тел. 8 (495) 225-25-28

ул. Профсоюзная, 23