



# HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE EAST

a Research Project of  
Fairleigh Dickinson University  
by

Amanuel Ajawin  
Waleed Al-Saiyani  
Baya Bensmail  
Feridun Kul  
Zina Ibrahim  
Jose Manuel Mendoza-Nasser  
Alice Mungwa  
Seddiq Rasuli  
Coumba Santana  
Fabrizio Trezza  
Mohammad Fahim Yarzai  
Zaidullah Zaid

Amer Al-Hajri  
Hamad Al-Zaabi  
Clotilde Ferry  
Gabriela Garcia  
Lorena Giminez  
Abdelghani Merabet  
Isabelle Rakotoarivelo  
Antonio Nico Sabas  
Ashley Toth  
Sharif Ahmad Waheedi  
Mohammad Younus

**Editor: Ahmad Kamal**

Published by:  
Fairleigh Dickinson University  
1000 River Road  
Teaneck, NJ 07666  
USA

January 2012  
ISBN: 978-1-4507-9087-1

The opinions expressed in this book are those of the authors alone, and should not be taken as necessarily reflecting the views of Fairleigh Dickinson University, or of any other institution or entity.

© All rights reserved by the authors  
No part of the material in this book may be reproduced without due attribution to its specific author.

## **THE AUTHORS**

**Amanuel Ajawin**, a Diplomat from Sudan  
**Amer Al-Hajri**, a Diplomat from Oman  
**Waleed Al-Saiyani**, a Graduate Student from Yemen  
**Hamad Al-Zaabi**, a Diplomat from the UAE  
**Baya Bensmail**, a Diplomat from Algeria  
**Clotilde Ferry**, a Graduate Student from Monaco  
**Ahmad Kamal**, a Senior Fellow at the United Nations  
**Feridun Kul**, a Graduate Student from Afghanistan  
**Gabriela Garcia**, a Diplomat from Ecuador  
**Lorena Giminez**, a Diplomat from Venezuela  
**Zina Ibrahim**, a Civil Servant from Iraq  
**Jose Manuel Mendoza**, a Graduate Student from Honduras  
**Abdelghani Merabet**, a Graduate Student from Algeria  
**Alice Mungwa**, a Graduate Student from Cameroon  
**Isabelle Rakotoarivelo**, a Civil Servant from Madagascar  
**Seddiq Rasuli**, a Graduate Student from Afghanistan  
**Antonio Nico Sabas**, a Graduate Student from the USA  
**Coumba Santana**, a Graduate Student from Mali  
**Ashley Toth**, a Graduate Student from the USA  
**Fabrizio Trezza**, a Graduate Student from Italy  
**Sharif Ahmad Waheedi**, a Graduate Student from Afghanistan  
**Mohammad Fahim Yarzai**, a Diplomat from Afghanistan  
**Mohammad Younus**, a Graduate Student from Afghanistan  
**Zaidullah Zaid**, a Graduate Student from Afghanistan

## INDEX OF CONTENTS

<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> by Ahmad Kamal	<b>01</b>
<b>COLONIZATION</b> by Abdelghani Merabet	<b>03</b>
<b>WOMEN AND EDUCATION</b> by Mohammad Younus	<b>15</b>
<b>HUMAN TRAFFICKING</b> by Coumba Santana	<b>27</b>
<b>RELATIONS WITH AFRICA</b> by Alice Mungwa	<b>33</b>
<b>AFGHANISTAN</b> by Feridun Kul	<b>41</b>
<b>ARMENIA</b> by Antonio Nico Sabas	<b>49</b>
<b>CYPRUS</b> by Isabelle Rakotoarivelo	<b>53</b>
<b>EGYPT</b> by Fabrizio Trezza	<b>59</b>
<b>IRAN</b> by Baya Bensmail	<b>73</b>
<b>IRAQ</b> by Zina Ibrahim	<b>83</b>
<b>ISRAEL</b> by Lorena Giminez	<b>95</b>
<b>JORDAN</b> by Clotilde Ferry	<b>109</b>
<b>KUWAIT</b> by Mohammad Fahim Yarzai	<b>119</b>
<b>LEBANON</b> by Zaidullah Zaid	<b>129</b>
<b>MOROCCO AND WESTERN SAHARA</b> by Gabriela Garcia	<b>139</b>
<b>OMAN</b> by Jose Manuel Mendoza	<b>155</b>
<b>QATAR</b> by Waleed Al-Saiyani	<b>163</b>
<b>SAUDI ARABIA</b> by Sharif Ahmed Waheedi	<b>173</b>
<b>SOMALIA</b> by Ashley Toth	<b>185</b>
<b>SOUTH SUDAN</b> by Amanuel Ajawin	<b>195</b>
<b>SYRIA</b> by Seddiq Rasuli	<b>205</b>
<b>TURKEY</b> by Hamad Al-Zaabi	<b>217</b>
<b>YEMEN</b> by Amer Al-Hajri	<b>229</b>

**INTRODUCTION**

*How Sultan after Sultan,  
With all his pomp and sway,  
Abode his destined hour,  
And went his way.*  
- *The Rubayyat of Omar Khayyam*

The unexpected speed of fundamental changes in the Middle East has caught almost all by surprise. Perhaps the most surprised were the autocratic leaders themselves who had built up the *status quo* in their respective fiefdoms on faulty notions of personal infallibility and unquestioning stability, forgetting the lessons of history about the inevitability of change.

Much of this frozen nature of the Middle East was also due to the encouragement and support of external powers, which drew great political and economic benefits from these stable structures, and frequently spent billions to sustain them. In many ways, therefore, the long rule of non-democratic regimes over decades resulted from both internal and external factors.

The changes that have now come have thus been initiated by the forgotten and trodden populations of these countries - young, jobless, frustrated, and angry. Using the latest social media instruments at their disposal, they have shown an astonishing degree of resilience in the face of powerful and violent governmental agencies. In the ultimate analysis, democratic depth has overtaken dictatorial weight, and in the process reinstated our faith in equity and justice.

However strong the winds of change might be, the fact remains that most of the problems of the Middle East accrue from a sad colonial past, in which European powers arrogantly inserted themselves into the region, and carved it up among themselves without any respect for human rights or human dignity. So the revolutionary change that is taking place is not only going to affect the regional countries themselves, but also those who were guilty in the first place of the greatest crime against humanity that colonialism constituted. The chicken always come home to roost.

The papers that follow have been prepared by a group of independent researchers in an effort to conduct an impartial analysis of the impact of the past history of the region, and of each country in the region, on its present and its future. A deliberate attempt has been made not to be overly influenced by the most recent events covered by the media, but rather to delve deeper into the historical factors that underlie the local cultures, and determine and explain their reactions.

There can be no doubt that the changes that we are witnessing go well beyond the Middle East. They represent the search for values and justice of peoples in a fundamentally materialistic world, one in which the main actors have forgotten all the principles which they so repeatedly proclaim, but which they do not practice at all. That is why the questioning that has started in the Middle East will spread far beyond the region, as is already visible elsewhere even in the most developed countries of the world as they struggle to re-insert some modicum of balance and stability in the shattered confidence of their own peoples.

It is just as clear that the changes have not yet played themselves out. Genuine revolutions normally result in prolonged periods of excess, and it is only after much time that the true forces that underlie the movements stabilize themselves. That process can take decades or more, as we can see from earlier revolutions. That is indeed the lesson of history, and we would all do well to tone down our immediate reactions to the current events, and let time pass so that future historians can draw the true picture of what is happening.

Meanwhile, those who are so quick in passing judgments from lofty pedestals, and voicing their critical opinions about the Middle East, would do well to look at the moat in their own eyes before they do so. We are all going through a period of intrinsic change in the world, in which all will be affected. Since change is an intrinsic part of human history, we should welcome the opportunity of being witnesses to it. We are in a crisis of radical proportions, but one in which the clouds of darkness will inevitably open up to brightness and light. So, the crisis of today represents the opportunity for tomorrow. Even in these troubled times there are grounds for enlightened optimism.

## COLONIZATION

**Editor's Note: No analysis of the status of the Middle East today is possible without delving deep into the sad story of Western colonialism, and its impact on local politics, economics, and culture. How and why that colonialism of a small minority succeeded in its domination of such a large majority is a matter that warrants further analysis. The fact remains that the impact of that colonial past continues, and forms the essential background against which the current unfolding events should be seen.**

### **Introduction:**

While the origin of colonization can be traced back to when City States such as Greece and Phoenicia established colonies over the Mediterranean Sea to maintain their military and commercial influence, the major waves of colonization really occurred during the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Europe witnessed a tremendous demographic growth due to the emergence of the industrial revolution, mainly in England and France. These factors lead to a strong sense of competition between the main European powers to enhance their influence globally.

This competing trend to acquire larger territories started at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and involved a lot of actors such as England, France, unified Germany and Italy.

The European powers created myths such as the “civilization of barbarian populations” to advance their purposes. However, the main objective was to control the natural and human resources, to enlarge market capabilities for their own flourishing industries, and to take control of strategic positions and the main routes for trade.

The discriminatory practices and the disastrous humanitarian consequences on indigenous populations testify to the level of vandalism that European colonial powers exercised.

Nobel Laureate for literature, Mario Vargas Llosa, in his last novel “El Sueno del Celta” describes the atrocities and unforgivable inhuman and barbarian practices by Leopold II of Belgium in Congo. Similar practices were carried out by other colonizers.

## **The Middle East in pre-colonial era**

### *The decline of the Ottoman Empire*

Since the emergence of Islam in the Middle East, the inhabitants have happily accepted successive Caliphates and Dynasties (Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid, Mamluk and Ottoman) that have allowed a coherent ideological evolution of the region despite the fact that they belonged to a varied group of ethnicities or religious orientations (Sunnite, Shiite).

The last indigenous Islamic Empire within the region, the Ottoman Empire, attained its apogee era between 1453 and 1683. It expanded its dominance over North Africa, created a naval presence over the Red Sea, gained control of Mesopotamia and naval access to the Persian Gulf and became the main naval force controlling much of the Mediterranean Sea. By the end of the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566), the Empire's population included 15 million people.<sup>1</sup>

The decline of the Ottoman Empire corresponded to the expanding competition within European powers that forced the Ottomans to forge alliances with some European countries in order to combat foreign invasions and occupation.

After being the primary unifying force of the Islamic world for centuries, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire threw the Middle East into a period of disorientation and lack of leadership. The slow collapse and subsequent abolishment of the Caliphate after the First World War also encouraged the emergence and spread of a strong nationalist sentiment among post-Ottoman entities such as Turkey and some other Arab countries.

The absence of a strong and unified leadership within the region weakened different entities of the Empire. Therefore, the powerful European States, mainly France and Britain who had strong interests in protecting the Suez Canal and taking advantage of large and rich territories, were encouraged to occupy the region and submit it to a long and cruel colonization.

In 1882, Britain had occupied Egypt on the pretext of restoring order. It was annexed with Sudan in 1914. Other provinces were lost as well. Algeria was occupied by France in 1830, Tunisia in 1881 and Libya by Italy in 1912.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Ottoman centuries : the Rise and fall of the Turkish Empire, L. Kinros.



**Causes and motivations of the colonization**

Throughout history, colonization has had some specific causes and motivations. Some of the main reasons for colonization are:

- Ideological and religious reasons: These have been the core reasons for several wars fought mostly by the defenders of the three major monotheist religions. Muslim conquerors had occupied Middle East and a part of the European continent in Andalucía and Eastern Europe. This led to Christian campaigns to re-conquer some of the territories in Spain and Palestine during the crusades and the *re-conquistada*.
- Political and military factors: They remain a major factor for wars in order to occupy territories and strengthen military and political capabilities.
- Economic motivations: This is one of the most important reasons for taking action and determining policies of major powers. The expanding economic potential and demographic growth justified essentially the colonization campaigns which were aimed at enlarging market capabilities and human and natural resources for flourishing industries. This motivation has also been at the origin of the new forms of colonization, or “neo-colonialism”, which allows developed countries, through local allied governments and the international systems to continue to dominate the developing countries.

**Different types of colonization:**

Throughout the history of colonization, a variety of methods were used to occupy large territories, submit its population and leaders to central authority, and to exploit its natural and human resources.

- Commercial colonization (commercial counters): this kind of subjugation was practiced mainly by Phoenicians over the main cities of the Mediterranean Sea coast. It was designed to enhance commercial activity through selling industrial products to native and indigenous populations, and buying local products.
- Colonization of settlements: this kind of colonization tends mainly to establish populations coming from the colonial metropolis within the occupied territories, where they can

get numerous privileges at the detriment of local people (it was practiced by the French in Algeria). This kind of colonization aims to change the identity of local cities and territories by imposing a new identity.

- Plantation colonies: The metropolitan population exercised leadership in economic and social activity, whereas the workers were mostly slaves from indigenous populations. This kind of colonization was backed by a military presence aimed at preserving the interests of the metropolitan population.
- Protectorates: This type of colonial subjugation differs from other forms of colonization. Here, the protective power assumes management of the State army and diplomacy, while other national institutions are formally managed by national citizens. This was practiced by France over Morocco and Tunisia.
- Mandates: At the end of the First World War through the Treaty of Versailles the main European powers distributed some of the Middle Eastern territories among themselves. France occupied Syria and Lebanon, while Britain took control over Iraq and Palestine. In fact, the secret agreement between France and Britain, in 1916, known as Sykes-Picot Agreement, effectively divided the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire outside the Arabian Peninsula between these two powers.<sup>2</sup>

### **Evolution of colonization in the Middle East**

#### *The British Empire*

Britain developed its colonial empire during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, due to its undisputed domination of the sea. The importance of protecting its ocean routes explains the pragmatic expansion of British Empire. It worked to control some important points in western Africa, the cape of South Africa, East Africa and India, which constitute the major points within maritime route from Britain to its colonies in India. Britain also controlled the Straits of Malacca and Hong Kong.

With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, another sea route of the utmost importance opened several possibilities. This

---

<sup>2</sup> Peter Mansfield, A history of the Middle East

route reduced considerable time and travel costs to India. It strengthened the control through the acquisition of Cyprus (1878), military occupation of Egypt (1882), and the establishment of protectorates in Aden (1838) and British Somalia (1884).

The British presence within its colonies was strengthened by flows of British migrants and the multiplication of Christian missionary societies, which permitted the spread of British traditions and culture in the occupied territories. The colonial British strategy aimed to provide and maintain a secure trade environment through the control of the main sea routes over the world and the military presence in the most important colonial Empire. By 1922, the British Empire had control over about 458 million people, who represented a quarter of the world's population during that time.<sup>3</sup>

#### *The French Empire*

With the exception of Algeria that had been occupied in 1830 by France, the tremendous French colonization campaign was launched under the Second Empire of Napoleon III (1852-1870) which had been stripped of most of its first colonial territories during the Congress of Vienna in 1815<sup>4</sup> and the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte. This trend coincided with the industrial revolution, which allowed French merchants and industrialists to launch successful investments outside France, such as the realization of the Suez Canal.

The French campaign was directed at different regions within Africa and Asia. As far as the Middle East was concerned, France expanded its control over North Africa:

- by establishing a protectorate on Tunisia in 1881;
- by establishing a protectorate on Morocco in 1912;
- in Mauritania starting from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

The last major colonial gains of the French Empire in the Middle East were achieved after World War I, when they gained mandates over the former Ottoman Empire territories, over what are now known as Syria and Lebanon.

On the eve of the Second World War, France had an Empire that expanded over 12 million sq. kms. and a population of 103 million people spread over five continents.

---

<sup>3</sup> Empire : the rise and demise of the British world order and the lessons for global power, Fergusson Niall

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Marseille: Empire colonial et capitalisme français, histoire d'un divorce, 1984

*Other major colonial powers in the region*

During the last two centuries, the Middle East had been mainly colonized by the two colonial powers: Britain and France. However, during this period some other countries intervened within the region in order to share the interests of this rich region and get control over some territories. Fascist Italy launched a colonization campaign over Libya in 1911 which was replaced at the end of the Second World War by France and Britain who shared the occupation of the territory till 1950 when Mohamed Idriss El-Snoussi was proclaimed King of Libya.<sup>5</sup>

Elsewhere, with the support of Britain and its Balfour Declaration, and the complicity of other western countries, Zionists occupied Palestine and established the state of Israel, which continues to occupy a lot of Arab territories.

Spain occupied the territory of Western Sahara and withdrew its forces in 1975, leaving the territory under conflict between Morocco and the Polisario.

Afghanistan, during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was subjugated to the Soviet occupation which resulted in a bloody conflict between the Afghan Mujahidin and Soviet army until 1989, leading then to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since 2001, under the garb of a war against terrorism, Afghanistan has been under the occupation of western forces led by the United States.

Iraq was invaded in 2003 by a coalition led by the United States, which claimed that Iraq had failed to abandon its chemical and nuclear weapons program. Since that date, Iraq has been under foreign occupation.

**Consequences of colonization***Political and economic consequences*

Around the world, the major conflicts and wars occurring today are affecting territories and countries that were once colonized in Africa, Middle East and South East Asia. To understand these conflicts it is not sufficient to examine current issues and problems in isolation but they have to be viewed in their historical perspective, most notably the colonial era and its linkages to the ongoing crisis.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Chapin Metz, Hellen. *Libya: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress

<sup>6</sup> Effects of colonization, Sandra Marker, November 2003.

After years of fighting for independence, most of the colonial territories had gained their independence and a certain form of “sovereignty”. However, the independence did not necessarily bring the freedom from imperialist influence. Colonial legacies were, and are still, visible in the new governments seeking to maintain the same practices of colonial powers. Among these are the discrimination against minority groups, disrespect of human rights, and the ongoing practice of disproportion in the distribution of the country’s resources.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, the Middle East in particular still has to deal with issues such as:

- Boundaries: Over a hundred new nations were born during the process of decolonization. Most of the new nations had either not existed as independent nations or they had not existed within the territories of colonial borders.<sup>8</sup> A lot of these conflicts have their origins in the unresolved issues of boundaries inherited from the colonial era.
- Ethnic rivalry: The borders of post-colonial territories are not necessarily corresponding to the ethnic groups that are settled there. Along with the discoveries of natural resources within these regions, this situation has exacerbated the intensity of conflicts in places like Sudan and Iraq.
- Unequal distribution of resources: this is directly linked to the diverging ethnic and religious groups that control the structures. Leaders favor groups on the basis of ethnic, religious, racial or other cultural factors which create political instability, inter-ethnic conflicts and rivalries.
- Formation of non-democratic and non-participatory governments in major parts of post-colonial territories. As a consequence, the situation of human rights within these countries is critical. Unjust and discriminatory policies inherited from the colonial powers are still practiced by the new governing institutions, and the populations suffer due to a lack of strong institutions, skills and experience to manage public affairs and guarantee good governance.

---

<sup>7</sup> Idem

<sup>8</sup> Collapsed Empire, Mark N Katz, in managing global chaos : sources of and responses to international conflict, 1996.

From the economic point of view colonization thus had disastrous effects on local economies. Natural resources were extracted and siphoned off by metropolitan colonialists. The policy of de-industrialization was deliberately practiced in the colonies, and slavery was also used to exploit plantations to provide raw materials to European industries.

During the pre-colonial period economic and technical developments in different countries were minor. According to some estimates, China and India alone accounted for almost 60% of the global population in 1820 and almost half of the global economy.<sup>9</sup>

The consequences and impacts during post-colonial era escalated, and totally changed this situation in which the majority of the world's population enjoyed such a substantial proportion of its resources themselves. The developed countries created an economic order based on policies which allowed them to maintain supremacy and a control over developing countries economies creating a new form of colonization under which the distribution of resources was totally changed.

#### *Humanitarian consequences*

As far as the humanitarian consequences of colonization are concerned, colonial powers have committed crimes and atrocities against indigenous populations which can be qualified in some areas as crimes against humanity.

Discrimination and exploitation of indigenous people was set up as a policy, termed as its "civilizing mission". The colonists were frequently constituted mainly of criminals and opponents who were rejected by European societies, and sent abroad to exploit other territories and resources. These people were accorded status, privileges and wealth at the detriment of local populations. Unjust policies lead to the loss of lands, resources, cultural and religious identities of the locals. Human rights were systematically violated, and slavery, apartheid and mass murder were practiced by the colonial powers.<sup>10</sup>

In 1931, Albert Bayet stated at the meeting of the League of Human Rights devoted to colonization, "Bringing science to the people who do not know, give them roads, canals, railroads,

---

<sup>9</sup> Les conséquences de la colonisation, Risham Badrouine, Témoignages, Novembre 2006

<sup>10</sup> Effects of colonization, Sandra Marker, November 2003

automobiles, telephone, arrange home health services, then let them know the human rights is a task of brotherhood... the country that has proclaimed the rights of man, who has contributed to the advancement of science, which is secular, the country which, before the nation, is the great champion of freedom...the mission to spread wherever it can the idea that made his own greatness. We must consider the investment to educate, elevate, to empower, enrich and assist people who need our cooperation".<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, these words were no more than the pretext of colonial powers in order to legitimize their policies.

In a similar vein, super powers which had been colonizers in the past themselves and had violated human rights so openly, are now using the pretext of "humanitarian intervention" in order to interfere and control the policies of post-colonial territories.

#### *Cultural consequences*

The most profound consequence of colonization lay in the cultural realm. The political and economic rape of the colonies created an unbridgeable cultural gap between the beneficiaries of colonization and the victims of the colonial assault. The era of colonial pillage led to the relative stagnation and often precipitous decline of traditional cultural pursuits in the colonies. At the same time, there was an unparalleled flowering of culture in Europe in terms of urban planning and in the realm of science and technology.<sup>12</sup> This was obviously at the expense of the colonized countries.

As far as the Middle East is concerned, it is important to remember that it evolved through a long period within a framework of a prosperous and expanding Islamic culture. Despite the fact that there were multiple ethnic groups speaking different languages, Islam and Arabic played a major role in unifying the region.

Colonization not only brought an end to that evolving process but it introduced cultural elements (language, secularism, liberal ideology, individualism) that strongly affected the cultural coherence in the region provoking till today a strong sense of "national identity". The evolution of Pan Arabism and Islamism are some of the features of this crisis where some components are

---

<sup>11</sup> De la mission civilisatrice coloniale à l'ingérence humanitaire, Rony Brauman, ancien Président de Médecins sans frontières, Mai 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Colonization, westernization and social culture in the post colonial societies, South Asia voice, March 2004

strongly over emphasized and defended whereas others are deliberately ignored and rejected.

### **Decolonization movements in the Middle East**

#### *The right of self determination*

The right to self determination, which means “the right of people to decide to get its independence and sovereignty and to choose the form of its political system”, has been proclaimed at the end of the First World War in the 14 points of the US President, Woodrow Wilson. At the end of the Second World War, this principle has been recognized within the Charter of the United Nations, and along with other principles played a major role in the movement of decolonization.

Meanwhile, nationalist movements played an important role in the Middle East. The indigenous elites played a major role in creating movements towards decolonization.

In some countries independence was recognized after strong political pressures at local as well as international levels, whereas in other countries independence was achieved after a lot of sacrifices in terms of the political, military and human price. In Algeria for example the revolution for independence from French colonization took more than 7 years (1954-1962) and a lot of bloodshed.

#### *The role of international and regional organizations*

The decolonization movement thus coincided with the proclamation of the right of people to self-determination at the end of World War II, which was confirmed within the Charter of the United Nations.

In many ways, the de-colonization movement was a result of World War II. The European countries, which were the main colonial powers, had to realize that it was only the intervention of the United States and Russia which had enabled them to survive the war. They could not possibly continue to sustain their colonies for any length of time after that realization had sunk in. Meanwhile, the colonized countries themselves were agitating more and more for independence.

The General Assembly of the United Nations was engaged in the independence movement in order to mobilize the international community and exercise pressure on the colonial powers, to end the rule of colonial Empires. The United States, remembering their own War of Independence, condemned the colonial system and supported



independence of colonized countries, whereas the Soviet Union, in an endeavor to spread its ideology, engaged indirectly in independence movements by providing both political and logistical assistance.

This movement was strengthened by the emergence of the “Third World” (a term used for the first time by the demographer Alfred Bovy in 1952) within the context of the Cold War between the two big powers: the United States and the USSR. The creation of the Non-Aligned Movement, constituted around eminent leaders of the third world (Nehru, Sukarno, Tito and Nasser) played a crucial role in providing assistance to independent movement and backing it up within the international realm.

In 1960, the United Nations General Assembly voted the Declaration on Granting Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

The creation of the Arab League in 1945 (formed with six members: Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Syria) had significant importance for the other Arab countries that were still colonized. It raised the awareness of an Arab identity different from colonial identity, and constituted a forum to defend the right to self-determination and mobilize political and logistical assistance to fighting peoples.

#### *Neo-Colonialism*

The independence of countries has not allowed sovereign and democratic governments to really defend the interests of their people. The legacy of colonial powers within post-colonial governments within the framework of an international system, established mainly by colonial powers, has helped western countries to maintain control of their former colonies. The involvement of powerful countries whether colonial powers or not, in the affairs of less powerful countries is called “neo-colonialism”.

Some of the governments in the Middle East which lack legitimacy in eyes of their own populations, are supported by powerful outside countries in order to implement their external agendas and interests. The Middle East is a very important region in terms of the wide natural resources it has (the richest region in terms of oil and natural gas) as well as its geo-strategic position at the cross roads of three continents.

The international economic order which is based on a set of principles, rules and institutions established by developed countries themselves, has the main purpose to maintain the supremacy of these countries, with the role of developing countries limited to supplying natural resources.

During the time when Middle East was ruled by some revolutionary leaders an idea of a new economic order was put forward and was strongly defended, but they could not succeed in changing an order which is still exploiting their resources and stopping their aspirations to development.

### **Conclusion**

The geo-strategic position of the Middle East, on the cross roads of three continents, in controlling important resources and strategic straits was what created the strong sense of competition within major European colonizers to decrease the role and power of the Ottoman Empire. Even today this competition involves actors that are still occupying some of the countries of the region, or exercising new types of colonization over some illegitimate regimes, which are only serving western interests and agendas within the region.

The sequels of colonization in the Middle East are still apparent as the region faces its current instability. The governments established in the post-colonial era do not necessarily reflect the ideas and aspirations of the people. In some countries, minority groups have control over the power structures preventing any kind of democracy to be established. Other countries are still facing the problem of identifying their national identity. The emergence of Islamism and Arabism are strong signs that post-colonial governments are seeking to find solutions to situations that they find unacceptable.

The influence of globalization, and foreign interference within the region have provoked disturbances and revolutions in some of the Middle Eastern countries. The outcome of this evolving situation should redefine the nature of governments by giving them legitimacy. On the other hand, this changing process certainly affects the nature of relationships with western powers, especially because of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the continued exploitation of the natural resources of the region.

## WOMEN AND EDUCATION

**Editor's Note: The women of the Middle East are the significantly under-utilised half of the population. Their role in society is limited, and their contribution to intellectual ferment is just as limited. In most cases this is due to their poor or delayed access to education, or due to the constraints that are placed on them after they do get that access. Surprisingly, the situation is changing by leaps and bounds, and as that happens, the future of the Middle East becomes increasingly bright.**

### **Introduction:**

Women have played a significant role in the Middle East and North Africa region both in the pre and post-Islamic eras but it is generally believed that they are marginalized, including proper access to education. Education is imperative for women empowerment. This region is characterized by a male dominated culture, limiting women's full participation in the socio-political arena. Although women continue to face challenges there have, nevertheless, been major progress over the past 50 years.

In 1960, the overall ratio of female to male enrollment in primary education was only 0.48%. However, by 2003, this gap had been reduced drastically, with an enrollment ratio of 0.94%. At the other end of the scale in tertiary education, it is interesting to note that female enrollment increased from a ratio of 0.49% in 1970 to 1.32% by 2003. Thus progress has been rapid and steady.

The primary factor for the growth of female education in the MENA region has been the expansion of a mass education system after independence. Prior to independence, the colonial powers restricted access to schools only to children of European settlers and to a very limited number of nationals, mostly the elite.

Although during colonization there were numerous indigenous educational institutions that primarily provided religious instruction, their standards did not meet the requirements for imparting education that could enhance development in the region.

In addition, these religious institutions were mostly for boys. Girls had little or no access to education.

In order to provide education to its citizens the entire Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has increased its expenditure on education both as a percentage of public spending and their GDP. On average a MENA country would spend 5.3% of its GDP in 1995 to 2003. This is to be compared to figures for the East Asia and the Pacific region and Latin America which spend 3.6% and 3.9% respectively.

In addition to the higher GDP percentage spent on education, MENA region's expenditure per pupil relative to per capita income is significantly higher not only compared to developing countries but also to the developed countries, particularly at the tertiary level.

Notwithstanding the encouraging regional progress, gender disparity in education is still significant and widely varies from country to country. For instance, female enrollment at the tertiary level in 2002 was high in the UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait, but low in Iraq and Yemen where gender disparity was significant.

Unfortunately, the overall female access to education has not matched their participation in political, social and economic sphere of society. According to the World Bank, women constitute only 26% of the Middle East labor force. Egypt is an illustrative example that highlights the lack of opportunities for females. Although the percentage of Egyptian females holding university degrees has doubled from 6 to 12% between 1998 and 2006, their rate of unemployment rose only from 19 to 27% during the same period. The under-representation of women in the political arena is even more staggering. Overall for example, women hold only 9% of the parliamentary seats in the region.

There are several factors contributing to the limitations that women face in the MENA region. The 30% illiteracy rate in the female population is almost double that of the 15.3% male illiteracy rate. The 2009 Arab Knowledge Report argues that Arab women still remain subject to a higher level of discrimination, political and culture pressures, social constraints and complex restrictions, primarily rooted in conservative traditions. These factors are likely to affect gender equality and the women's role in the socio-political aspects of society. Religion also continues to play an important role

in women's empowerment, which has been used both ways to enhance education opportunities for girls in some cases and to limit it in others.

**The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia:**

Female education in Saudi Arabia is indebted to the wisdom of King Faisal (1964-1975). Saudi Arabia had a high illiteracy rate. Adhering to its conservative values the Saudi society was not open to the idea of female education. Their education was not considered compatible with Saudi cultural and religious values.

King Faisal played an important transformative role in advancing female education in Saudi Arabia. He managed to convince his people, including the Bedouin tribes, about the importance of formal schooling for girls. Given the deeply religious nature of Saudi society it was argued that female education was against the principles of Islam. It is interesting to note that King Amanullah Khan had to face similar arguments in Afghanistan in 1920s. But unlike King Amanullah Khan, King Faisal moved gradually to advocate female education to avoid disruption and violent rejection by the conservative public. For example, he did not force the parents to send their daughters to school, even though girls education was made mandatory.

King Faisal responded to the criticism challenging his critics with arguments based in Islamic teachings. Whenever King Faisal faced resistance he would ask, "is there anything in the Holy Quran which forbids the education of women?" He further stated, "We have no cause for argument, God enjoins learning on every Muslim man and women". Knowing that the conservative attitude of his people towards educating women was primarily rooted in traditions and not in Islam, he successfully managed to confront them on religious grounds.

King Faisal's wife, Queen Iffat Al-Thunayan, actively supported educational reforms. Queen Iffat's contribution in advancing education in Saudi Arabia is an important part of Saudi history. Her first major contribution to Saudi education was the establishment of Taif Model School for Boys and Girls in 1943, in which girls and boys were educated separately, but in the same school. In 1955, Queen Iffat initiated the first private school for women in Jeddah, Dar Al-Hanaan (the House of Affection). Her own daughter was one of the 15 students who attended this school.

In 1967, Iffat launched the first girls college in Riyadh and established Al-Nahdah Al-Saudia, an organization that has continued to promote women education and provided free classes for women on literacy, hygiene, child-care, and courses on foreign languages. In 1970s, Queen Iffat started the country's first community college for women.

Public education in Saudi Arabia is free. Article 30 of the Saudi Constitution stipulates citizens right to education as the State's responsibility and states: "The state provides public education and pledges to combat illiteracy." In 1960, the General Presidency of Girls' Education (GPGE) was established with the responsibility to oversee girls education. The Committee operated independently outside the Ministry of Education. GPGE establishment provided a key input to girls education. Starting from 15 girls schools with 5000 students in 1960 it expanded the number of schools throughout the country. Female enrollment increased at all levels in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and gender disparity decreased in consequence.

While all this was an astonishing achievement in providing education to girls, keeping female education under a special institutional arrangement outside the Ministry of Education resulted in poorly resourced schools for girls. This issue became more apparent during a fire incident in 2002 in an elementary girls school in Mecca which resulted in the death of 15 young girls. The incident triggered public anger and outcry as the press reported that the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, or religious police, had prevented the firemen from entering the school to put off the fire by arguing that the students and their teachers might not be wearing their headscarves inside the school. The public pressure and outcry led to the merger of GPGE into the Ministry of Education.

A rapid growth in female education alone does not co-relate into equal opportunities in the labor market. Data on Saudi unemployment is sketchy. According to the CIA World Fact book, the Saudi Arabia unemployment rate in 2010 could be anywhere from 11 to 25%. The rate among women is much higher as some estimates indicate that Saudi women account for only 7% of the labor force. Work opportunities for women remain limited due to social and cultural constraints that restrict women to certain jobs and from the ability to drive independently in their cars. Nevertheless,

despite these limitations, potent forces in Saudi Arabia have brought about rapid changes in women's educational prospects in the last three decades. The future can only be brighter as women increasingly begin to match men in their educational achievements.

Religion has been at the heart of the debate over girls education in Saudi Arabia. Religion is expected to remain a dominant factor in the life of Saudi Arabia and will continue to influence the debate over women's education and their role in society. However, it is unlikely that growth of educational opportunities for women by itself will change Saudi or regional politics towards liberalism or conservatism.

### **The Islamic Republic of Iran**

Iran is a major oil producing country and a major member of the OPEC. According to World Bank classification Iran is a Middle Income Country (MIC).

Education in Iran is centralized. The Ministry of Education is in charge of all aspects of education including educational planning, financing, administration, and curriculum development. Teacher training, grading, and examinations are also the responsibility of the Ministry.

In the early 1970s during the Shah era, Iran undertook a review of the education system and made efforts to improve the system by updating school curricula. The focus was also shifted to upgrading teacher's skills and efficiency. According to the World Bank, in the early 1970s Iran witnessed an increase in enrollment at the elementary level from 73% to 93.2%. Secondary schools witnessed an increase from 27% to 45% during the same period.

#### *Post Islamic Revolution Iran*

Iran's progress in expanding education for all continued after the Islamic Revolution in 1978. In fact the progress was far more rapid as compared to the Shah's regime.

Iran managed to improve gender parity at primary enrolment from 0.8 in 1985 to 0.9 in 1990. By 2003, girls enrolment at the primary level surpassed males with a female to male ratio of 1.1. Both secondary and tertiary levels had similar progress. In 2003, Iran's expenditure on education as percentage of the GDP was 4.8%.

Women constitute well over 50% of Iranian university students. It is interesting to note that, unlike some other countries in the MENA region, Iran did not face any resistance from the religious

setup as far as girls education is concerned. The ruling religious figure actively encouraged female education.

The role of women in post Islamic Revolution can be seen in the light of a quote from President Khatami, the then president of the country: “We are not the guardians of women to give them something by force or take it away from them. We are only preparing the ground for women to recognize their rights and capabilities, and to acknowledge their own merits...once they have done that, they will reach their rightful position in society...and the first prerequisite is to increase women’s knowledge and education”.<sup>13</sup>

However, the government made sure that school curricula were revised to ensure compliance with Islamic principles.

The Government of Iran has systematically tried to create a new identity for the Iranian women, balancing education with deep conservative and religious values making sure that education does not promote secular values.

The issue of women’s education and their participation in the socio-economic spheres of Iranian society have been a key component of governmental policies.

The First Economic, Social, Cultural Development Plan of the Islamic Republic (1989-1993) stipulates the approach to the issue of national development and the role of women by “bringing about a higher level of participation among women in social, cultural, educational, and economic affairs while maintaining the values of the family and the character of the Muslim women”.<sup>14</sup>

Iran’s example setting progress in enhancing female education in the post- Islamic revolution era has been most extraordinary. It has bridged the gender parity gap.

The leaders of the Islamic Republic have strongly advocated female education, politically, economically, and socially, and achieved very successful results. Such a drive is rooted in the political thinking of the ruling political circle to promote a new identity for the Iranian women based on conservative values.

Similar to Saudi Arabia, religion forces will continue to play a strong role in women education in Iran, but with a view to tap on women as a strong political force to promote conservative values.

---

<sup>13</sup> Gulnar Mehran: Gender and Education in Iran, 2003

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*



**Afghanistan:**

The tomb of Guharshad Begum still stands high in Herat as a reminder of the great female scholar of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. If the rich Persian literature owes special gratitude to Nur ad-Din Abd ar-Rahman Jami (the famous Afghan poet of 15<sup>th</sup> Century), he owes his success to Guharshad Begum who played a critical role in nurturing him. Women contribution has not only been limited to cultural and political field, they also played a critical role in battlefields. It was Malalai's bravery that resulted in the defeat of the British army in 1880 at the Battle of Maiwand when she grabbed the Afghan flag from a fallen fighter in the battlefield and rallied Afghan soldiers as she sang:

*"I shall make a beauty spot out of my beloved's blood.  
Which will put to shame the roses in my garden.  
Young love, if you do not fall in the battle of Maiwand,  
By God, someone is saving you for a token of shame."*

There are numerous accounts of such great women whose contributions to the Afghan national identity will always be remembered and cherished as a source of pride for the nation.

That being said, the plight of women in Afghanistan today has been an unfortunate blight on the nation's history. Access to education has been one of the greatest challenges for Afghan females.

*The Era of King Amanullah Khan (1919-1929)*

An important thinker, Mahmood Tarzi, returned from exile. as Editor-in-Chief of the Seraj-Al-Akhbar (1911-1918), and focused on issues of national sovereignty, political reform, economic development, education, and the importance of participation of women in the socio-political aspects of Afghan society. His ideas and advocacy provided an impetus to King Amanullah Khan's own development and reform agenda. The King formally proposed his agenda to the Cabinet in 1920, and seven months later, the first girls school in Afghanistan was established.

King Amanullah's wife, Queen Soraya (Tarzi's daughter), was a great support to the King in promoting education for girls. While the King was busy pushing for women's rights and girls education through his cabinet and government machinery, the Queen was engaged in a public campaign in an effort to rally public opinion. She was the first queen in Afghan history to publicly

appear without a headscarf and to deliver public speeches. She encouraged practical steps to end the isolation of women and underlined the societal importance of girls access to education.

It was during one of these first gatherings, that 50 women from the crowd volunteered to support the first school called The School of Mastorat (meaning “women”). It was the work of these volunteers that helped the School of Mastorat to open its door and embrace the first batch of female students. As the 50 girls, most of whom were from the royal family, walked into the school, the Queen greeted them as their principal. The Queen addressed the students, their mothers and some of the other dignitaries invited for the opening ceremony. By 1926, the school was elevated from elementary to middle level and a total of 800 girls studied there. Three additional girls schools were established by mid 1920s.

King Amanullah’s steps to reform the Afghan system, especially his call for unveiling women sparked a severe reaction. The conservative opponents of the King used it against him and labeled his agenda as against Afghan cultural and religious values. The news of the announcement of the first batch of 13 Afghan girls who went for higher education to Turkey sparked a violent reaction. The news led to the attack of the government institutions by the tribes. Public anger later forced the King to call back the girls and to reverse some of his reform agenda.

Realizing the growing public anger and a strong campaign against the King, which many historians believe was covertly supported by the then British government, Amanullah Khan called a Loya Jirga in September 1928. The debate in the Jirga centered around the issues of women’s unveiling and girls education. The King defended his agenda for girls education and argued that it was within the Islamic norms and religious guidelines quoting the Hadith of the Prophet that says “Education is obligatory for every male and female Muslim”. But the conservatives succeeded in forcing the King to close the girls schools.

*Reign of Habibullah Kalakani (January to October 1929)*

As the rebellion spread and his army started to defect, King Amanullah went into exile and Kabul fell to a man called Habibullah Kalakani. Kalakani was an illiterate and a well-known bandit. He rallied people against the King calling him and his agenda as anti-Islamic. Upon seizing power, Kalakani issued a decree repealing

many of King Amanullah's reforms including educational reforms. Article 5 of the decree called for closure of girls schools and banned women from leaving their homes without the permission of their male household heads. Fortunately, Kalakani's rule did not last for long and he was overthrown by King Nadir Shah in October 1929.

*The Era of King Nadir Shah and King Zahir Shah*

After seizing power, Nadir Shah reopened schools for boys as his first priority. Given the experience of King Amanullah it took him two years to reopen education opportunities for girls. In 1931, a medical training course was established in a female hospital in Kabul, where a French doctor trained girls as midwives. In 1940, the medical training course was transformed into an official school for girls. Visible progress in promoting female education in Afghanistan was made during the late 1940s.

In 1946, the first women's association was established spearheading the agenda for women empowerment and vocational education.

In 1947, the cabinet endorsed a proposal put forward by the Ministry of Education which led to the establishment of the Faculty of Literature and Faculty of Science in 1948 for girls. In 1958, the Faculty of Medicine for girls was established. Between 1961 and 1964, the above-mentioned institutions were merged into a co-education system. This was a major change in the Afghan education system but did not generate any major public opposition.

*The Era of Communist Regime and Soviet Occupation:*

The Soviet invasion and the subsequent war in Afghanistan was a set back for education. The invasion of Afghanistan by the Red Army in December 1979 lasted for 10 years. During this period, the national education system collapsed except in limited urban areas that were under the control of the Soviet regime. About 80% of the schools were destroyed. Teaching staff decreased by 50% as most of them left the country or died during the war. Student enrollment fell by 30%. About 5 million Afghans became refugees in Pakistan and Iran. Education was not a priority as they struggled for survival. International assistance was primarily focused on the growing need of food and shelter.

However, the situation gradually started to change for the Afghan refugees mostly living in urban areas in Pakistan. The two major and hardliner political parties among the Mujahedeen factions,

Hezb-e-Islami and Jamiat-e-Islami, established special female schools. Like the hardliner in Iran, it was a political move to reach out to women as an untapped source of political influence.

The Pakistan Government also started establishing schools for girls in some refuge camps with financial support from the international community. By late 1980s, a modest number of girls schools were established inside Afghanistan in areas under the control of the Mujahedeen.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) played a key role in education for the Afghan refugee community in Pakistan. By 1990, 70% of the schools in Afghanistan with a total number of about 628,000 students, out of which roughly 35% were girls, were all run or supported by NGOs, including some Islamic NGOs such as Muslim Aid. Christian NGOs, such as Christian Aid, also played a visible role in education for the Afghan refugees.

The NGO community had to cautiously approach girls education by carefully navigating through cultural and religious sensitivities. All instructors were females, conservatively dressed to respect local cultures and dedicated transportation was provided to both students and staff. Despite all these efforts, it was not free from controversies.

#### *The Taliban Era*

In 2003, before the Taliban came into power there were roughly 2200 schools in Afghanistan. The Taliban closed almost all schools for girls. Although the education sector generally suffered a huge blow during the Taliban regime, the impact on girls education was particularly devastating. Girls gross enrolment ratio fell from 32% in 1995 (when Taliban took over Kabul) to 6.4% in 1999.<sup>15</sup> Since the collapse of the Taliban in 2001, the education sector has again made some encouraging progress, at least at the elementary level, but it will take long time and significant resources to undo the damage caused by three decades of a conflict that is still ongoing.

Overall progress has thus been patchy with several deadly setbacks. In spite of significant opposition to female education the situation in Afghanistan is quite similar to circumstances in Iran in terms of efforts by religious political forces to tap on women as a

---

<sup>15</sup> (American Institute for Research: Education and the Role of NGOs in Emergencies: Afghanistan 1978-2002).

political asset. In any event, chances are that female education will significantly expand once the conflict is over.

**Conclusion**

From an examination of the three case studies above, it is clear that women's education in the wider Middle East has equally wide variations. The situation is quite favorable in North Africa, improving in the Gulf states, relatively poor in conflict affected states like Iraq and Afghanistan. Various political forces, including religious based political parties, are expected to reach out to women as a source of political strength. Education will play a dominant role as an avenue for such reach out.

All this bodes well for the future role of women and their access to education in the Middle East. They form the relatively under-utilised part of the economy and intellectual life of the region, but from any study of their past iconic achievements, one could conclude that they will rise and shine in future, with expanding political influence.



## HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Editors Note: While human trafficking is hardly specific to the Middle East, it is somewhat surprising that a region which is largely based on Muslim values in its culture and practice should nevertheless see a continuation of this phenomenon. The same can however be said of other Christian parts of the world, where this abhorrent practice also continues despite all spiritual teachings.**

### Introduction

Human trafficking is a rapidly growing phenomenon world-wide. It is now the third largest form of trans-national organized crime after the trafficking of illegal drugs and arms, and has become an extremely lucrative and profitable industry. This practice is primarily carried out under the garb of recruitment of domestic servants or laborers, illegal immigration, or under the pretext of providing better job opportunities to vulnerable segments of the society.

Human trafficking is done by the use of force, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or position, or by taking advantage of the vulnerability of the person. Such persons are then exploited for prostitution, servitude, forced labor, enslavement, quasi-slavery practices, or trade in human organs.<sup>2</sup>

Most countries are affected by this scourge of human trafficking. However, current numbers and statistics available to quantify the practice do not realistically show the scale and extent of the problem. It is estimated that the total annual revenue generated as a result of human trafficking is between US \$ 5 to 9 billion worldwide.<sup>3</sup> However, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates the revenue to be much higher.<sup>4</sup>

It is determined that 27 million people are victims of human trafficking.<sup>5</sup> Over 2.5 million of the trafficked people are thought to be victims of forced labour, including sexual exploitation.

It is also determined that the problem of human

trafficking affects over 161 countries across the world. The victims range from as young as 4 to 50 years of age. 95% of the victims experience physical or sexual violence during trafficking. 43% of the victims are used for prostitution and 32% are coerced into forced labour.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) Global Report on Trafficking shows that majority of trafficked victims are women and children (88%), where women constitute 66%, girls 13%, boys 9% and men 12%.

An estimated 1.2 million children are trafficked each year. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports that 6 million children are used for bonded and forced labor.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, most victims are hesitant to report the instances of abuse against them. These victims are usually unaware of their rights and do not possess legal documentation as they are either sold or kidnapped and see their papers confiscated. Some victims are unable to communicate due to language barriers or fear that the authorities of the country would support their own nationals instead.<sup>8</sup> There are instances where parents themselves sell their older children into human bondage, as it has been reported in some cases in India and Mauritania. Under these circumstances, the trafficked children feel that they would not be welcomed back home and as such have no incentive to return. Since incentives for the enforcement of laws vary from one country to the other, it is a challenge to accurately account for each case.

#### **Forms of Human Trafficking**

Bonded labor is one of the worst forms of human trafficking. In such cases, services provided to the employer are greater than those stipulated for when the original contract was made or money had been borrowed. In countries like Mauritania, Syria and Kuwait, debt owed does not end if the father of the family dies. It is passed on to the deceased's wife and children.

Inherited debts are common in several countries. Since no formal written contract is preserved for such transactions, the debts are never liquidated under most circumstances. Debts may



result in sexual exploitation or physical labor where often no payment is provided. For such women escape lies through infectious diseases or dismissal. Their only hope of freedom lies in death.

Sex trafficking usually involves children of both sexes. Dire financial situations play a vital role in this regard and many children are sold into servitude by their parents due to sheer poverty and desperation.

Men in forced labor usually migrate voluntarily to neighboring countries in order to find work opportunities that allow better living standards for their families. In some countries in the Middle East, the "kafala" system restricts the freedom of such workers completely by allowing the employers to hold their passports and other such legal documents. Such a dispensation does not give them the option to seek employment elsewhere. Many victims are forced to perform unskilled work under dangerous situations. Their salaries and living conditions are at the mercy of their patrons. They sometimes do not even receive payment for their work as domestic servants or factory workers.<sup>5</sup>

#### **History of Human Trafficking in the Middle East**

Great civilizations and ancient cultures such as Egypt, India, Greece, Sub-Saharan Africa and Rome encouraged slavery. In Africa, slaves were usually acquired through land conquests and warfare. Considered as spoils of war, prisoners would usually become slaves; women are used as concubines, companions, domestic servants or agricultural workers.

From the 15th to 17th Century, more than nine millions Africans were forcibly abducted as slaves to the Americas in what came to be called the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. While it was declared illegal by the British in 1807, this inhuman but lucrative business did not end and still exists in one form or the other.

Slavery is still a common phenomenon in Africa, especially in Mauritania and Sudan, where race and religion play an important role. It is estimated that at least 200,000 people are held in bonded labor in these two countries. Mauritania is known for maintaining a system of chattel slavery that has been going on for hundreds of years where the light-skinned ruling elite is taking advantage of their darker counterparts. Slavery

was banned in 1980 but it is still practiced today.

In Egypt, children are used and abused for picking cotton at low wages. In conflict areas such as Sudan, young girls and women are kidnapped and forced to become concubines while young men are taken away from their families to become camel or goat herders. This is surprising as these regions are predominately Islamic and the concept of slavery goes against the teachings of Islam.

### **Current forms of Human Trafficking**

In 1973, the International Labor Organization (ILO) passed the Minimum Age Convention. Unfortunately, despite the enactment of this Convention and its adoption by many States, its enforcement remains a problem and many countries are not fully complying with it.

Children are employed in dangerous environments for less pay. In Pakistan and India, they are involved in brick making or carrying water to workers in the fields. In Egypt, they pick cotton. In Israel, Sudan and Mauritania, children are sold for prostitution and sex trafficking. In United Arab Emirates, Oman and Qatar young boys are forced to ride camels as camel jockeys. These camel jockeys face inhuman treatment and are given very low nourishment in order to keep their weight under check.

In Sudan, children are forced into military conflict as child soldiers. They are encouraged to actively perform hostilities along soldiers. In Afghanistan, children have been recruited by the Taliban and used as suicide bombers. In Iran, children were being sent into fields in order to de-mine. In Yemen, young boys are killed fighting tribal wars for their ancestors. Countless bodies have been found in the Middle East missing vital organs which were taken from their bodies.

### **Reasons and Motivations**

Human trafficking is an intricate phenomenon. Its presence within societies involves economic benefits, cultural and social necessities as well as political reasons. A shared common reason that fuels human trafficking is the financial aspect. Too often a lack of economic opportunities drives people to emigrate to neighboring countries and foreign lands.

People sometimes voluntarily opt to enter this dark

circle due to dire financial difficulties. They want to end a life of oppression and suffering, and embrace the possibility of starting a new life with economic improvements abroad. They often have no option but to seek employment in a foreign land in order to have the opportunity to live a better life.

Political conflicts and natural disasters also lead to human trafficking. The nature of capitalism where there is a demand for cheap goods, high profits and a reliable income also fuel human exploitation. Until recently, there were few prosecutions against the perpetrators due to lack of participation from local authorities. This encouraged the proliferation of such illegal practices since criminals have a low chance of getting caught and being prosecuted.

Despite current practices and measures to prevent human trafficking, it is still flourishing. Many organizations have tried to buy back slaves from slave-holders in order to set them free and offer them a potential chance to freedom. Human trafficking increased as slave-holders realized that large amount of money could be obtained from well-intentioned international organizations.

#### **Possible Solutions**

Strict immigration policies as well as employment rules can help towards accountability and transparency. The United Arab Emirates is a good example as it has tracked down organized crime and prosecuted human trafficking perpetrators over the recent years. Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates have adopted anti-trafficking laws and legislation, created shelters and rehabilitation centers for victims of exploitations. It is a great beginning and may save many lives.

In 2009, the Kingdom of Bahrain adopted the strongest sponsorship reform by changing the “kafala” system and allowing workers to seek new employers and better working conditions.

Human trafficking needs to be addressed as an international issue. Each country should take measures to fight it but a collective effort is imperative. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was ratified in 1948<sup>25</sup> and continues to guide the development of international conventions on human rights and domestic legislations to prevent the abuse of basic human rights

and fundamental freedom.

The legal edifice of international Conventions against trafficking has also expanded over the past few decades. However, all these laws need to be implemented in spirit to counter the problem of trafficking which cannot be achieved without political will and intervention.

### **Conclusion**

It should be the government's responsibility to protect its people against trafficking. Human trafficking is a global trend and its consequences are dire on its victims due to the resulting psychological and physical abuse. Victims are often tortured, deprived and manipulated in the worst imaginable ways. Financial gain and profits are fueling this heinous crime, and only the strict enforcement of laws can help prevent the growth of this evil.

## RELATIONS WITH AFRICA

**Editor's Note: Relations between the Middle East and Africa date back to ancient times. Of late however, these relations are assuming much closer contacts, for the mutual benefit of both.**

### Introduction

Relations between Africa and the Middle East have survived serious challenges and are entering a new era. The first “external” cooperation extended by Africa in the aftermath of colonialism was to forge relations with the Middle East. The contention remains that relations (invariably referred to as Afro-Arab relations), cooperation and solidarity between these two regions are likely to flourish than decline in the near future.

### Key Challenges

Growing research traces relations between Africa and the Middle East from 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Centuries to the Arabization and Islamization of Africa. Relations between Africa and the Middle East took a sharp turn after the western colonialism and imperialism. These two regions were considered “co-sufferers”.<sup>16</sup> They forged the Afro-Arab alliance against colonialism.

Africa and Middle East were originally a continuous landmass but were separated by a geological fissure which resulted in the creation of the Red Sea. This geological fissure did not completely sever the physical link between the two regions. It was the deliberate construction of the Suez Canal at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century which completed this separation. A physical separation of the two regions is of no consequence in their shared sociological origin. The unity of Africa and Arabia is an undisputed reality.

Mazrui<sup>17</sup> adds that the initial geological and physical unity of the present day Africa and the Middle East, the extensive and historic ties between the two peoples and their efforts in overcoming the geological separation created by the narrow Red Sea and the

---

<sup>16</sup> Mario Azevedo, (1988) “*The Organization of African Unity and Afro-Arab Cooperation*” in *Africa Today*, Vol. 35, No. 3/4, The OAU at 25: The Quest for Unity, Self-Determination and Human Rights (3rd Qtr. - 4th Qtr., 1988), pp. 68-80 .

<sup>17</sup> Mazrui, Ali “Africa and the Arabs in the New World Order”, UFAHAMU, 1992, UCLA.

Suez canal, resulted in what he refers to as “*Afrabia* and communities of *Afrabians*”. This has been proven by long standing political, economic and cultural ties between Africa and the Middle East, as is the case between Ethiopia and Yemen who jointly claim the Queen of Sheba as a common historic leader.

The colonist manipulated issues of race, religion and slavery to sour relations between Africans and the Arabs. Bujra<sup>18</sup> describes the intense campaign of separation of Africans from Arabs by the colonialists. He points out that the “colonial wall” from the West to the East coast of Africa constituted the global level of separation of Africa from the Middle East. At the local level the exposure to colonialism triggered animosity between Arabs and Africans in countries such as Mauritania, Sudan and Tanzania, and between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, Ghana, Cote d’Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Kenya and Mozambique. He points out the case of Sudan where Christians in the south were separated and ruled separately. This resulted in the long civil war between the north and south, the longest civil war in Africa.

In the name of their so-called “civilising mission” the colonialists embarked on a vicious and severe ideological indoctrination of both Africans and Arabs. Under this inhuman mission the colonialist inculcated the belief in Arabs that they were inferior to the Europeans but superior to the Africans.

Relations between Africa and the Middle East have evolved since then. They recognize and respect each other’s sovereignty and accept the League of Arab States and the African Union as two separate regional bodies.<sup>19</sup> These relations have also evolved with the emergence of institutions such as African Development Bank, the Arab Bank for African Development, and several Universities.

### **Contemporary Challenges**

Relations between Africa and the Middle East also improved after the collapse of USSR.<sup>20</sup> This resulted in seeking new alliances for the maintenance of international peace and security in Africa and the Middle East. This was also the case in the post-World War II

---

<sup>18</sup> Bujra Abdala, (2002) “*Afrabia and the African Union*” Lecture delivered at ACARTSOD Tripoli, Libya on 24 September 2002 .

<sup>19</sup> See Segal R. (2002) Islam’s Black Slaves: the other black Diaspora,

<sup>20</sup> <sup>20</sup> Lev Voronkov “(1999). Regional Cooperation: *Conflict Prevention and Security through Interdependence*” International Journal of Peace Studies, Volume 4, Number 2, July 1999

design of the international peace and security architecture which had a significant impact on Africa and the Middle East. The period following the launch of the United Nations witnessed a proliferation of intra and inter-regional cooperation including the establishment of the League of Arab States in 1945, and the Organization of African Unity later in 1963.

Some of the issues at the United Nations initially created a cleavage in relations between the Arab and the African blocs.

At the First Conference of Organization of African Unity in Casablanca in 1958, the outright denunciation of Israel, derailed the negotiations for the formation of the Organization of African Unity. Newly independent African Arab states (namely Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia known as the Casablanca bloc in the negotiations for the formation of the OAU) were already members of the League of Arab States. This Arab (Casablanca) bloc expected the OAU to fully embrace its position on the Palestinian question.

The newly independent black African states such as Ghana and Tanzania from the Monrovia and Brazzaville Bloc made it clear to the Arab Casablanca Bloc that they did not intend to cooperate in the negotiations for the formation of the OAU if the Israeli–Palestinian issue was part of the negotiations. Black African leaders, Nyerere of Tanzania and Nkrumah of Ghana, recognized Israel and did not see it as a neo-colonial state. They also admired Israel for its economic prowess and were enjoying significant aid from it. This was not in compliance with the position of the Arab Casablanca Bloc. As a result of this situation, attempts initiated by Arab states to pass an OAU resolution on Palestine failed.

A number of subsequent events changed the viewpoint of these African states and they ultimately consolidated their positions with OAU/AU and the League of Arab States.

The events included the Israeli occupation of Egyptian Territory during the 1967 war and the defiance of Israel against UN Security Council resolution 242 of 1967. Thus at the 1968 Summit of the OAU in Addis Ababa, the OAU Council of Ministers passed a resolution calling Israel the aggressor in the 1967 war.

At that 8<sup>th</sup> Summit the OAU also decided that the situation in the Middle East constituted “a serious threat to regional peace in

Africa<sup>21</sup>”, and started on an effort to pressure Israel to end its occupation of Arab lands, in particular, the occupied land of Egypt, a founding member of the OAU.<sup>22</sup>

The 9<sup>th</sup> Summit of the OAU subsequently adopted a distinctly pro-Arab stance on the question of Palestine. The Israeli-Palestinian issue remained a key factor in Afro-Arab relations as Arab states worked to sustain black African support through training programmes for independence and liberation movements in Africa. Another tactic deployed by the Arab States to win the support of “black” African States was to equate the Palestinian problem with the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa.

The failed promise of African governments to ensure economic and political fruits for their people has engendered serious implications for Africa’s relations, not only with Middle East, but with other international parties. This situation has skewed the balance in favour of the apparently more economically viable and advanced Middle East. In this imbalance, Africa appears to be on the receiving end, a situation which tends to reinforce the claims of the Middle East that it has brought enlightenment to Africa. The extent of relations between the two regions seem to lend significant credit to this perception, with Africa appearing to be the beneficiary of socio-economic development support initiatives, while maintaining unwavering support for the Palestinian cause, as expressed in the political Declarations on the situation constantly adopted by various summits of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the former organization of African Unity, and its successor, the African Union.<sup>23</sup> Thus, from an ideological perspective, the diverse, but closely related shared experiences of Africa and the Middle East should not be seen as liabilities, but rather as a shared and empowering mindset.

### **Future Prospects**

Relations between these two regions are not sporadic or of limited relevance. During the first historic summit in Cairo in 1977, Heads of States agreed to formalize the long standing relations. In

---

<sup>21</sup> Cited in Ran Kochan (1973) “ An African Peace Mission in the Middle East: The One-Man Initiative of President Senghor” *Journal of African Economies*” pp 186-196. Accessed on 12 February 2011 at <http://afraf.oxfordjournals.org/content/72/287/186.extract>

<sup>22</sup> OAU Resolution on the contained in AHG/res.66(VIII) Addis Ababa, 21-23 June 1971.

<sup>23</sup> Lila Ratsifandrihamana’s narrative in this book series constitutes a fairly comprehensive account of the relations;



doing so, they adopted a Declaration and Program of Action to govern their relations.<sup>24</sup> The Constitutive Act of the African Union states that its objectives amongst other things are to “encourage international cooperation, taking due account of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” This also lies in the mandate of the Afro-Arab Cooperation Department of the African Union Commission, which states, inter alia “that the department is “responsible for initiating, facilitating, coordinating, and following up the cooperation between the African Union and the League of Arab States in the areas of politics and diplomacy, trade, economy and finance; culture, education and information”.<sup>25</sup>

We can conclude that there is a renewed commitment expressed by both sides towards enhancing cooperation for the three imperatives described below.

#### *Security Imperatives*

Realist security theory states that the tendency is for states to ally against those who exhibit hegemonic threats and thus pose a common danger to the international community. As indicated above, there is a major spike in cooperation between Africa and the Middle East since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. It is a security alliance against western colonization and imperialism.

Even though overt colonialism and imperialism may be a thing of the past but the new forms of these phenomena are no less threatening to Africa and the Middle East. Cooperation between Africa and the Middle East (the co-sufferers of these phenomena) thus constitutes a strong diplomatic cement. Viewed from the perspective of realist security, cooperation between the two regions is likely to remain a shared quest.

Jean Ping summarizes this situation thus: We in the African Union Commission believe that Afro-Arab Cooperation has neither a substitute nor an alternative...It is a unique type of cooperation, whose level of interdependence is continuously on the increase...The continued conflict situations in some of our common member states such as Somalia and Sudan have made it clear that our two sides must

---

<sup>24</sup> Jean Ping (2010) Statement to the Joint Meeting of Arab and African Minister, October 2010. Sirte, Libya.

<sup>25</sup> African Union, Mandate of the Department of Afro-Arab Cooperation,

join efforts to ensure that a sustainable and lasting solution is found to these conflict situations.<sup>26</sup>

The challenges of ensuring human security also render the search for new alliances to guarantee the safety of people. Recent natural disasters have exposed the limitations of even the most powerful countries in the world to face challenges. One of the lessons learnt in Africa and the Middle East with relatively weak economies is that they cannot continue to rely solely on alliances with the western world. They must develop and strengthen strong inter-governmental alternative to complement existing ones.

*The Role of Non-State Actors*

The depth of relations between Africa and the Middle East cannot just be assessed by studying inter-organisation relations. The democratic revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa have drastically changed the role of individuals and other non-state actors. Jean Ping recently said, “Above all, the low involvement of private sector and civil society in the planning and implementation of Afro-Arab projects have created a lack of a sense of ownership and participation on the part of these important actors. In this environment, people to people interactions were not adequately promoted and never created a better understanding and increase in knowledge of each other’s realities”.<sup>27</sup>

*Economic Development Potential*

Since the first Afro-Arab Summit in Cairo in 1977, economic cooperation has been a major feature between Afro-Arab countries. This includes organizing Afro- Arab trade fairs and the establishment of the joint institute based in Mali for cultural exchanges and research in the two regions. Yet, the economic cooperation between Africa and the Middle East remains marginal as the economies of the states on both sides are mostly based on production of primary commodities and a weak industrial base. Trade between Africa and the Middle East continues to remain insignificant. The two regions however understand the importance of strengthening economic ties.

Jean Ping said that, “Africa is the richest continent in the world, in terms of its natural and mineral resources, including agricultural and marine resources, which are capable of powering its

---

<sup>26</sup> Jean Ping (2010) Statement to the Joint Meeting of Arab and African Minister, October 2010. Sirte, Libya..

<sup>27</sup> ibid

economic growth and sustainable development. Africa supplies up to 31% of the world's demand for bauxite, cobalt, gold, manganese, phosphate and uranium. Additionally, it supplies 57% of the world's need for chromium and diamonds, and the hydrocarbon (oil) deposits are immense. Furthermore, as Africa's population continues to grow, the size of its market also increases and could reach about 1.4 billion consumers by 2020/2025. By 2050 Africa may have a population of 2 billion, thereby making it even more attractive to investors. It is this market size and natural resources deposits that have drawn the interest of emerging powers of both the North and the South. And, it is what explains its appeal as a strategic partner.<sup>28</sup>

Speaking at the same Meeting, the Secretary General of the Arab League, Amr Moussa said, "We also note with satisfaction cooperation and coordination between the two Organizations in the field of peace keeping and peace-making processes. Regarding commercial, financial and economic cooperation, we note that all issues discussed are expected to yield results in the form of growth and development for the benefit of our peoples and societies. This cooperation will promote investment and trade and improve quality standards, specifications and measures. It will similarly deal with transport, communications and building knowledge societies, as well as energy, including solar energy, through joint investment and cooperation in the field of the environment, water resources, capacity building, transfer of technology, migration, free movement of persons and employment....Yes, the opportunities are great, the potentialities huge, and the willingness to cooperate clearly articulated during this Summit. Yes, we will work within this Strategy that is likely to open wider windows of opportunity to the peoples and societies of both Africa and the Arab world."<sup>29</sup>

A number of factors suggest that this situation will improve in the near future. Geographical proximity between the two regions reduces the costs of transportation and communication. Cultural similarities indicate that both regions share certain consumption patterns. This increases the chances of availability of skilled labor on both sides. One of the strategic objectives of the economic cooperation of the Africa-Arab Joint Partnership Action Plan of

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid,

<sup>29</sup> See Statement by the Secretary General of the League of Arab, Mr. Amr Moussa, to the Joint Meeting of Arab and African Minister, October 2010, Sirte, Libya

2011-2016 adopted by the joint meeting of African and Arab Ministers in February 2010 focused on collaboration in agriculture and food security in particular. These efforts attest to the willingness of the two regions to increase economic cooperation and provide a platform for expanded relations.

**Conclusion**

There is a striking resilience in the relations between the two regions despite some historical and contemporary impediments. This resilience outweighs pessimistic views. These two regions share far deeper sociological roots, philosophical stands and political dilemmas on which their joint actions would be far more beneficial to them. There is an increase effort to meet the global challenges of security which constitute strategic concerns for Africa and the Middle East.

Having survived several impeding factors, relations between Africa and Middle East have assumed a new meaning, and their relations are likely to bloom in an unprecedented manner. It may seem a premature assumption but the two regions might also benefit from the new revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East which might significantly reduce the democratic deficits in both regions and help promote more harmonious relations at all levels.

## AFGHANISTAN

**Editor's Note: Most people believe that Afghanistan has been ravaged by wars only over the past three decades. In actual fact, it has been the object of external interventions for centuries, during which a noble people have been subjected to external pressures which just do not allow them to find their own solutions to their own political, economic and social lives. That sad state of affairs continues.**

### Introduction

Ever since Afghanistan came into existence, the policies of great powers and neighboring states have affected its security and future. Neighboring states Iran (in the west), Pakistan (in the south east), Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan (in the north) and China (in the far northeast) have all been struggling with their foreign policies towards Afghanistan. Afghanistan has still not been able to create a stable nation.

The profound and tremendous impact of foreign nations on the development and security of Afghanistan has held back all development in the country.

Afghanistan first became a battle ground between two great powers, namely, Britain and Russia during their "Great Game" in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Then the Cold War during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was another big blow for Afghanistan as it was again caught between two new super powers, namely, Russia and the United States. When the two finally left the region, conflict among various ethnic groups resulted in a civil war which destroyed the country's infrastructure. The resulting vacuum gave Afghanistan's neighbors a free hand in its future and its security.

In their strategic approaches, no regional state is prepared to allow its neighbor to gain influence in Afghanistan. Each retains links to client networks that are capable of fractionalizing and incapacitating an emerging Afghanistan. Each neighboring state sponsors destabilizing forces in hopes that the Kabul government will fail, and this helps extend their authority in the region.

Securing Afghanistan's future depends on the determination and will of its people. Unless the Afghans unite against these external polices, it is improbable that they will enjoy long lasting peace and security. History proves that Afghans can come together against foreign invasion and occupation as they did during the First, Second, and the Third Anglo-Afghan war, and the Russian Invasion in the late 1970s. However, that momentum appears to have failed.

### **The Historical Invasions**

Afghanistan, often called the crossroads of Central Asia, has had a turbulent history. It was a country where cultures, crafts, and sciences, including medicine, astronomy, mathematics and metalworking flourished. Afghanistan has served as the land route between the South Asia, Iran, and Central Asia, and has enticed conquerors throughout history.

Persian King Darius conquered Afghanistan in 500 BC, Alexander the Great conquered it in 329 BC on his way to India. After Alexander's death, the history of Afghanistan then moves between the Seleucids, the Mayras, the Bactrians, the Parthians, the Kushans, the Sassanids, the Ephthalites, and the Turkik Tu-Kuie.

The Muslim conquest of Afghanistan then began in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. Several short-lived Muslim dynasties were founded, among them, Mahmud of Ghazna in the early 11<sup>th</sup> Century, Genghis Khan and Timur in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, Babur in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, Nadir Shah in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

Finally, Ahmad Shah, an Afghan tribal leader, established a united state covering most of what is the present-day Afghanistan. His dynasty, the Durrani, gave the Afghans the name by which they call themselves.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Big Game**

The intervention of major powers in Afghanistan has left a great impact on the country. The British Empire became a major power in the South-Asian sub-continent after the Treaty of Paris in 1763 and began to show interest in Afghanistan. It was the threat of the expanding Russian Empire, which was pushing for an advantage in Afghanistan. The Great Game set in motion the confrontation between the British and Russian empires, with both wanting to

---

<sup>30</sup> "Afghanistan: History." *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*. on Infoplease.  
<<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0856490.html#ixzz1GdfDh3VS>>.

establish their own trust-worthy government in Kabul. That was just the beginning of the Russian and British involvement in Afghanistan's affairs.

The British realized that the major threat to their interests in India would come from Russia which had begun a steady advance southward. On the other side, the Russians feared permanent British occupation in Central Asia as the British moved northward across India, taking Punjab, Sindh, and Kashmir. The British viewed Russia's absorption of the Caucasus, the Kyrgyz and Turkmen lands, the Khanate of Khiva, and the Emirate of Bukhara with equal suspicion as a threat to their interests in the South-Asian subcontinent.<sup>31</sup>

### **First British Afghan War**

The British wanted to contain Russian advances southward before they could reach India through the Khyber Pass and the Bolan Pass.

To justify their plans, Great Britain issued the Simla Manifesto in October 1838, setting forth their reasons for intervention in Afghanistan. The manifesto stated that in order to ensure the welfare of India, the British must have a trustworthy ally on India's western frontier. Hence, the British started to occupy Afghanistan in 1839.

Highly dissatisfied with this intrusion, the Afghans fought against the British Empire. In 1842, from a contingent of around 16,000 British soldiers and civilians, only one British soldier managed to escape and return to Jalalabad.<sup>32</sup>

In the three decades after the First British Afghan War, the Russians advanced steadily southward towards Afghanistan. In 1842, the Russian border extended on the northern side of the Aral Sea; five years later the Tsar's outposts had moved to the lower reaches of the Amu Darya (Oxus River). Later in 1865, Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara had also been formally annexed to the Russian Empire.

### **Second British Afghan War**

When Russia's war ended with the Ottoman Empire and the Treaty of Berlin was signed, Russia turned its attention to Central

---

<sup>31</sup> Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia*, Kodansha International, 1992, ISBN 4-7700-1703-0, p. 1

<sup>32</sup> Terence R. Blackburn, David, *The extermination of a British army: the retreat from Kabul*, 2008 APH Publishing Corporation. p.121

Asia. Russia sent an uninvited diplomatic mission to Kabul. The Amir of Afghanistan unsuccessfully tried to keep them out. After the Russian envoys arrived in Kabul, the British demanded that the Amir accept a British mission as well. The Amir refused to receive the British mission and threatened to stop it if it were dispatched. The British ordered a diplomatic mission for Kabul but the mission was turned back when it approached the eastern entrance of the Khyber Pass. This triggered the Second British Afghan War. A British force of about 40,000 fighting men, mostly British and Indians, were distributed into three military columns, and penetrated Afghanistan at three different points.

Afghanistan then had to sign the Treaty of Gandamak in 1879 in return for an annual subsidy and vague assurances of assistance in case of foreign aggression. In exchange, Afghanistan relinquished the control of foreign affairs to Britain and a British representative was stationed in Kabul.

One of the major impacts of the Second British War in Afghanistan was that Afghanistan accepted a mission headed by the British Indian foreign secretary, Sir Mortimer Durand, to define the limits of British and Afghan control in the south of Afghanistan. The Durand Line (1893) laid the foundation for a heated disagreement between the governments of Afghanistan and British India, and later, Afghanistan and Pakistan, over what is known as the issue of Pashtunistan.

### **Third British Afghan War**

At the end of World War I, relations between Afghanistan and British India intensified. Weary of British involvement in their foreign affairs, Afghans declared their independence from British Empire, and the Afghan Army crossed the Durand Line. This led to the Third British Afghan war. There are several factors that triggered this war. The revolution in Russia in 1917 nullified treaties with the British Empire, thus paving the way for the second phase of the Great Game. Secondly, Amanullah Khan came to power. Keen to modernize the country and free it from foreign domination, Amanullah Khan declared independence and sparked the Third Anglo-Afghan War.

King Amanullah was resolute in his stance on Afghan autonomy from foreign control. For over 40 years since the Second Anglo-Afghan War, the boundaries of Afghanistan had been devised



by foreign governments. The British-imposed Treaty of Gandamak in 1879 and the creation of the Durand Line in 1893 forced British control and influence in the south. In the north, the Russians imposed the settlement of the lands of the Amu-Darya in 1888 and the 1895 settlement of Pamir. The creation of these boundaries was deeply resented.<sup>33</sup>

The Third British Afghan war had a major impact on Afghanistan's future. In August 1919, the Treaty of Rawalpindi <sup>34</sup> was signed between the United Kingdom and Afghanistan. The United Kingdom recognized Afghanistan's independence, and agreed that the British Indian Empire would never expand beyond the Khyber Pass. This resulted in Afghan independence with sovereignty in foreign affairs.

However, tactical victory and strategic British gains resulted from the reaffirmation of the Durand Line which divided the Afghan tribes on both sides of the border. This weakened the Afghan government and had a major impact on its stability and security.

### **The Soviet Invasion**

After the Second World War and the independence of India and Pakistan, Britain declined as an imperial power and the United States became the next super-power. The United States and the Soviet Union contended to influence Afghanistan, and once again it became the battle ground for two super-powers. Russia's motives were similar to those of the British Empire in protecting their interests in Central Asia and in spreading communist ideology beyond their borders. Russia had four Central Asian republics bordering Afghanistan; Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The Russians believed that if Afghanistan fell to insurrection, the neighboring states might follow. Additionally, Afghanistan became the clashing point for two different ideologies, communism and imperialism. The Russian government feared that the United States would establish a pro-western government in Kabul which would have a ripple effect on Central Asia, and would undermine Russian sovereignty and ideology. The Soviets started to penetrate the Afghan Military. They then orchestrated a coup to

---

<sup>33</sup> L. Runion, Meredith. *The history of Afghanistan*. Greenwood Pub Group, 2007. 88-89. Print.

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/492327/Treaty-of-Rawalpindi>

overthrow the legitimate government of Afghanistan but were not successful.

In December 1979, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. They intended to occupy the nerve centers of the city. "Russian advisers already attached to Afghan army units repeated tricks used during the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. They asked Afghan soldiers to turn in all live ammunition and substitute blank rounds for a 'training exercise.'"<sup>35</sup> In addition, Soviet advisers had persuaded some of the personnel of the Kabul air base to go on vacation and give their duties to the newly arrived Soviet experts.<sup>36</sup> The Russian forces then killed Hafizullah Amin, the Afghan President, and established a government they could easily control.

This Soviet invasion, which lasted more than ten years, turned out to be very costly for Afghanistan and the Afghans. The invasion left the country with severe political, economic, and ecological problems that still haunt the country today. More than one million Afghans died in the war and millions became refugees in neighboring countries of Pakistan and Iran.

After the Soviets withdrew, a power vacuum was left behind in the country encouraging extremists from around the world to gather in Afghanistan. This triggered another turbulent chapter in Afghanistan's history.

### **Pakistan**

Afghanistan and Pakistan have very close historical, cultural, and religious bonds. Yet, there are deep divisions, rivalry and suspicion between them, much of them relating to the Durand Line.

After Afghanistan's independence in 1919, the Loya-Jirga (Grand Assembly) nullified the Durand Line agreement. Even today, Afghans believe that the agreement was signed for 100 years, and thus legally expired in 1993.

On the contrary, Pakistan contends that the agreement is valid and is the legal boundary between the two countries. The Pakistani government sees any departure from this position as a great

---

<sup>35</sup> Kakar, M.Hassan. *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response*. University of California Press, LTD, 1997. 23. eBook.

<sup>36</sup> Kakar, M. Hassan Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979- 1982. Berkeley: University of California Press, c1995 1995.

danger to their sovereignty. They are concerned that tribes on both sides of the Durand Line will form a single state of Pashtunistan, which would divide Pakistan's territory into two, as well as encourage other parts of Pakistan to claim independence.

This is one of the main reasons why Pakistan has always involved itself in Afghan affairs. It supported the anti-Soviet fighters (mujahedeens) during the 1980's and supported the Taliban government during 1990's. Pakistan played a pivotal role in Afghanistan after the Russian withdrawal; it was home for almost 4 million Afghan refugees who fled the country during the several decades of Soviet invasion and the civil war.

As a consequence, until the Durand Line issue has not been resolved and finalized peacefully amongst the two nations, it is very difficult to have a stable and secure Afghanistan.

At the same time, Afghanistan's location makes it strategically important to Pakistan. It sits across an important interconnected network of trade routes across the Asian continent connecting the east, south, and western Asia with the Mediterranean world, as well as the north and northeast Africa and Europe. The Silk Road was the symbol of this interconnectedness.

In today's globalized economy, it is strategically very important for Pakistan to have a trade route access for its economy through Afghanistan to central Asian and Russian markets. This access route will open new markets for Pakistani goods and services.

On the other hand, this will guarantee the transport of cheap energy resources from central Asian countries to Pakistan, south Asia and the global market. Pakistan desperately wants an Afghan government that is reliable and friendly.

A third force influences the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, namely India. Rivalry between Pakistan and India has had tremendous negative effects on security and stability in Afghanistan as both countries compete for influence over the Kabul government.

Pakistan wants to have a peaceful northern border due to its conflict with India over Kashmir. Having a reliable neighbor in Afghanistan in order to prevent the emergence of a possible two-front threat from India is fundamental for Pakistan.

Afghan Taliban and other militant groups have thrived within Pakistan. A major imperative of Indian policy in Afghanistan

is to prevent the rise of Islamist militancy that has been prevalent over the last six decades.

Afghanistan holds a strategic importance for India also as it tries to reach out to energy rich Central Asian states such as Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Not only does India gain energy resources but it also uses Central Asian nations as a market for its goods and services.

India also wants to use Afghanistan as a means to monitor Pakistan and to influence Pakistani politics. Aware of India's tactical political motives, the Pakistani government is doing its best to counter such initiatives.

### **Iran**

Afghanistan and Iran have many commonalities including religion and language that create cultural overlaps between the two countries. The Afghan provinces of Herat, Farah, and Nimruz border Iran. Despite such close ties, Afghanistan's relations with Iran have fluctuated in modern times with periodic disputes over the water rights of the Helmand River which has been the main issue of contention.

In the aftermath of the Soviet invasion and the subsequent civil war, Iran became home to more than three million Afghan refugees. Tehran has repeatedly used the refugee situation in order to pressurize the government in Kabul. Iran has historical and cultural links to Central Asia and is vying to construct an oil pipeline from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf which is important for Iran's economy. Iran is thus an important player in Afghanistan's future and security.

### **Conclusion**

It is thus clear that Afghanistan has been the object of much desire for outsiders. Its location at the cross-roads of major trade routes, and its convenience as a buffer between great powers, added to its vulnerability.

All this largely ignored the traditions of its population, hardy mountain folk eking out their spartan living from a difficult terrain. A people who only asked to be left alone have thus been trampled upon by one and all. Will that situation change in the foreseeable future? The question remains unanswered.

## ARMENIA

**Editor's Note: Armenia remains a largely forgotten part of the larger Middle East. It springs back into the global consciousness only from time to time, either when the Armenians refer to the "genocide" which took place there in 1915, or when the problems in the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh hit the news headlines.**

### Introduction

Armenians consider themselves direct descendants of Noah - survivors of the Biblical flood. According to Genesis; the boat came to rest on a mountain in the Ararat range. Ararat, located in the heart of Armenia was a Holy Mountain for the people of the ancient world. Many ancient scriptures placed the Biblical Garden of Eden in Armenia. Tradition states that Noah founded Nakhichevan, the oldest of the Armenian cities. Thus, the territory of the Armenian Plateau is regarded as the cradle of civilization.

The oldest myths relate the wars of ancient Armenians against the Assyrians. Haik, who was considered as the patriarch of the Armenian people, led his army to defeat the Assyrian giant Baelus. By approximately 2100 BC, a prototype of the first Armenian state was founded. Even now, Armenians call themselves Hai (pronounced high), and their country - Haik or Haiastan, in honor of Haik.

In ancient times, rivers Tigris, Euphrates, Araks and Kura were considered a part of Armenia. That is why Assyrians also called Armenia Naira which means Country of Rivers. Haik who was once considered to be a legendary hero is now accepted by some researches as an actual chieftain of Armenia in the 3rd millennium BC.

One of Haik's most famous scions, Aram, extended the borders of his country, transforming it into a powerful state. Since then, Greeks and Persian began to call it Armenia which means the country of Aram.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Babayan, Yuri. "Armenian History." <http://www.armenianhistory.info/origins.htm>

**The First Christian State**

In 301 AD, King Tiridates established Christianity as the state religion of Armenia. Thus, Armenia became the first Christian state in history.<sup>38</sup> However the culture of Armenia, though similar, is yet distinct from its neighboring Christian countries Russia, Georgia, Greece and Cyprus.<sup>39</sup>

**The Arab Expansion.**

In the early 7<sup>th</sup> Century a new Arab power emerged in the Middle East. The Arabian Caliphate began its expansions. Egypt and Syria became Islamic countries. By 680 AD, the Arabs had destroyed the last remains of the Persian resistance and invaded all Persian territories. Zoroastrianism was replaced by Islam.<sup>40</sup>

The Arabs invaded Armenia in 640 AD. Prince Theodoros Rshtuni led the Armenian defense. A peace agreement was signed in 652 AD allowing Armenians freedom of religion. Prince Theodoros traveled to Damask where he was recognized by the Arabs as the ruler of Armenia, Georgia and Albania. However, by the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century the Caliphate's policy towards Armenia and the Christian faith had hardened. Special representatives of the Caliph known as ostigans were sent to govern Armenia. The ostigans decided to reside in Dvin which was the residence of Armenian Catholics. Although Armenia belonged to the Caliphate but the Armenians remained faithful to the Christianity, and the Arabs failed in their attempts to convert the Armenians to Islam.<sup>41</sup>

**The Russian Tilt**

From the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the Armenians began to place their hopes on the growing Russian power. A number of messengers were sent to the Russian czars in order to seek their protection. The rich Armenian community of New Julfa presented Czar Alexis Mikhailovich a golden throne adorned with precious stones. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the ties with Russia strengthened as the military victories of Peter the Great over the Persians and the Turks inspired the Armenians. At the same time, a number of patriots such as Israel

---

<sup>38</sup> Babayan, Yuri. "Armenian History." <http://www.armenianhistory.info/origins.htm>

<sup>39</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture\\_of\\_Armenia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Armenia)

<sup>40</sup> Babayan, Yuri. "Armenian History." <http://www.armenianhistory.info/origins.htm>

<sup>41</sup> *ibid*

Ori, traveled to Europe trying to find support among the Christian powers. Unfortunately, their activities brought little results.<sup>42</sup>

Around this time, the Eastern Armenian provinces rose up against the Muslims. Uprisings were headed by the princes of Artsakh (the so-called Meliks of Karabakh). In 1697 AD, the Meliks signed Gandzasar Treaty, which declared Armenia under the patronage of Russia. Unfortunately, the Russian territorial expansion stopped and the Armenians were met with great disappointment. David-Bek, ruler of Artsakh and Siunik provinces, consolidated Armenian forces against the Turks. However, after David-Bek died in 1730, the Turkish tribes gradually dominated most of Artsakh.

The Armenian later went under the reign of Russian Empress Catherine the Great (1762-1796). As a result of the two successful wars against the Ottoman Empire, Russians annexed new and vast territories. The Count Potemkin, illustrious statesman and favorite of the Empress, came forward with the idea of forming a new Armenian-Georgian Kingdom.

In 1800, Georgia became part of the Russian Empire. Five years later, the leaders of Karabach proclaimed themselves loyal subjects of the Russian czar. The Persian troops were defeated and the Russian army conquered Erevan. The 1813 Treaty of Gulistan asserted Russian sovereignty over a number of former Khanates including the Khanate of Karabakh.<sup>43</sup>

### **Young Turks and the Armenian Genocide**

The Young Turk Movement started as a reaction to the rule of Sultan Abdul-Hamid (1876-1909). The movement was founded by young military officers who were especially disturbed by the continuing decline of Ottoman power. Working secretly in unconnected clusters the Young Turks succeeded in overturning the rule of the autocratic sultan.

The Young Turks gained public support to suppress the April 1909 counter-revolution staged by the palace. To consolidate Turkish rule in the remaining territories of the Ottoman Empire and to expand the state into Turanian lands in the east, mostly in control of Iran and Russia, they devised a secret plan to exterminate the Armenians. Ottoman misrule had made the Armenians a prosperous

---

<sup>42</sup> ibid

<sup>43</sup> ibid

minority. The elimination of a wealthy minority served the purpose of the nationalist program to promote Turkish control over the economy. The plan was carried out in the spring and summer of 1915. Half a million Armenians are said to have perished between 1915 and 1923, and over a million were deported.<sup>44</sup>

### **Nagorno-Karabakh**

In the spring of 1991, the Azeri and Soviet military forces began the "Circle" operation in the enclaved Armenian villages of Shahumian, Khanlar and Shusi districts. Some 100 Armenians were killed. In spite of several protests by the Armenian Government the purges continued with growing cruelty. In the summer of 1991, the leaders of Artsakh appealed to the United Nations, asking it to prevent the physical annihilation of their people. As a result, the declaration of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic was drafted in September 1991.<sup>45</sup>

After the collapse of the Soviet Union a referendum was held in Armenia in 1991. The Armenians voted overwhelmingly for independence, and after 70 years of Soviet rule Armenia became an independent State.<sup>46</sup>

### **Foreign Policy**

For Russia, Armenia is a traditional ally, specifically in defense sector. Russia tries to preserve its political, economic and military presence in the South Caucasus. It is also the main security guarantor for Armenia.<sup>47</sup>

The nature of Armenia's relationship with the US and Europe is quite complex. Armenia is striving to forge close contacts with the West, including the US and Europe. While the Armenian government has repeatedly stated that it is not planning to apply for NATO membership, it is closely cooperating with NATO, and the level of this cooperation is comparable to those of Armenia's neighbors. This policy of advancing relations with Russia and the West is called "complementarism".<sup>48</sup> Armenia is considered a European country by the European Union.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> [www.armenian-genocide.org/young\\_turks.html](http://www.armenian-genocide.org/young_turks.html)

<sup>45</sup> Babayan, Yuri. "Armenian History." <http://www.armenianhistory.info/origins.htm>

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.armenianhistory.info/independence.htm>

<sup>47</sup> [http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/politics/news/54389/Andrey\\_Areshev\\_Armenia](http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/politics/news/54389/Andrey_Areshev_Armenia)

<sup>48</sup> <http://embassy.mfa.gov.ge/index>

<sup>49</sup> Karine Khudaverdian Counselor Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations



## CYPRUS

**Editor's Note: Cyprus is host to one of those unfortunate cases of intractable disputes in the world, with no solution in any foreseeable future. It is a house divided against itself, with its south looking towards Christian Europe, and its north looking towards the Muslim Middle East. Its historical and cultural differences appear to be just too wide. In the ultimate analysis, it would either have to move completely towards Europe or towards the Middle East. Until that happens, it may continue to fester as a divided island.**

### **Introduction**

In the 1800s, Greece and Turkey came forward as major forces that coveted possession of Cyprus. During the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, external forces such as the United Kingdom and the United Nations played an important role in shaping the dynamics of the dispute over Cyprus. The role of European Union in the conflict also became prominent after the emergence of the European Union as a major international political bloc, and Turkey's bid to enter the European Union.

### **The Imperial Legacy**

Situated at the junction of Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East Cyprus became the object of attraction for the rest of the world because of its geo-strategic location. The inhabitants of Cyprus had strong historical, religious and cultural ties with both Greece and Turkey. Though the origin of the name "Cyprus" remains uncertain, one claim asserts that it was derived from "Kypros", the Greek name for copper, which the Mycenaeans promoted in the Iron Age.

The first reported invasion of Cyprus occurred with the arrival of the Hittites from Anatolia followed by the Egyptians. When the Assyrians took power in Cyprus, ten city-states emerged around the 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC, namely Famagusta, Kyrenia, Larnaca, Limassol, Nicosia, Paphos, Salamis, Ledra, Tamassos and Soloi. Later, Cyprus was conquered and annexed to Anatolia until

Alexander the Great of Macedonia took power and reinforced the Greek influence in the region. Upon his death, the island transitioned to the Hellenistic Era under the Ptolemaic regime before the Romans settled in.

In 58 BC, Cyprus converted into a Roman Republic province, which moved the island to Orthodox Christianity. Around 45 AD, Barnabas founded the Church of Cyprus. He played a central role in the spread of Christianity on the island along with Apostle Paul and Saint Mark the Evangelist.

There were further conquests during the Medieval Period as the Roman Empire split into the East and West. Roman Emperor Constantius II opened the door to Byzantium with a strong wave of Greek culture. Under the Byzantine Empire, Cyprus recognized the Salamis and renamed Constantia as its capital.

The island was caught between Islam and Christianity after the first Arab conquest by Caliph Muawiya in 650 AD which brought a strong Islamic influence on the island.

The collapse of Byzantium left Cyprus under the control of the Crusaders. In 1011 AD, Richard the Lion Heart of England took possession and settled on Limassol but his unsuccessful administration of the island left him with no option but to sell Cyprus to the Knights Templar.<sup>50</sup> He made Cyprus a kingdom and introduced French culture. The Kingdom of Cyprus pushed Catholicism, which was brought by the Romans, through a deal with the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The Catholic realm was established after the First Crusade.

In 1570 AD, three years before the end of the Venetian conquest, the Ottomans led by King Suleiman the Magnificent established their empire and ruled over Cyprus for the next three centuries until 1878.

This shift between the ruling empires has given multiple cultural and social identities to Cyprus.

### **Dual Social Identity**

The social division of Cyprus occurred as a result of failed leadership which left the people of Cyprus miserable and victims of oppression. Heavy taxes also impoverished them. The arrival of the

---

<sup>50</sup> Origin of the Knights Templar: The formation of the brotherhood of the poor fellow-soldiers to protect pilgrims to Jerusalem.

Ottomans followed by the British triggered the demand for social identity. With the help of the Triple Entente – Britain, France and Russia – the eight-year revolution turned out victorious. And for the first time, Cypriots expressed their desire to be united with Greece under *Enosis*.

The Turks did not allow Greece to achieve this goal. After Cyprus became a British protectorate against the Ottomans, a series of wars followed as a result of the rivalry between the two sides including the 1914 War and the Greco-Turkish War of 1919 -1922. While opposing Enosis, the Turks proposed *Taksim* or partition in retaliation.<sup>51</sup>

The rivalry between Greece and Turkey added by the latitude of their respective alliances strongly impacted Cyprus. Unfortunately the inhabitants started to identify themselves as Greeks and Turks rather than as Cypriots. Moreover, the inter-ethnic conflicts put Enosis and Taksim as the basis for their claim of sovereignty.

In the 1950s, the British's betrayal to protect the Greek-Cypriots after the invasion resulted in a rebellion. Cyprus reached its independence on 16 August 1960. The constitution gave equal rights to all communities regardless of the uneven social distribution but it was never enforced. This created a social controversy. A violent confrontation arose in the island.

The United Nations' inclination to form a nation under the auspices of the Greek-Cypriots was unacceptable to the Turkish. The proposed constitutional amendments limited the advantages of Enosis which was not acceptable to the Greeks. Horrendous violence arose in 1967. The same year, the United Nations declared the Buffer Zone and separated the two sides in the north and the south for security purposes and to prevent further conflagrations. The separation, also called the Green Line, cut through the capital of Nicosia. Turkish-Cypriots suffered major human loss as a result of the conflict and they started to avenge by invading the south via their military junta and defeated the Greeks.

---

<sup>51</sup> Occupation shift: First human activity on the southern Cyprus then moved to the center to the Troodos Mountains. The peoples left by the settlers remain on the north and the center. The North remained less occupied or the level of occupation was not interesting.

With the impossibility to regain peaceful relationships, it made sense to opt for a separation of the Island. The division was formalized during the Turkish military invasion in 1974.

In 1983, the north declared its independence establishing the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, recognized only by Turkey.

### **Culture and Religion**

Cyprus possesses a rich cultural heritage. Artistic and architectural designs can be traced back to the Neolithic era. Cypriot poets and architects have been inspired by the developing arts of the Middle Ages when French and the Italians reigned over the island during the Crusades.

Greek and Turkish were declared as the official languages after the independence of Cyprus in 1960. English, French and German are also spoken in Cyprus. British rule played a significant role in incorporating English in the educational system in addition to Greek. Most of the school teachers in primary education have studied either at universities in Greece, the United Kingdom or the United States of America. More than half of the entire population, around seventy six percent, speaks English.

Different invasions brought several religions to Cyprus. 78% of people in Cyprus are Greek Orthodox, and 18% are Sunni Muslims.

### **Economic Stimulus**

Agriculture, farming and trade of raw materials used to be the base of Cyprus's economy. Today, it relies on tourism, offshore enterprises and financial services. But the socio political tension generates separate strategies by the two states which creates economic instability. The wealthy Greek-Cypriots benefit more from the island's resources while the Turkish-Cypriots struggle in building their economy. The island became a Mediterranean resort, attracting millions of visitors. The Government's adoption of Euro as the national currency has made it simple for transactions.

As part of the European Union, the standard of living in Cyprus is placed among the highest in EU countries.<sup>52</sup> Turkey's current status as a non-member is critical in regards to the TNRC's contribution for the revival of the economy of the North.

---

<sup>52</sup> Cyprus became member of the EU in 2004 under Greece's back, a member itself since 1981. Turkey's candidacy is still on hold.

The physical enclave nature of the area belonging to the Turkish-Cypriots, and its diplomatic non-recognition and territorial narrowness threaten the economical survival of the North. The Turkish-Cypriot community has had a hard time in creating a functioning economy after the de facto creation of their state.

The process of developing industrial and tourism management is heavily funded by Turkey, and the implementation of the “free economic zone” to attract foreign investments has not generated significant revenues. Inflation and unemployment has grown rapidly with the lack of funds to initiate new investments.

### **The Future**

The Cyprus dispute will hopefully take a better turn in the future. The United Nations has not tackled the situation so far.<sup>53</sup>

#### *From a Political Perspective*

The two states of the Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus have a clear sense of their ideological differences. An attempt to settle the dispute by uniting the two states is a lost battle.

Instead of a United Cyprus Republic,<sup>54</sup> the separated states might do better to remain independent but with separate governments which do not interfere in each other’s internal affairs. The Turkish Republic should draft its own constitution, elect its own President and should establish its own federal power.

The external powers should only play the role of mediators rather than direct actors. When the North will successfully integrate in the diplomatic community, the acceptance of Turkey in the European community will be facilitated, which will certainly open doors to an economic reform.

The only possibility of forward movement could come if Turkey also joins the European Union. Once that happens, the division of Cyprus into two parts would become irrelevant.

Cyprus has always been part of the Middle East. In time, that geographical proximity will shape the structure of Cyprus to form a new community. For the Turkish-Cypriots, this entails advantages.

---

<sup>53</sup> The United Nations began to consider the Cyprus dispute as an international issue in 1948, three years after Cyprus’s integration as one of its Member States.

<sup>54</sup> United Cyprus Republic: issued from the fifth revision Annan Plan, a United Nations proposal to settle the Cyprus dispute.

*From an Economic Perspective*

The Greek-Cypriots have their economic future in good hands. The economic struggle for the Turkish-Cypriots will continue. The political and social associations that Cyprus has developed over the last few years will have severe implications on its economy. It is highly probable that the Turkish-Cypriots will establish a closer relationship with the Middle East. Once the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus will have established its alliance with the Middle East then it will rise from its seclusion. An unofficial report from USAID, “the economic future of Cyprus – post-settlement,” stated that if a political settlement is reached, it will offer accelerated economic benefits to the Turkish-Cypriots with general increased employment and improved job opportunities and expanded sectoral activities.

*From an Environmental Perspective*

The historical dossier of Cyprus has recorded innumerable natural disasters, including plagues, erosion, famines, drought and earthquakes. In particular, this latter was identified as early as the Iron Age and came back during the 1700s. Climate change puts its existence in further danger. In 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change divulged an estimated global average sea level rise between 0.6 and 2 feet for the next century.<sup>55</sup> If that happens, Cyprus will not survive another century.

Risks of increasing droughts and the scarcity of water resources will cause difficulties in the ecological protection of the island. Given these facts, the environmental danger on Cyprus should not be overlooked.

**Conclusion**

Cyprus is a great example of a divided house against itself. Foreign forces have played a strong role in shaping its divided social, political and economic structures. Its future depends on the effective management of its autonomous federations.

---

<sup>55</sup> The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established in 1988 by the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

## EGYPT

**Editor's Note: With its long and uninterrupted history, and its large and educated population, Egypt has always been a central force in the Middle East. However, the true nature of its current revolution cannot be understood without studying the political, economic, and social, details of its chequered past. It is equally clear that unfolding of future events in Egypt will be a major determinant for the rest of the Middle East.**

### Introduction

The strength and cultural sophistication of modern Egypt can only be understood through an analysis of its history. The memories and pride of the ancient glories are strongly rooted in the DNA of the Egyptian nation. Egypt's relations with neighboring countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan and Libya are strong, and are often asymmetrical, with Egypt playing a pivotal role in the balance of power.

Today, as modern history unfolds, the people of Egypt are leading a revolution that will completely change the socio-political structure of the Middle East.

In 6000 BC numerous communities of hunters populated the area that is now Egypt. The incremental drying of the Sahara naturally confined such populations to the banks of the Nile, which became the source of life for future civilizations. According to Egyptian tradition, around 3100 BC King Menes unified North and South Egypt into a single Kingdom,<sup>56</sup> an event that is widely recognized as the beginning of Egyptian civilization. King Menes established the first of thirty dynasties that ruled Egypt uninterruptedly, setting an example of social continuity rivaled only by China.

### The Three Kingdoms

During the period known as the Old Kingdom (2580–2130 BC), Egypt began its quest for glory. Spanning from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to

---

<sup>1</sup> Kuhrt, Amelie. "The Ancient Near East". (London: Routledge) 1995. Pg 135

the 6<sup>th</sup> dynasty, this period is best known for the large number of pyramids constructed as burial places for the pharaohs.<sup>57</sup> Besides being an expression of original and creative art, “the Age of Pyramids” represents an apex of technological progress, scientific advancement and great prosperity for the Egyptian society. Memphis, a city not too far from modern Cairo, was the capital of the Old Kingdom and still today, after 4000 years, shines with the glory of ancient times.

Unfortunately, the end of the Kingdom was marked by a period of anarchy and cultural decline. Historians identify this era as the First Intermediate Period (2130 – 2000 BC).

Around 2000 BC, Mentuhotep II became the new great pharaoh and established the Middle Kingdom of Egypt (2000-1630 BC).<sup>58</sup> The Egyptian ruler had his eyes towards the south of the Nile; the region of Nubia (contemporary Northern Sudan) known for its riches in gold, ivory, ebony and other luxury commodities.

Stability reigned supreme under the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> dynasties, but slowly died with the advent of the Second Intermediate Period (1630-1540 BC). Indeed, from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> dynasty, Egypt was in a chaotic state, with its power declining.

This paved the way for the ascent of the Hyksos; a family with Asian origins.<sup>59</sup> For the first time in Egyptian history, a foreigner sat on the pharaoh’s throne.

Following the Second Intermediate Period, the New Kingdom (1540-1080 BC) was created. From the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> dynasty, it was the largest, most powerful and most significant Kingdom of Egypt. Apart from being the strongest military power, the New Kingdom also became the cultural and intellectual hub of the region. Young princes from other provinces were sent to Thebes to be educated in the Egyptian way of life. Such greatness is also mirrored in the supremacy of Egyptian art. In fact, the New Kingdom provided most of the art, architecture and artifacts for which ancient Egypt is famous.

Unfortunately, from the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> dynasty, internal chaos and external pressures led to the end of Egyptian hegemony.

---

<sup>57</sup> Strudwick, Nigel. “Texts from the Pyramid Age”. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature)

<sup>58</sup> Chahin, M. “Before the Greeks”. (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press),

<sup>59</sup> Booth, Charlotte. “The Hyksos Period in Egypt”. (Buckinghamshire: Shire Publications)



**Foreign Rulers**

In the 7<sup>th</sup> Century BC, the entire Middle East was ruled by successive powerful empires, and this foreign domination lasted until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Interested in gaining access to Egypt's strategic geographic position, the superpowers of different eras made great efforts to conquer it.

The first intruders were the Assyrians who forced their way through the Kingdom around 663 BC. The Assyrians entrusted vassal princes with the administration of the Egyptian provinces. A hundred years later, the Persians took over. They made important legal reforms, such as the codification of existing Egyptians customs, and managing different construction projects such as the creation of a canal connecting the Nile to the Red Sea in 515 BC.<sup>60</sup>

However, despite their extended presence in the region, the Assyrian and Persian invasions did not significantly change the way of life in Egypt.

The Greeks arrived in Egypt in 332 BC under the command of Alexander the Great. While adopting local customs (offering sacrifices to the Egyptian Gods and being crowned as the new pharaoh by an Egyptian religious leader), Alexander strategically managed to create outposts of Greek culture in the new colony. His greatest project was the foundation of Alexandria, the greatest city of the region, and one which gradually became the center for the advancement of Greek science and philosophy.

Today, Alexandria remains the second largest city in the country. Alexander's successors continued ruling Egypt for 300 hundreds years. Historians usually refer to this period as Ptolemaic Egypt. The last of these rulers was Cleopatra, whose kingdom finally fell under the domain of the Roman legions.

Mostly interested in exploiting Egyptian craftsmanship to produce luxury goods, importing harvest grains from the Nile valley, and imposing taxation on the large population, the Romans did very little to influence Egyptian culture.

However, during the period of the Roman occupation (1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> Century) the desert of Egypt became home to the first Christian monks, which created the backbone of the Coptic Church – an

---

<sup>60</sup> Manning, Joseph. "The Last Pharaohs: Egypt Under the Ptolemies". Princeton Press

institution that represents the largest group among the 15% Christian population of modern Egypt.<sup>61</sup>

### **The Advent of Islam**

The Christian momentum was undermined by the fierce spread of Islam across the Middle East and North Africa. The “Arab takeover”, during the 7<sup>th</sup> Century, represents one of the fastest and most dramatic expansions in history.

When Prophet Muhammad died in 632 AD, only half of Arabia was under Muslim control. Two years later, the whole peninsula was brought under the faith of Islam. By 642 AD, Alexandria was handed over to the Arabs, leaving the Caliph with complete control over Egypt., which thus became part of the so-called “Arab World”.<sup>62</sup>

With the exception of the relatively short period of Shiite leadership under the Fatimid Dynasty (969-1171 AD), Sunni Islam has always been the dominant religious force in Egypt. However, in the first half of the second millennium, Egypt resented the emerging Turkish dominance. Brought to Egypt in the early 9<sup>th</sup> Century as slaves and mercenary fighters, Turkish Mamelukes proved to be excellent fighters. Their status, first in the military rankings and then in the Egyptian society as a whole, made them an elite group. In 1250 AD, Mameluke sultans were sitting on the throne of Egypt.<sup>63</sup> With great discipline and firm control over the population, the Mamelukes stayed in power for almost 300 years. In 1517, their reign was brought to an end with the emergence of a parallel, more powerful and more organized Turkish counterpart, the Ottoman Empire. With the exception of two years of Napoleonic rule (1798-1799), Egypt then remained an Ottoman province until modern times.

### **Pre-Modern Era**

The new vigor, provided by the strong and pragmatic Mohammed Ali at the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> Century, laid the foundations for the creation of a new modern state. An Egyptian governor serving under the control of the Ottoman Sultan, Mohammad Ali grew to be a legitimate advocate for Egyptian autonomy. He defeated the Ottoman army, and coerced the Sultan to sign treaties (Kutahya

---

<sup>61</sup> Thomas, Martyn. “Copts in Egypt: a Christian Minority Under Siege”. Zurich: Vandenhoeck

<sup>62</sup> Bertold, Spuler. “A History of the Muslim World: The Age of the Caliphs”. Princeton: Press

<sup>63</sup> Oliver, Roland. “Medieval Africa”. (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press

1832 and London 1840) that would diminish Ottoman authority over Egypt. Mohammed Ali's style and long rule changed the course of history for Egypt. Even though he symbolically remained a general serving the Ottoman Empire, Mohammed Ali made the first concrete attempt to strengthen local rulers to fight external forces.

With a desire to increase trade and to enhance the power of the navy, Mohammed Ali understood the need for the creation of a deep-water harbor in the city of Alexandria. The success of the operation was immediate as Alexandria recovered the old splendor of the Greek times. In the wake of such success, the Mahmudya canal, linking the Nile to Alexandria was created in 1820.<sup>64</sup> Within 10 years, Egypt became the direct link between the East and Europe. It brought Egypt fortune and misery (the canal attracted both investment and foreign rule). Trade improvements were accompanied by administrative improvements which enhanced the infrastructure.

Egyptian progress culminated in the creation of the Suez Canal. Since the Napoleonic conquest, French diplomats and engineers had been dreaming about the creation of a canal that could connect the Mediterranean to the Red Sea. The Egyptian authorities refused the proposal on the basis of the great cost of the operation. However, French pressure mounted on Egypt. In 1854, the new governor Said Ali, was convinced by the French diplomat Ferdinand de Lesseps to allow the creation of the canal. While the French financed most of the Suez Canal project, the British did their best to stop it.

### **The Opposing Forces**

Egypt's extensive national expenditures and administrative mismanagement led to the 1870 bankruptcy. In 1875, the Egyptian governor tried selling more than half of the shares of the Suez Canal to the British to overcome financial losses.<sup>65</sup> The following year Egyptian finances were placed under the direct and joint control of the British and the French. The renewed foreign intervention in state affairs did not remain unnoticed by the Egyptian people.

As a reaction to all these external pressures, Pan-Islamism and nationalism gained momentum. These movements can be considered as the seeds that triggered the future Egyptian revolution,

---

<sup>64</sup> Thompson, Jason. "A History of Egypt" (New York: Vintage Books), 2008. Pg 224-232

<sup>65</sup> Mahajan, Sneh. "British Foreign Policy, 1874-1914". London: Routledge

and consequent independence. Pan-Islamism is based on the premise that Muslim states must reject the corruption of the Christian West, while finding inner strength and purity from Islam. The intellectual leader was Jamal al-Din, who lived in Cairo for 8 years before he was sent into exile in 1879 by the Egyptian authorities.<sup>66</sup>

Army officers occupying higher ranks initiated the doctrine of Egyptian nationalism. Their military mutiny in 1879 helped create a new chamber of deputies with Arabic as the official language of the government, and Arabi Pasha (exponent of the nationalist movement) as the minister of war.

From then on, the British forces and the nationalist movement were engaged in a continuous fight for the control of Egypt. Alarmed by Arabi Pasha's achievements the British marched towards Cairo in 1882; while Egypt officially remained an Ottoman province, the British became the de facto rulers.

A few years later, following the developments of WWI, their grip on power tightened and Egypt became a British protectorate. Throughout this period, manifestations and popular, and the uproar clearly displayed the unwillingness of the Egyptian public to tolerate foreign rulers. Faced with such opposition, the British granted independence to Egypt in 1922, with the condition that British troops would remain on Egyptian soil to protect the Suez Canal, and British interests.

Tension in the country remained high and the parliamentary government had to struggle for its survival. On one side, the government was challenged by the stubbornness of the King who did not desire to relinquish his powers.

On the other hand, a far greater threat was present through the British political and military influence on the country. A clear example of the British might was the 1924 military intervention that aimed at preventing Egypt and Sudan from merging into a single country. Later international events, such as the creation of the Zionist movement and the loss of the Arab-Israeli War in 1948, worsened the already strained relations between local and foreign powers.

In the years following the loss of the 1948 war, riots against foreign troops became more frequent. The religious and terrorist elements of the Muslim Brotherhood (responsible for the

---

<sup>66</sup> Asante, Molefi. "Culture and Customs of Egypt". Westport: Greenwood Publishing

assassination of the Egyptian Prime Minister Nokrashi Pasha, and of the Cairo Chief of Police) added to the general violence.<sup>67</sup> In January 1952, there was unending violence and chaos on the streets of Cairo when the British troops killed more than 40 Egyptian demonstrators. Under these circumstances, in July 1952, army general Gamal Abdel Nasser seized power through a bloodless coup. The advent of Nasser would not only guarantee extended freedom but also a rejuvenated sense of pride and glory for the Egyptians.

### **Nasser and Nasserism**

From the beginning, Nasser proved to be bold, charismatic and uncompromising. He belonged to the “Free Officers”, a small secret association within the Egyptian army<sup>68</sup> that was responsible for the 1952 coup.

His one party government did not leave room for an opposition, and his strong secular stance eventually contributed to the creation of various enemies, among them the most prominent Islamic force in Egypt - the Muslim Brotherhood. Secularism was also embraced by the two following presidents, making the Muslim Brotherhood a constant opposition.

The European Powers were unwilling to accept the new wave of Egyptian politics. Once more, the Suez Canal proved to be the fighting ground where national and foreign power’s interests violently clashed. Surprised and outraged by the declaration of nationalization of the Canal, the British and the French forces plotted a secret plan to regain possession of the asset. The strategy involved sparking border incidents between Israel and Egypt to start an international crisis (the Suez Canal Crisis of 1956) that would require the intervention of both British and French troops.<sup>69</sup> The plan failed. The Security Council and General Assembly of the United Nations,<sup>70</sup> as well as the most of the international community, widely condemned the act of aggression. While Israel, Britain and France had their international reputations strongly damaged, Nasser gained from the crisis.

Nasser used his newly acquired international popularity to promote the image of a free and independent Egypt, which was ready

---

<sup>67</sup> Jabbur, Nabil. “The Rumbling Volcano: Islamic Fundamentalists in Egypt”. Pasadena Press

<sup>68</sup> Gordon, Joel. “Nasser’s Blessed Movement”. Oxford University Press

<sup>69</sup> Edward, Beverley. “Conflicts in the Middle East since 1945”. New York: Routledge

<sup>70</sup> Verbeek, Vertjan. “Decision Making in Great Britain during the Suez Crisis”. Burlington

to take on the task of leading the Arab world. He took on a series of international initiatives aimed at reviving the greatness of Egypt and the Arab states. In 1958, he merged Egypt and Syria to create the United Arab Republic. One year later, Yemen joined the confederation under the name of the United Arab States. Nasser was a charismatic leader who held this political unit together until 1961, when Syria finally withdrew.

On the international level, Egypt was recognized as one of the main five nations (along with India, Indonesia, Ghana and Yugoslavia) leading the Non-Aligned Movement. His gestures contributed to the birth of Nasserism, an Arab nationalist political ideology founded on “Arab Socialism”, which refused the influence both of Soviet Communism and of Western Capitalism.

Nasser was resentful of western presence in the region, particularly, with regards to Zionist Israel, which was considered an extension of European Imperialism in the Middle East. During the outbreak of hostilities between Israel and Syria, he was quick to involve Egypt in the escalating crisis. For the second time, Israel decisively defeated the Arab states during the Six Day War (1967); consequently, annexing both territories of Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula. The following year, Nasser started a War of Attrition against Israeli forces blocking the Suez Canal.<sup>71</sup> This war terminated with the 1970 ceasefire agreement. The same year Nasser died.

### **Sadat and Change**

Initially, Anwar Al Sadat’s policies were in line with those of his predecessor. Departing from Nasserism would have been political suicide. As an ex-vice president of Egypt, and senior member of the “Free Officers” group, Sadat took over the presidency in 1970. His first concern was the recovery of land lost to Israel during the 6 day war.

In October 1973, in alliance with Syria, Egypt launched a surprise attack on the Israeli forces occupying the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula and the Syrian Golan Heights. After a successful advance, the Israeli army quickly encircled Egyptian forces. However, the battle was never concluded, for an American and Soviet intervention dictated the ceasefire through Security Council Resolution 338.<sup>72</sup> The

---

<sup>71</sup> Herzog, Chaim. “The Arab-Israeli Wars.”(London, Vintage Books

<sup>72</sup> Wellens, Carell. “Resolutions and Statements of the United Nations Security Council.”

Sinai Peninsula was eventually returned to Egypt giving Sadat the credit for being the first Arab to take back land occupied by Israel.

Given the outcome of the war and American intervention, Sadat changed the course of events in Egypt. Taking advantage of the opportunity, perhaps truly believing in the peace process, Sadat engaged in diplomatic talks with Israel. In 1977, he took a historic trip to Jerusalem. A year later peace talks began at Camp David and gave birth to the historic Peace Accord signed in Washington D.C., in March 1979.

While the new policy gained respect among some members of the Egyptian public, the indignation of the rest of the Arab World was great. The majority of the Arab states felt that Sadat had turned his back on Nasser's Pan-Arabism and destroyed the dream of a united Arab front confronting the Zionist threat. Their disenchantment led to the temporary suspension of Egypt from the Arab League and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, and a sudden decline of Egyptian regional influence. The Peace Accord also triggered the assassination of Sadat, which was carried out in October 1981.

Sadat had re-instituted the multi-party system, at least symbolically, allowing a certain degree of political freedom. While maintaining socialist elements, Egypt's economy was increasingly influenced by free-market forces. These political and economic reforms clearly displayed Egypt's new position in the world, moving from the Nasserist independence to Sadat's Western alliance.

### **Mubarak and the Never Ending Rule**

Taking office in 1981, Muhammad Hosni Mubarak became the new president of Egypt. He followed the policies of Sadat, his predecessor. Keeping the terms of Camp David, he ensured the return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in April 1982. In 1994, he was the broker for peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and the next year he hosted a summit in Cairo attended by Yitzhak Rabin, King Hussein and Yasser Arafat.<sup>73</sup> Mubarak's relationship with Israel was influenced (or dictated) by the strategic alliance with the United States. After the Egyptian participation in the Gulf War in 1991 Mubarak became one of America's major allies in the region.

---

<sup>73</sup> Karsh, Efraim. "Arafat's War: The Man and his Battle for Israeli Conquest."

Mubarak also inherited problems with religious extremists. The national religious fundamentalists rejected Egypt's pioneering role in the peace process with Israel. During the 1990s, Muslim terrorism became a major problem, as incidents were carried out to severely destabilize and attack national finances and security. Mubarak was not shy to use his power to interrupt the activities of the opposition groups. The government promptly introduced martial law imprisoning more than 20,000 militants. The battle against terrorism was fought on different fronts: against the Muslim Brotherhood (by then a mainstream movement with widespread followers), against the Al-Jihad group (responsible for the assassination of Sadat), and against the Al-Jama'a al-Islamiya group.<sup>74</sup>

Maintaining stable control over the nation and enjoying the support of the only superpower of the world, Mubarak's everlasting presidency seemed unchallenged. After being re-elected by a majority vote in 1987, 1993 and 1997 referendums, Mubarak won the 2005 Presidential elections with more than 90% votes, despite wide-spread skepticism.<sup>75</sup>

His grip on power appeared so unshakable that journalists and political analysts often speculated that his son Gamal would be the next president of Egypt.

### **The Sweeping Revolution**

Despite its alliance with the US, the Egyptian government was structurally fragile. The peace process in which Egypt had invested time and reputation did not bear much fruit. After 20 years of effort, the Camp David accord did not help in developing permanent peace between Israel and its neighboring Arab countries.

On the contrary, emerging forces such as the Iranian leadership, Hamas in Palestine, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and last but not the least, the right wing representatives in the Israeli parliament, grew so strong that they made the peace process an unattainable dream. In addition, the United States (Egypt's main ally) lost both respect and authority in the region in the aftermath of the Iraqi war. These new trends proved to be a fatal blow to Mubarak's authority.

The Egyptian government also failed to address the economic concerns of the young population. With nostalgia,

---

<sup>74</sup> Davis, Joice. "Between Jihad and Salaam." New York: st. Martin Press

<sup>75</sup> Arafat, Alaa Al-Din. "The Mubarak leadership and future of democracy in Egypt." New York, Palgrave Macmillan



Egyptian citizens looked back at the socialism of Nasser, when housing, education and health care were made available for the people. As the national GDP kept growing at remarkable rates, the gap between rich and poor kept widening. With 44% of Egyptians considered poor or extremely poor, 2.6 million people fall well below the poverty line.<sup>76</sup>

Public anger and economic frustration were quickly channeled into a popular revolution, which in turn led to the deposition of Hosni Mubarak. In January 2011, inspired by the revolts in Tunisia, tens of thousands of people filled the streets of Egyptian cities demanding the end of President Mubarak's rule. Although faced with determined protesters, the Egyptian president tried to hold onto power.

The Egyptian government responded with a series of strategic moves aimed at cracking down the revolution or softening the tones of the protests. It also attempted to crush the wave of protests (Jan 26), reshuffle the cabinet (Jan 29), propose free and fair Presidential elections in the near future (Feb 1), increase employees' salaries by 15% (Feb 7) and pledge for new reforms (Feb 8).

Such offers did very little to change the minds of the angry citizens in the streets. On February 11, after 18 days of continued protests, Hosni Mubarak was forced to step down.<sup>77</sup>

Great credit has to be given to the demonstrators for renouncing the use of violence and toppling the government by peaceful protests.

The Egyptian army also played a pivotal role in facilitating the smooth transition of the new government. Historically the most legitimate and authoritative institution within the country, the military was decisive in tipping the balance of power against Mubarak. Since the time of Mohammed Ali and Ibrahim Pasha (who fought the Ottomans for the Egyptian independence), a great deal of power had resided in the hands of Egyptian officers. Yet, from Naguib to Mubarak, all presidents of Egypt had been part of the small group of army officers who orchestrated the 1952 revolution.

Initially loyal to Mubarak, the army slowly switched sides by supporting the people. On 31<sup>st</sup> January, when the Army decided not

---

<sup>76</sup> "Egypt: Will the dam burst?" *The Economist*. September 11, 2008.

<sup>77</sup> "Egypt News – Revolution and the Aftermath." *New York Times*. 31 March 2011.

to fire on the protesters, it was clear that Mubarak was doomed to step down.

Even more significantly, the day before Mubarak resigned, military officers declared that the army would now take measures to “protect the nation”, alluding to the fact that the transfer of power was already under way.<sup>78</sup>

The Muslim Brotherhood was not part of the core group of individuals that triggered the historical revolt on January 25; however, it will inevitably play a major role in the future politics of the nation. It is highly likely that the Justice and Freedom Party (representing the Muslim Brotherhood) can win the Presidential elections at the end of the year.

### **US Paralysis**

Taken by surprise by the rapid flow of events, the American government fell in a temporary state of “foreign policy paralysis”. Interestingly enough, the most powerful and sophisticated intelligence services in the world were not able to foresee the Egyptian revolution.

Without having a clear plan, American diplomats maintained a low profile during the initial stages of the revolution. After all, there was no clear answer to the dilemma that they were facing: on the one hand, Mubarak represented stability, friendliness and major gains for the national interests of the United States, on the other hand the voices of people demanding democratic reforms could not be ignored.

In addition, the US kept receiving mixed signals from its allies in the region. While the Europeans favored the deposition of Mubarak, a series of Middle Eastern countries (Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain above all) repeatedly advised the US to defend the Egyptian dictator. It was only towards the final stages of the protests, when it was obvious that Mubarak had lost support of the army, that the United States took a clear and strong stance against the Egyptian dictator.

While there was a possibility that the new Egyptian leadership might be favorable to the state of Israel, there was no guarantee of security for a small state surrounded by “could-be-enemies”. Hence, it is understandable to see the frustration of the

---

<sup>78</sup> “Egypt News: Day 17 as it happened.” BBC News.

United States and Israel in seeing Mubarak, an old friend and good ally, being removed from his position.

### **The Arab Spring**

If Tunisia was the spark that ignited the flame, Egypt was the impetus that took the revolution to the four corners of the Middle East. In spite of the obvious efforts by national rulers to stop the popular revolt, the revolution started spreading in the North African region. Responding to the call of the Tunisian crowd and motivated by the Egyptian fervor, Algerian and Moroccan citizens started protests. While clashes between security forces and the protesters took place, the protests were largely carried on peacefully. When the wind of change reached Libya, demonstrators were attacked with extreme violence. Unwilling to give up power, Colonel Gaddafi used repressive methods to suppress the revolting crowds.

While some governments clashed with the protesters, others offered reforms. Understanding that the revolution originated from economic injustices and social frustrations, many Gulf countries (Saudi Arabia and Bahrain) used their oil revenues to slow down the revolt.

Overshadowed by the weight of the US alliance, weakened by internal governmental corruption, and mistrusted by the rest of the Arab world, Egypt had left a void that no other country in the region could fill. Neither the rich Saudi Arabia nor the revolutionary Iran was able to speak to the Middle East as Egypt had done in the past. Today, the spontaneous revolution is a proof that Egypt is the “Gateway to the Arab Spring”.

The revolution has given new hope to the people of Middle East. Apart from removing some of the dictators that have been oppressing their people, the recent events allowed for the inception of a new thought – “change is possible if we are all united”. The “Arab Spring” exposed the flaws, backwardness and non-representative nature of national governments. Their “reform packages”, apologies and promises of change are implicit expressions of guilt. The revolution in Egypt has provided the Arab states with a new sense of unity and a new common direction. A leaderless grass root movement in Egypt has thus given birth to a new form of Pan-Arabism, and this may well determine the future unfolding of events in the Middle East.



## IRAN

**Editor's Note: Current attention on Iran is focused almost exclusively on its nuclear programme. However, Iran has a history and a civilization that goes back several thousand years, and a population mass that makes it a central player in the developing history of the Middle East. It is futile to believe that it can just be suppressed into submission. The question then is how the policies of other players can be adjusted to take due account of its reality.**

### Introduction

Iran's current socio-political situation poses several questions: Is Iran an aggressive power, or a victim? Is the Shi'ism of Iran passive or violent and revolutionary?<sup>79</sup>

Perhaps, a peep into its history might have some answers to these questions and possibly project its future. As Omar Al-Khayyam explained in *his* 12<sup>th</sup> Century poetic *masterpiece* "When I want to understand what is happening today or try to decide what will happen tomorrow, I look back."<sup>80</sup>

There are aspects of Iranian civilization that have either been forgotten, remained unknown or have been deliberately neglected.<sup>81</sup> The contribution of the Persian Empire can be traced back to the world's oldest Charter of Human Rights (the Cyrus Cylinder); the oldest material of construction - the brick (6000 BC); the creation of the first express mail system; the windmill; the domestication of animals; the introduction of paper to the west from China; to the development of the predecessor of the guitar, the "oud"; the first wine; and the treasury of classical Persian poetry which had a far reaching influence, not just on Middle East, Central Asia and India but throughout the world.

---

<sup>79</sup> Michael Axworthy: A history of Iran: empire of the mind, basic book edition 2010, P 5.

<sup>80</sup> Omar Khayyam." BrainyQuote.com,

<sup>81</sup> Michael Axworthy: A history of Iran: empire of the mind, basic book edition 2010, P 5.

Though Iran is commonly perceived as a homogenous nation, with a strong national culture, in actual fact, minorities such as the Azeris, Kurds, Gilakis and Turkmen constitute half of the Iranian population. It is an Islamic republic, but less than 2% of the population offer Friday prayers.<sup>82</sup>

Demographically, Iran remains the most populous nation in the region, twice the population of Iraq or Saudi Arabia. It has the youngest population in the Middle East. Out of a population of 73 million, and not even counting the children below the age of 15, a full 50% comprise of youth between the ages of 15-25.<sup>83</sup>

### **Ancient Persia**

Iranians continue to identify with and remain connected to the proud and glorifying memories of the powerful ancient Persian Empire.

The Persian Empire still remains one of the most mysterious civilizations of the ancient world and has been the subject of much debate. That Empire was the dominant world power for over two centuries (550-330 BC), with borders stretching from Greece and Libya in the west to the Indus River (present-day Pakistan) in the east.

Small nations under the Empire's rule enjoyed considerable autonomy.<sup>84</sup> It was the world's first religiously tolerant super power. The Persians also distinguished themselves by never owning slaves, in strict contrast to the situation prevailing in the Roman Empire and before.

The greatest legacy of the Persian Empire was the establishment of a central government. That central power was executed by the following dynasties:

*Achaemenian Dynasty: From Cyrus the Innovator to Darius the Expansionist*

The Indo-European race, or the "Aryans"<sup>85</sup> became an empire under Cyrus the Great (559-530 BC).

He carried out a policy of religious and cultural tolerance that became the characteristic of Persian rule. The concept of

---

<sup>82</sup> Tom Nuttall: You Are One-Third Daffodil: And Other Facts to Amaze, Amuse, and Astound, 2009, P141

<sup>83</sup> World savvy monitor: Iran, issue8, March 2009.

<sup>84</sup> John Curtis, Nigel Tallies, Beatrice André-Salvini Forgotten empire: the world of ancient Persia, p.

<sup>85</sup> In the second millennium B.C, migratory waves from Eastern Europe brought the Indo-European race of Aryans into Persia. Aryans means "Noble".

freedom and basic human rights is codified in the Cyrus Cylinder under his rule in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC.<sup>86</sup> In addition, an innovative system of water management was created; a cross-continent paved roadway stretching 1500 miles was constructed; a canal linking the Nile to the Red Sea was built; as was one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Mausoleum of Maussollos.

During the rule of Cyrus's successor, Darius, the Persian Empire stretched from North Africa to India and from the Aral Sea to the Persian Gulf. It included what today is Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Jordan, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, and the Caucasus region. During his reign, Darius improved the extensive road system, the famous "Royal Road", a great highway stretching all the way from Susa to Sardis, with posting stations at regular intervals. Major reforms also took place under Darius. Coinage was introduced and the efficiency of the administration increased.

The Old Persian language was used on royal inscriptions, written in a specially adapted version of cuneiform.<sup>87</sup>

#### *Alexander the Great and the New Persia*

After defeating the Persian army, Alexander the Great considered himself as the successor to the Achaemenian Kings. While paying tribute to Cyrus the Great at his tomb, Alexander adopted Persian cultural and administrative practices, took a Persian wife (Roxana), and ordered thousands of his troops to do the same in a mass wedding.<sup>88</sup>

An important legacy of Alexander's conquest of Persia was the introduction of the Persian imperial practices into the West. Many of these practices, particularly those relating to state administration and the rule of law, were later adopted by the Roman Empire.

#### *The Sassanian Dynasty (602-629 AD)*

The Sassanid era is considered to be one of Iran's most important and influential historical periods. In many ways the Sassanid period witnessed the highest achievements of the Persian

---

<sup>86</sup> The Cyrus Cylinder: original housed at the British Museum in London, with a replica at UN headquarters in New York. Describe as the first charter of human rights. It's a call for religious and ethnic freedom; it banned slavery and oppression of any kind; and it gave member states the right to subject themselves to Cyrus's crown.

<sup>87</sup> Michael Axworthy: *A history of Iran: empire of the mind*, basic book edition 2010.

<sup>88</sup> Reza Ladjevardian: *From Ancient Persia to Contemporary Iran*, 2010.

civilization. The traditions of the Achaemenian dynasty were revived and Zoroastrianism<sup>89</sup> was reestablished as the state religion. Art and architecture thrived. The Sassanid dynasty invented the banking system and issued letters of credit known as “Sakks”. Persia continued to influence the Roman civilization considerably during the Sassanid Dynasty.

*The Arab Conquest*

The Persian Empire was defeated in 642 AD by nomadic tribesmen who subscribed to the newly found faith of Islam. Islam's ideals of equality and unity appealed to many Persians, as they were in sharp contrast to the rigid and hierarchical social structure of the later Sassanian Dynasty.<sup>90</sup>

When the Abbasids Caliphate chose Baghdad as its capital, the Persian influence grew rapidly in the region, and Iran became the cradle of Arab civilization.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, a brilliant Muslim sociologist, Ibn Khaldun expressed great admiration for the Persian scientific spirit and paid tribute to their contributions in his masterpiece, the “Muqaddimah”. He stated: “It is a remarkable fact that, with few exceptions, most Muslim scholars both in the religious and intellectual sciences have been non-Arabs”.

Thus the founders of grammar were Sibawaih and, after him, al-Farisi. Most of the Hadith<sup>91</sup> scholars, who preserved traditions of the Prophet for the Muslims, were Persian.

Only the Persians engaged in the task of preserving knowledge and writing systematic scholarly works. “If learning were suspended at the highest parts of heaven, the Persians would attain it.”<sup>92</sup>

Among the Persian luminaries in intellectual history were: Omar Khayyam, the famous mathematician and poet; Al-Khwarizmi the father of algebra; Avicenna the physician; Abu Musa Jabir Ibn Hayyan - known as the father of chemistry; the prominent

---

<sup>89</sup> Many scholars consider Zoroastrianism to be the world's oldest monotheistic religion; there are 200,000 Zoroastrians worldwide. The religion's key beliefs and practices are: 1. Belief in one God. 2. A revealed word. 3. Fervent prayer (5 times a day). 4. Dualism (good and evil). John Mitchell “Zoroastrianism's Monotheistic Influence and Religious Beliefs”, Feb 2011.

<sup>90</sup> Marguerite Del Giudice *Persia: Ancient Soul of Iran*.

<sup>91</sup> Narrations concerning the words and deeds of the Islamic prophet Muhammad tools for understanding the Qur'an.

<sup>92</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, translated by Franz Rosenthal (III), pp. 311–15, 271–4 [Arabic];



philosophers and scientists Al-Farabi, Ferdowsi Al-Biruni and Muhammad Balkhi (Rumi).

### **The Iranian Revolution (1979)**

Iran was never colonized by a Western country. Its geographical location and oil reserves drew significant attention from Britain and Russia during the famous Great Game in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and by the United States during the New Great Game in 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Even today, Iran's internal politics continues to be influenced by its international relations.

During his rule, Shah Mohamed Reza Pahlavi promoted Persepolis and Cyrus to revive the ancient Iranian civilization and identity and to modernize Iran according to his vision. But his policies backfired and the Iranians rebelled against him.<sup>93</sup>

Hundreds of people were executed by SAVAK and thousands were killed by the army during the anti-regime demonstrations that sounded the death-knell for his rule.

Ayatollah Khomeini then took over after a revolution in 1979, and Iran became world's first Islamic Republic.<sup>94</sup>

### **Cultural Beliefs and Values**

American scholar of Iranian and Central Asian Studies, Richard Nelson Frye, states that, "Iran's glory has always been its culture."<sup>95</sup>

An eclectic cultural elasticity has been said to be one of the defining characteristics of Persian spirit and a clue to its historic longevity.<sup>96</sup> For example, Iranians have continued celebrating the ancient and non-Islamic Persian New year "Nowruz" for over 3,000 years now.<sup>97</sup>

Iranians are proud of their ethnic and cultural identity. Iranians proudly claim: "Inside every Iranian there is an emperor or an empress".<sup>98</sup>

Iranian society is religious. Its leaders see themselves as rulers with authority from God.<sup>99</sup> There are important aspects of

---

<sup>93</sup> SAVAK was created in 1957 with the help of American and Israeli advisers.

<sup>94</sup> *idem*

<sup>95</sup> Richard Nelson Frye *Greater Iran: a 20th-Century odyssey*, 2005, P3.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>97</sup> Marguerite Del Giudice *Persia: Ancient Soul of Iran*.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid*

Shi'ism that have shaped Iran's political culture in ways that are quite different from other Muslim nations.<sup>100</sup>

### **Fears of Foreign Interventions**

Iran has always been of interest to foreign powers because of its geostrategic location and oil reserves.<sup>101</sup> Iranians suspect and mistrust outsiders' vis-à-vis their objectives.<sup>102</sup>

As one of the most powerful civilizations, Iran sits at the intersection of Europe, Russia, Asia and the Arab world. This geostrategic location, combined with its abundance of oil and natural gas, endows Iran with considerable regional and international relevance.

For over twenty-six centuries, Iran has served as a transit route between the East and the West. It is the only link between South Asia and the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>103</sup>

Iran owns the third largest oil reserves and it is the second largest producer of natural gas in the world.

Iran's economy is dependent on its oil exports. Iran is located along one of the busiest bottlenecks of the world for the transit of oil - the Strait of Hormuz, leading from the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea, the sea of Oman and the Indian ocean through which tankers must pass to deliver all sea-borne oil from Iran, Iraq, and the Gulf countries to Europe, North America, and Asia.

The Strait is only twenty miles wide. It is shared by Oman and Iran. The Persian Gulf is patrolled by the Fifth Fleet of the United States Navy, stationed in Bahrain. The US Fleet is on constant high alert due to regional instability.<sup>104</sup>

Iran is particularly concerned by the western threat of "regime change."<sup>105</sup>

The acquisition of nuclear weapons is an important consideration for the Islamic Republic given the fact that five of the eight nuclear members are in Iran's neighborhood- India, Pakistan, Russia, China, and Israel. Even the USA is present through its naval fleet in the Gulf.

---

<sup>100</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack: The Persian puzzle: the conflict between Iran and America, 2005, P6.

<sup>101</sup> World sway Monitor: Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Hamid Yeganeh, Zhan Su, (2007) "Comprehending core cultural orientations of Iranian managers", Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal, Vol. 14 Iss: 4, pp.336 - 353

<sup>103</sup> Ibid

<sup>104</sup> Idem

<sup>105</sup> World savvy monitor: Iran, issue8, March 2009.

### **Iran and the Arab World**

The complexity of Iran's relations and interaction with its neighbors is influenced by a constant tension between its Persian and Islamic identities. On one hand, it bases its claim for predominance in the Middle East on a highly accentuated Islamic-Shiite identity; and on the other hand, Iranian nationalism is highly exclusive. While Iranians identify *pro forma* with Muslims in general, Iranian national identity projects a sense of superiority towards its Arab neighbors and a pride in its pre-Islamic imperial past.<sup>106</sup> As a result, Iran has few friends in its neighborhood. With the exception of the Shia allies in Syria and Southern Lebanon, and the Shia populations in other neighboring countries, Iran does not have allies in the region.

Three of Iran's historic enemies and rivals have collapsed in the last 20 years: the Soviet Union, Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. This has greatly increased Iranian's power in the region. It has created concern among the Sunni Arab states and Israel.

Iran extends its influence in the Middle East partly by its support of Shia Crescent countries (Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq) and other groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas. Iran is suspected of supporting terrorist attacks throughout the region, including the bombing of the US Embassy and Marine barracks in Lebanon (1980s), and the Al-Khobar Towers explosion (1990s). Iran also shares a border with Turkey, a NATO member and home to a kindred Kurdish minority. If Turkey were admitted to the European Union (EU), as is being considered, Iran would border the EU and will be affected by the gravitational pull of the EU.

Recently, the center of gravity in the Middle East has shifted from the Arab heartland comprising Egypt and the Fertile Crescent to what was once considered the non-Arab periphery - Turkey and Iran. Furthermore, there is perception that these are the only two countries in the Middle East that are able to stand up and challenge what is perceived as Israel's predatory behavior.

### **Iranian Attitude towards the West**

It is important to understand Iran's anger towards U.S. foreign policy. In 1953, the CIA led the coup against Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister Muhammad Mossadegh, in

---

<sup>106</sup> Shmuel Bar: Iran: Cultural Values, Self images and Negotiation Behavior, 2004, p 2.

favor of the dictator Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi.<sup>107</sup> The long and ongoing tensions between the United States and Iran are marked by major events and crisis, including the American Embassy hostage crisis (1979), the U.S. tilt towards Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war, the Iran-Contra scandal, the American-Iranian military tensions of 1987 and 1988, and the recent U.S.-Iran nuclear crisis.

Despite historical animosities and accusations there are reasons for rapprochement. Presently there are at least three good reasons why experts and analysts are optimistic about Iran's rapprochement with the West.

*Firstly, Common Interests:* The US and Iran have shared and continue to share important common interests. These include defeating the Taliban in Afghanistan; stabilizing Iraq; protecting Muslim minority populations worldwide in places such as in Bosnia and the former Soviet Republics; keeping oil flowing through the Persian Gulf; and countering Sunni extremists Al-Qaida. In the fall of 2001, Iran cooperated with the US intervention in Afghanistan and shared intelligence regarding Al-Qaeda.<sup>108</sup>

*Secondly: Cost-Benefit Analysis:* Both US and Iran are losing benefits from current hostilities. Western sanctions hurt the Iranian economy and simultaneously create tensions for America with its allies, many of whom would like to trade with Iran but are castrated by the US restrictions.

The US cannot withdraw forces from Iraq or Afghan quagmire without support or at least the passive neutrality of Iran. Similarly, Iran will not emerge from its economic doldrums without the support of west.

An Iranian lawyer once stated: "It is clear that US will return to Iran".<sup>109</sup>

*Thirdly: Pragmatism:* Both US and Iran are known for their pragmatism, although rhetoric on both sides often obscures this fact. US-Iranian coordination in the early months of the war in Afghanistan is probably the best example of the mutual benefits of cooperation.

---

<sup>107</sup>: Wajahat Ali: The folly of attacking Iran, interview with Steve Kinzer, author of "All the Shah men", 2008.

<sup>108</sup> Brendan O'Leary: How to get out of Iraq with integrity, 2009, P27.

<sup>109</sup> L'Iran ou le retour de la Perse! Entretien avec Me Ardavan Amir-Aslani, Algérie-focus 21 janvier 2010.

### Iran and China

Relations between Iran *and* China go back to the pre-Islamic period. The earliest record of these *relation* dates back to 115 BC Under the Tang dynasty and Sassanid dynasty, China and Iran had extensive links via the Silk Road.<sup>110</sup> By the 4<sup>th</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC, China's silk products had already been introduced to West Asia and East Europe, passing through Iran, and other products of eastern part of the Mediterranean were introduced to China through Iran.<sup>111</sup>

The history of cordial relations between Iran and China continue to this day. Driven by economic interests, as well as political sympathy for Iran's grievances, China is the only major player still active in investing in Iran's oil.

### Conclusion

Iran is a major player in the Middle East and every regional decision has to include it in its calculations. Since the collapse of two U.S. allies in North Africa, Tunisia and Egypt, Iran feels stronger. Ardavan Amir-Aslani argues that "an unrestrained race is engaged with Turkey for a future Yalta with the United States. It is about who will control the region".<sup>112</sup> He also notes that Saudi Shiites "have become bold" and we are witnessing "a Shiite rise to power in the region on behalf of the Arab Spring, which is in addition to successes in Lebanon (Hezbollah), Iraq and the alliance with Hamas in Gaza".<sup>113</sup> Iran can become an "economic and technological power" in the next 20 years. Iran's foreign policy is focusing towards the East to the new emerging economies of China, India and Russia.

---

<sup>110</sup> Shireen Hunter *Iran's foreign policy in the post-Soviet era: resisting the new International order*, 2010- Page 266.

<sup>111</sup> Ralph Kauz: *Aspects of the Maritime Silk Road: From the Persian Gulf to the East China Sea*,

<sup>112</sup> Olivier Bot : *L'Iran se voit «conforté» par le printemps arabe*, Tribune de Genève, 01.03.2011.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.



## IRAQ

**Editors Note: Almost all our knowledge of Iraq seems to be based on the media coverage of the three wars that have devastated this country over the past three decades. This does no justice to a country and a civilization that goes back at least three thousand years, and which has produced great achievements in learning and thought. Few realize that it is through the Arabic translations, carefully preserved in the ancient library of Baghdad, that Greek writings and thought ultimately reached the West. Even fewer have taken the trouble to appreciate the attention to the concepts of human rights codified in the Laws of Hammurabi in 1750 BC in Babylon.**

### Introduction

Iraq is located between South West Asia and the Middle East. It was called "The Heart of the Middle East".<sup>114</sup> It shares borders with Iran in the East; Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia in the West; and Kuwait and the Gulf in the South. Iraq occupies an area of 438,446 square kilometers.

Iraq's location in the Arabian Gulf makes it an important connecting zone for international trade routes between the Near East and the West. The country is geographically divided in four main zones or regions: the desert in the west and southwest; the rolling upland between the upper Tigris and Euphrates rivers; the highlands in the north and northeast; and the alluvial plain through which the Tigris and Euphrates flow that extend to the borders with Turkey and Iran.

Iraq was originally known as "Mesopotamia" or the land between the two rivers, Tigris and Euphrates. The word is derived from the Greek words "*mesos*" which means "between" and "*potamos*" which means "rivers."

The alluvial plain begins north of Baghdad and extends to the Persian Gulf. Here the Tigris and Euphrates rivers lie above the level of

---

<sup>114</sup><http://www.maps.com/map.aspx?pid=11049>

the plains and the whole area is a delta interlaced by the channels of the two rivers and by irrigation canals.

The South of Iraq has marshy areas and wide, flat, barren plains. The Marshes (Al-Ahwar in Arabic) are unique in Iraq where nature is pristinely preserved. They cover a large area surrounding Shatt El-Arab waterway and the union of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

### **History**

In Iraq, several ethnic groups such as the Assyrians, the Bedouins, the Babylonians and the Kurds live together and preserve their individual traditions. The turbulent history, hostile environment and multi-stranded culture of Iraq have produced a complex conglomerate, which lacks the ingredients for creating a homogeneous country and commitment to the idea of national community. Modern Iraq is a fractured society where different tribal, ethnic and religious groups appreciate the idea of a nation state but adhere to their own value systems.<sup>115</sup>

#### *The Sumerians*

The descendants of the early Stone Age farmers who struggled to survive on the Marshes were known as the Sumerians in 2900-2350 BC. Sumer is the ancient name for southern Mesopotamia which is located between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in Iraq.<sup>116</sup> The Sumerians were highly innovative people who responded creatively to the challenges of Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Wandering groups of people began to settle in the fertile plains between the Tigris and Euphrates as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> millennium BC. But it was around 5000 BC that the development of a sophisticated irrigation system enabled an advanced civilization to evolve.

The Sumerians were able to pass on complex agricultural techniques to successive generations, which led to marked improvements in agricultural production. Another important Sumerian legacy that has survived is the famous Sumerian epic of Gilgamesh. This epic revolves around the story of Gilgamesh, who was a king of the city-state of Uruk in approximately 2700 BC.

#### *The Akkadians*

With an increase in its population and development of cities, Sumer's military began to grow. Axes and spears were used for warfare. The Sumerians were overwhelmed by a tribe known as the Akkadians,

---

<sup>115</sup>Country study; Iraq, <http://countrystudies.us/iraq/31.htm>

<sup>116</sup> Editor of Time- Life books, Sumer: Cities of Eden. Alexandria 1993



the first conquerors, who resided to the north of Sumer in Mesopotamia, around 2300 BC. The Akkadian conquest of Sumer was led by Sargon I, King of the Semitic city of Akkad. He was the world's first empire-builder who sent his troops from Mediterranean Sea to the Arabian Gulf. He attempted to establish a unified empire and to end the hostilities among city-states. Sargon's rule introduced a new level of political organization that was characterized by a clear separation between the religious and political authorities. He commanded what may have been the world's first standing army. Certainly, he controlled a military force far more potent than anything Sumer or possibly the world had seen ever before.

The Akkadians assimilated many attributes of the Sumerian culture with their own, including aspects of the Sumerians arts and sciences. The merge of the two cultures led to the emergence of Babylon, a thriving and prosperous city-state revered as a wonder of the world.

Babylon was a town located on the Euphrates, south of modern Baghdad, ruled by King Hammurabi (1792-1750 BC). While Hammurabi devised an elaborate administrative structure, his greatest achievement was the issuance of a law code designed "to prevail justice in the country, to destroy the wicked and the evil, so that the strong may not oppress the weak."

Babylon's status as a seat of high civilization and human achievement lasted for about two thousand years. During that time the local ethnic factions fought among each other, but Babylonian customs and culture survived.

#### *The Assyrians*

Next in line come the Assyrians, who ruled over Babylon as part of an extensive empire that reached as far as the Mediterranean and included the sacred city of Jerusalem. The Assyrians alternated in power over Mesopotamia with other ethnic factions for about five hundred years during the first millennium BC.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC, Mesopotamia would begin to be impacted and dominated by foreign powers, setting the trend that would recur in Iraq for future generations.

In 539 BC the Persians conquered Babylon. The conquest was led by Cyrus the Great, one of the most renowned emperors in the history. After two hundred years of Persian rule, another major empire Macedonia defeated the Persians under the leadership of Alexander the Great. Alexander made grand plans for Babylon. He wanted to make it

an eastern capital for his empire but he died shortly in 323 BC. His plans did not materialize, as the next rulers, the Sassanids showed no concern in maintaining or preserving the civilization.<sup>117</sup>

#### *The Umayyads*

The rise of Islam in Arabia, which spread through the military was enormously important in shaping the history of Iraq. In the 630 AD Arab armies started moving into Iraq. In a series of battles culminating with the battle of Qadisiyya in 636 AD, the Arabs defeated the Sassanids and came to control Iraq and Persia as well as other territories in southwest Asia.

It is during this period that Islam divided itself between the Sunni and Shia strains. Shias believe that only a direct descendant of Mohammed could qualify as a supreme Islamic leader, but the Sunnis believe that any highly educated Muslim was worthy of the highest level of leadership within the faith.

Damascus then assumed the central role in the Muslim world when a clan known as the Umayyads, who were Sunnis, established their rule, and made it their capital. Under the Umayyad Caliphate, the Arabs were regarded as the most civilized and advanced people of the world. Unfortunately, the Umayyad lineage did not survive very long. In 749 AD, a rebellious sect based in Iran known as the Abbasids, who were Shias, staged a successful revolt against the Umayyads.<sup>118</sup>

#### *The Abbasids*

After the Abbasids took power, the center of gravity moved from Syria to Iraq, forming a new city that would be known as Baghdad. Baghdad's importance would go beyond being a major cultural and urban center. For Arabs, it remained arguably the most advanced and culturally enriched city in the world. Baghdad reached the highest level of power and cultural advancement as it became the center of Islamic and Arab civilization.

During the reign of the first seven caliphs, Baghdad became a center of power where Arab and Iranian cultures assimilated to produce a blaze of philosophical, scientific, and literary glory. This era is remembered throughout the Arab world, and by Iraqis in particular, as the pinnacle of Islamic culture. Within fifty years the population outgrew the city walls as people thronged to the capital to become part of the Abbasids' enormous bureaucracy, or to engage in trade. As a result,

---

<sup>117</sup> Michael Hart, *The One hundred* 1978

<sup>118</sup> Helen Metz, *Iraq*, 1978

Baghdad became a vast emporium of trade linking Asia and the Mediterranean.

During this period, the Muslim world became an unrivaled intellectual center for science, philosophy, medicine and education as the Abbasids championed the cause of knowledge and established the House of Wisdom where both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars sought to translate many classic works of antiquity into Arabic and Persian. Works that would have otherwise been lost have survived only because of these translations. During this period the Muslim world was a cauldron of cultures which collected, synthesized and significantly advanced the knowledge gained from the ancient Roman, Chinese, Indian, Persian, Egyptian, North Africa, Greek, and Byzantine civilizations. The period saw the recovery of much of the Alexandrian mathematical, geometric and astronomical knowledge, such as the works of Euclid and Ptolemy. These recovered mathematical methods were later enhanced and developed by other Islamic scholars. It is from this period that the terms and concepts of “algebra”, “algorism”, and “algorithm” were developed, along with the system of Arabic numerals.<sup>119</sup>

During the 9<sup>th</sup> Century, Baghdad had over 800 doctors, and great discoveries were made in the understanding of anatomy and diseases. Astronomy in medieval Islam was advanced and the improvement in the precision of the measurement of the Earth's axis, though originally developed by the Greeks, was perfected by Islamic astronomers and engineers, and was subsequently brought to Europe. Arab Muslims now studied astronomy, alchemy, medicine and mathematics. During the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Centuries more scientific discoveries had been achieved in the Abbasid Empire than during any other period of history.<sup>120</sup>

#### *The Mongols*

In the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, another conqueror appeared on the scene, a powerful Mongol leader named Hulagu Khan (1217-1265 AD). He seized Baghdad in 1258 AD and killed the last Abbasid caliph. While in Baghdad, Hulagu made a pyramid of the skulls of Baghdad's scholars, religious leaders, and poets, and he deliberately destroyed what remained of Iraq's canal headwork. The material and artistic production of centuries was swept away. Iraq became a neglected frontier province

---

<sup>119</sup><http://countrystudies.us/iraq/16.htm>

<sup>120</sup>Karen Armstrong(1993). A History of God. Ballantine Books

ruled by the Mongols. Political chaos, severe economic depression, and social disintegration followed in the wake of the Mongol invasions. Baghdad, which had been a center of trade, rapidly lost its commercial importance. The rapid deterioration of settled agriculture led to the growth of tribally based pastoral nomadic. By the end of the Mongol period, the focus of Iraqi history had shifted from the centralized and urban-based Abbasid culture to the tribes of the river valleys, where it would remain until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>121</sup>

*The Safavids, the Ottomans, and the Mamluks*

From the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, the course of Iraqi history was affected by the continuing conflicts between the Safavid Empire in Iran (Shia) and the Ottoman Turks (Sunni). In 1509 AD, the Safavids led by Ismail Shah (1502-1524 AD), conquered Iraq and initiated a series of protracted battles with the Ottomans. In 1535 AD the Ottomans, led by Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566 AD) conquered Baghdad, but the Safavids re-conquered it in 1623 AD under the leadership of Shah Abbas (1587-1629 AD).<sup>11</sup>

By the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the frequent conflicts with the Safavids had sapped the strength of the Ottoman Empire and had weakened its control over its provinces. The cycle of tribal warfare and of deteriorating urban life that began in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century with the Mongol invasions was temporarily reversed with the reemergence of the Mamluk dynasty.

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the Mamluks (Shia) began asserting authority over the Ottomans. Extending their rule over Basra, the Mamluks eventually controlled the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys from the Persian Gulf to the foothills of Kurdistan.

The Mamluks were able administrators and their rule was marked by political stability and economic revival. The greatest of the Mamluk leaders, Suleyman the II (1780-1802 AD), made great strides in imposing rule of law. Iraq initiated important modernization programs that included clearing canals, establishing industries, training an army of 20,000 soldiers, and starting a printing press. The Mamluk period ended in 1831 AD when a severe flood and plague devastated Baghdad.

**The British invasion**

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Ottoman territories had become the focus of European powers. During the previous century,

---

<sup>121</sup> The Table of Contest, country Study; <http://countrystudies.us/iraq/17.htm>

enfeebled Ottoman rule had invited intense competition among European powers for commercial benefits in Middle East.

British interest in Iraq significantly increased when the Ottomans granted concessions to Germany to construct railroad lines from Konya in southwest Turkey to Baghdad in 1899, and from Baghdad to Basra in 1902. The British then stormed Iraq from Basra and reached Baghdad up the Euphrates river. By March 1917 the British had captured Baghdad.<sup>10</sup>

After the First World War, a victorious Britain then established a new Iraqi regime with an imported king who had never been to Iraq before his appointment. The British and the new monarchy worsened the historical problem between the Sunni and the Shia. The new king was a Sunni from the Hijaz, and he completely ignored the Shia majority of Iraq.<sup>122</sup>

Top-secret British documents showed statistical studies conducted by the British indicated that the Shia were 55 percent of the population at that time, and the Sunnis only 25 percent. They also showed the secret behind appointing an imported Hashemite Monarchy to rule Iraq.<sup>123</sup> The British also divided Iraq into three provinces: Baghdad, Basra and Mosul.<sup>124</sup> It could be argued that sectarian strife was further exacerbated by such policies.

Artificially created political and ideological sectarian differences are the chief source of conflict in Iraqi society. The problem of sectarianism in Iraq is different from the sectarian problems in other Muslim countries. In Iraq, Sunnis and Shias have lived in peace and harmony for years. Many Shia and Sunni families inter-marry. They have lived and worked together in the same areas. This sectarian divides were really created in 1920's by the British in Iraq. The problem was exacerbated by Saddam's sectarian regime which was a continuation of previous sectarian regimes.<sup>13</sup>

In 1958, when opposition to pro-western government reached a critical point, a group of military officers led a coup d'etat and deposed the monarch and some other officials who were supportive of British policies. General Karim Qasim and Colonel Abd al-Salam Arif took over with a commitment to political and social reforms that would address the endemic problem of Iraqi politics and society. Civilian rule consisted of a

---

<sup>122</sup> Hamid Al-Bayati, *Documentary Studies, The Shia of Iraq* 1997

<sup>123</sup> The British Documents, 371/175 753, EQ 1019/26, 1964

<sup>124</sup> Malik Mufti, *Sovereign Creation*

three-man council - an Arab Sunni, an Arab Shia, and a Kurd. The council in turn formed a cabinet for a broader inclusion of leaders who opposed the monarchy.

On October 13, 1932, Iraq became a sovereign state, and was admitted to the League of Nations.<sup>125</sup>

### **Contemporary Iraq**

In 1394 AD, as the Tatar hordes of Timurlane swept over Mesopotamia, they took the trouble of stopping at a small provincial town on Tigris River, some hundred miles north of Baghdad, where they erected a pyramid with the skulls of their victims. The name of the town was Tikrit.

It was in this small town, six centuries later, that a brutal dictator was born: Saddam Hussain or Saddam Al-Tikrity. He came to power in 1973. A repressive one-party apparatus, dominated by him and members of his extended family exclusively, controlled the political power. The provisional Constitution of 1968 stipulated that the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party was to govern Iraq through the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), which exercised both executive and legislative authority. President Saddam Hussein, Prime Minister, Chairman of the RCC, and Secretary General of the Regional Command of the Ba'ath Party, wielded exclusive authoritarian power.

The Ba'athists alleged that their legitimacy derived from "the people". The new state and its mission were synonymous with "the Arab nation" or "the people". In the Ba'athist mind, what they called violating the whole "people" was an even more monstrous version of old-fashioned treason.<sup>126</sup>

Saddam, a Sunni Muslim, feared that radical Islamic ideas hostile to his secular rule were rapidly spreading inside his country among the majority Shi'ite population. He decided to attack Iran and started an eight year war which cost both countries millions of casualties and billions of dollars. The collateral damage to the economies of other nations was also immense. This also started a turbulent relationship with Iran until the recent liberation of Iraq.

In the beginning of the 1980s, human rights groups said that 180,000 ethnic Kurds were rounded up and killed in the Anfal campaign in which hundreds of mountain villages were destroyed. In 1988, nerve and mustard gas was used against Iraqi-Kurdish civilians in Halabja, on

---

<sup>125</sup> Sandra Macke, *Iraq and the Legacy of Saddam Husain* 2002

<sup>126</sup> Hamid Al-Bayati 2011 from *Dictatorship to Democracy*

the border between Iraq and Iran, with 5000 killed in a single day.<sup>12</sup> The world, and the United Nations, just looked the other way.

### **The Iraq- Iran War (Gulf War I)**

Saddam, a Sunni Muslim, feared that radical Islamic ideas hostile to his secular rule were rapidly spreading inside his country among the majority Shiite population. He decided to attack Iran and started an eight year war (1980-1988), *Gulf War I*, the longest war after World War II. Additional to the old score to settle with the Iranians over his southern border, and particularly on the dividing line in the Shatt Al-Arab river outlet which governed entry into the port of Basra. Saddam felt confident he could regain the lost territory and probably topple the anti-American regime in Tehran by taking swift military action. He was quite sure that his objectives were in the American interest, and that Washington would support his moves.

That is indeed what happened. The United States supported Iraq, with several billion dollars worth of economic aid, the sale of dual-use technology, non-U.S. origin weaponry, military intelligence, Special Operations training, and even some direct involvement in the war against Iran.

This war cost Iraq and Iran millions of casualties and billions of dollars in damage. The collateral damage to the economies of other nations was also immense. This also started a turbulent relationship with Iran, which lasted until the recent liberation of Iraq.

### **The Iraq-Kuwait War (Gulf War II)**

By the end of the war with Iran in 1988, Iraq was virtually bankrupt. Most of its debt was owed to Saudi Arabia. This was also when the collapse in oil prices had a catastrophic impact on the Iraqi economy.

Saddam then began planning to attack Kuwait, which he claimed was historically part of Iraq's Basra province. He also claimed that Kuwait was siphoning off Iraqi oil in the oil-fields straddling the borders of Iraq and Kuwait.

In early July 1990, Iraq complained about Kuwait's behavior, such as not respecting their quota, and openly threatened to take military action. He then moved 30,000 troops to the Iraq-Kuwait border, in the belief that his decision to invade Kuwait would not be opposed by the West. However, as it turned out, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was internationally denounced. In the same year Saddam fired dozens of Scud ballistic missiles at Israel, which exacerbated the situation even further.

With the approval of the United Nations, a large coalition of countries then set out to reverse the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait. The war lasted only a short time, as the Iraqi forces were totally unable to stem the advance of the US led coalition.

However, once Kuwait had been liberated, the US-led coalition stopped its advance, and did not go deeper into Iraq, which they could have easily done. Saddam Hussain thus got a reprieve, and lived to fight another day.

### **The US-Iraq War (Gulf War III)**

In March 2003, the United States launched another attack against Iraq. Though they considered it as a continuation of the unfinished business of Gulf War of 1991, immediately following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the renewed attack did not have the support or approval of the United Nations Security Council.

The US-led coalition drew its justification from the UN Security Council 1441 of 2002 in which Iraq was offered "a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations" that had been set out in several previous resolutions, and threatened "serious consequences" if those obligations were not met. Until a few days before the war, it was the position of the UK, the main US ally in the war, that this Resolution 1441 was not enough of a justification, but that a further resolution would be desirable before the UK would go to war.

Resolution 1441 was not interpreted by China, Russia and France either as authorizing war. Kofi Annan, speaking on behalf of the UN, declared: "I have indicated it was not in conformity with the UN Charter from our point of view". However, no one called for the Security Council to put a stop to the actions of the US-led coalition.

The United States and Britain also used the excuse of the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq as a justification for initiating the invasion of Iraq. However no weapons of mass destruction were ever found in Iraq, so the excuse rang hollow.

According to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, the goals of the American interference were "to end the Saddam Hussein government and help Iraq's transition to democratic self-rule." The Americans supported the natural democratic right of the absolute majority of Shias in Iraq in exchange for widespread cooperation and healthy bilateral relations between the two countries<sup>127</sup>

---

<sup>127</sup> Donald Rumsfeld speech on 27 May 2003,  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/may/28/iraq.iran>



### **Iraq Today**

The turbulent history, harsh environment and mixed cultures within Iraq have produced a complex and unique combination of “national ingredients” that pose a difficult challenge in creating a homogeneous and united community. Throughout its history, Iraq had fought for its freedom and independence against many conquerors. Astonishingly, each time Iraq has been able to recover and rebuild its infrastructure with full faith and belief in its unity and sovereignty.

The Iraqi economy had been in deep crises with a plummeting currency devaluation, cuts in government subsidies for basic food items like rice, wheat and sugar, plus skyrocketing prices in general. Yet the economy of Iraq today has seen some progress and has tremendous potential for growth. But economic development is hobbled by uncertainty, rampant corruption, lack of investment, outdated and worn out infrastructure and ongoing security issues.

There are, however, some encouraging signs regarding economic performance. Currency reserves are stable and growing at a rate of \$12 billion per year. Consumer imports of computers, cell phones and other appliances have increased dramatically. New businesses are opening and construction is moving forward in secure areas. Because of Iraq’s ample oil reserves, water resources and fertile lands, significant economic growth is possible if violence is reduced and the capacity of government improves.<sup>15</sup>

Iraq’s relationships with neighboring countries are developing. Iraq and Kuwait stand at the dawn of a new era of peaceful coexistence and friendly relations. Compensation claims continue to be settled, with nearly \$31.4 billion having been disbursed to individuals, corporations, governments and international organizations.<sup>128</sup>

The outstanding question remains about the situation in Iraq after the impending withdrawal of US troops from the country. The final agreement which has been concluded provides for the withdrawal of all forces by a set deadline by the end of 2011.<sup>129</sup>

This agreement was considered, by a vast majority of the Iraqi people, as a tremendous success for the Iraqi government in brokering a deal on Iraqi terms. Iraq and its relationship with European countries has

---

<sup>128</sup> UN Secretary General declaration on 27 January 2011

<sup>129</sup> The SOFA in Iraq 2009, [http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/world/20081119\\_SOFA\\_FINAL\\_AGREED\\_TEXT.pdf](http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/world/20081119_SOFA_FINAL_AGREED_TEXT.pdf)

improved progressively to a level based on mutual interests and respect for shared values of democracy and basic human dignity. The Iraqi people have reasonable faith and the resolve that they are now moving in a positive direction and that they will achieve the status that they deserve.

## ISRAEL

**Editor's Note:** While all contemporary coverage of Israel is dominated by the relations between a Jewish Israel and an Arab Palestine, few remember that the creation of Israel was essentially the result of the prolonged European history of Christian persecution of the Jews over centuries. Whether during the Inquisition in Spain, the Pogroms in Eastern Europe, or the Nazi Holocaust in Germany, it is the European Christian community that constantly attempted to suppress the Jews, partly in the belief that it was the Jews who had collaborated with the Romans in the crucifixion of Christ, and partly due to their jealousy of Jewish money-lenders. The metamorphosis of that Christian-Jewish antipathy into an Islamic-Jewish antipathy thus appears to be the result of the Palestinian lands imperially allocated to Israel by the British, and to their subsequent enlargement by wars, rather than due to any ideological or religious reasons.

### Introduction

In order to understand the creation of the State of Israel in 1947, it is necessary to recount more than 4,000 years of history, from the common origins of the Israelite and the Arabs, to the Second World War and the Nazi movement. The Israelites went from a persecuted and excluded community to the only non-Muslim state in the Middle East, and this has transformed Israel into a key actor and factor in the conflict and peace processes in the Middle East.

#### *Origins of Judaism*

In the history of monotheist religions, there is the emblematic figure of Abraham, considered the father of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Abraham was born in the city of Ur in Babylonia four thousand years ago.<sup>130</sup> It is believed that he drew a

---

<sup>130</sup> Hebrew Bible.

covenant with God that a great nation shall be born from him.<sup>131</sup> Abraham then left his native land and went to Canaan<sup>132</sup>, an area that presently includes the Palestinian territories, Israel, Lebanon and western Syria.

According to the scriptures, since Sara, Abraham's wife, had passed child-bearing years, she offered her Egyptian maidservant Hagar, as a wife to Abraham. Hagar was the daughter of Pharaoh, given to Abraham during his travels in Egypt. She bore Abraham a son, Ismail, who, according to both Arab and Jewish traditions, is considered the ancestor of the Arabs.<sup>133</sup> A few years later, when Abraham was 99 and Sara 90, a miracle happened and she bore Abraham's second son, Isaac,<sup>134</sup> considered the ancestor of the Jewish people. The origins of these two have led some authors to regard the conflict between Arabs and Jews as a form of sibling rivalry.

*The Promised Land and the United Monarchy*

After the death of Abraham, the Jews were treated as slaves in ancient Egypt. Prophet Moses liberated them, leading the Jewish Communities to the Promised Land, in the Canaan region.

After reaching the Promised Land the Jews organized their tribes under a confederation. However, the pressure from neighboring tribes forced the Israelites to unite as one state, creating the United Monarchy. Biblical historians date this United Kingdom from 1020 BC to 930 BC. Tensions between the northern and the southern part of the kingdom led to its division and two separate kingdoms were created. The Kingdom of Israel (or Northern Kingdom) existed as an independent state until around 720 BC when it was conquered by the Assyrian Empire; while the Kingdom of Judah (or Southern Kingdom) existed as an independent state until 586 BC when it was conquered by the Babylonian Empire.

**A Historical and Religious Perspective**

*History of Anti-Semitism*

The Romans persecuted the Jews. It was not until Christianity became the dominant power in the medieval times that the persecution and anti-Jewish sentiments intensified. Christianity

---

<sup>131</sup> *ibid*

<sup>132</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid*.

is rooted in Jewish theology. The fracture occurred when Jesus (born a Jew) was considered the Messiah by a section of the Jewish Community. This group eventually divided from Judaism and created a new religion, Christianity, while those who rejected Jesus as the Messiah, continued to follow Judaism.

This fact was considered by the founders of Christianity as a threat to the legitimacy of the church. As a response, the church had to deny the legitimacy of the Jews and Judaism.

Competition for converts led to an ongoing conflict between the Christians and the Jews until the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century BC.

The negative impact was revealed in the New Testament where the Jews are held responsible for Jesus' crucifixion. This laid the groundwork for centuries for the Christian characterization of Jews as agents of the devil.

*Medieval Times (5<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Century AD)*

By the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, with the exception of the small Jewish community, Europe had converted to Christianity. For centuries, the reputation of Jews as devil's children rendered accusations against them. Jews were accused of murdering Christians and drinking their blood for ritual purposes.<sup>135</sup>

Accused of spreading the epidemic of the Black Death, the Jewish communities were expelled from Europe. From England in 1290; France in 1306 and 1394; Hungary between 1349 and 1360; Austria in 1421; numerous localities in Germany between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries; Lithuania in 1445; Spain in 1492; Portugal in 1497; and Bohemia and Moravia in 1744-45. Between the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and 1772, Jews were not allowed into Russia. When admitted in Russia, they were restricted to one area only.<sup>136</sup>

The temporary readmissions were usually accompanied by employment restrictions, as well as designated living areas, later known as *ghettos*.

It was permitted for Jews to perform tasks such as tax and rent collecting. This aggravated the social tension between the Christians and the Jews, with the latter being typically seen as insolent, greedy and usurers.

---

<sup>135</sup> The reason for Antisemitism, Why the Jews? Dennis Prager and Joseph Teleshkim (2003). Chapter Eight: Christian Antisemitism.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

*Islam and Judaism*

Islam was the second religion to emanate from Judaism. However, it was also rejected by the Jews. By the 7<sup>th</sup> Century, there was a substantial Jewish population in Medina. It is considered that Muhammad was influenced by the religious practices of the Jews. Some authors note “the intrinsic values of the belief of one God, as well as the creator of the world, the God of justice and mercy, before whom everyone high and low bears personal responsibility came to Muhammad, as he never ceased to emphasized, came from Israel”.<sup>137</sup>

In the early days of Islam, Muslims prayed in the direction of the then Jewish holy city of Jerusalem, and observed Yom Kippur.

It was only when Muhammad concluded that the Jews would not recognize him as a prophet that Mecca replaced Jerusalem, and Ramadan replaced Yom Kippur.<sup>138</sup>

Like the Christians, Islam did not shy away from revealing its reservations towards Jews in the Quran.

Once Islam spread across the Middle East in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century, the Jews (and Non-Muslim in general) were imposed a *Dhimmi* status.

According to Sharia Law, *Dhimmi* is a theoretical contract granting special protected status to Non-Muslims, providing them with residential rights, in exchange for taxes. Forced conversions were never part of this agreement, thus allowing Jews to freely preserve their religion in all Islamic states.

*The 19<sup>th</sup> Century*

After the French Revolution, legislation prescribed the equality of all citizens before the law. This obviously included the Jewish communities. Property, worship and occupation rights were rescinded.

Despite the new law, traditional discrimination and hostility towards Jews on religious grounds persisted and was supplemented by an anti-semitism known as ethno-nationalism, which slowly turned them into an alien race.

Along with this trend, Social Darwinism emerged, alleging a conflict between higher and lower races of human beings, thus placing White Europeans as superior to Semitic Jews.

---

<sup>137</sup> Jews and Arabs: A Concise History of Their Social and Cultural Relations. S.D Goiten

<sup>138</sup> The reason for Antisemitism, Why the Jews? Dennis Prager and Joseph Teleshkim (2003).  
Chapter Ninth: Islamic Anti-Semitism

*World War I (1914-1918)*

During World War I, the Ottoman Empire ruled the Palestinian territory. The Ottoman Empire joined Germany and Austria-Hungary against the Allies. At that time, the Turkish military governor ordered deportation of all foreign nationals. A large number of Jews living in Palestine were Russians and they were forced to flee during the war. This situation created an animosity against the Turkish domination, which led to the formation of the *Netzakh Yisrael Lo Yishaker* (NILI), which translates "*The Eternity of Israel will not lie*", as a Jewish espionage network with the purpose of assisting the United Kingdom in its fight against the Ottoman Empire. The information they provided is said to have helped the British invasion.<sup>139</sup>

Likewise, the United Kingdom offered to support Arabs for independence from the Ottomans in return for Arab support for the Allies.<sup>140</sup> In 1916, the Arabs led by Thomas Lawrence, a British army officer, and backed by Sharif Husayn<sup>141</sup>, revolted against the Ottomans in the belief that Britain would help establish Arab independence in the Middle East.

Meanwhile the United Kingdom and France, with the involvement of Imperial Russia, drafted the secret agreement, later to be known as "The Sykes-Picot Agreement" of 1916. This agreement effectively divided the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire between British and French control or influence, with Palestine to be under British rule, and Syria and Lebanon to be administered by France. The terms of the agreement became known in October 1917 to the Bolsheviks, who decided to expose the agreement to the public once they overthrew Imperial Russia. The document then became public three weeks after the Balfour Declaration<sup>142</sup> was enacted.

*The British Mandate for Palestine (1917-1947)*

At the Paris Peace Conference and through the League of Nations, much of the Ottoman Empire was divided into mandated territories assigned as per the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The British

---

<sup>139</sup> Brief History of Palestine <http://www.mideastweb.org/briefhistory.htm>

<sup>140</sup> The Husein-McMahon Correspondence

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/hussmac1.html>

<sup>141</sup> Sharif of Mecca and Emir of Mecca from 1908 until 1917, when he proclaimed himself King of Hejaz.

<sup>142</sup> The Balfour Declaration (1917) .

were anxious to keep Palestine away from the French, and decided to ask for a mandate that would advocate the Jewish national home under the Balfour Declaration.<sup>8</sup> The Arabs opposed the idea of a Jewish national home, considering that the area was their land.

*The rise of Nazism (1933) and World War II (1939-1945)*

Nazism arose as a political movement in Germany. Adolf Hitler, ideologue and leader, came into power in 1933. This ideology incorporated among others, anti-Semitic principles, which in practice translated into a systematic exclusion from national life, with a view to the complete annihilation of the Jewish community from Germany. They were forced to live in ghettos and eventually directed into extermination camps.

As a result of the Anti-Semitic legislation, and until October 1941 when Jewish migration out of Germany was prohibited, the Jewish migration rate to Palestine increased significantly. It is estimated that more than 60,000 Jews entered Palestine during 1933 and 1939.<sup>143</sup> The mass migration, combined with a growing aversion towards British colonial rule, led to the 1936-1939 Arab revolt in Palestine.

Consequently, the British drafted the *MacDonald White Paper* in May 1939 which was a Policy Paper with the proposal to create an independent Palestine governed by Palestinian Arabs and Jews, in proportion to their numbers in the population. It set a limit of 75,000 Jewish migrants for a five-year period 1940-1944. After 1944, further immigration would depend on the permission of the Arab majority. Restrictions were also placed on the right of Jews to buy land from Arabs. Both the Jewish and the Palestinian-Arab leadership rejected the White Paper.

Despite the mass migration and restrictions, the Nazi operations against the Jews intensified. By 1945 the Nazis had murdered almost seven out of every ten Jews in Europe. This was mainly due to the cooperation that Nazis received from citizens of Nazi occupied countries. In some countries the Jewish population completely vanished. Such was the case in Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.<sup>144</sup> This systematic genocide is known as the Nazi Holocaust and it is estimated that of the eleven million Jews targeted,

---

<sup>143</sup> The Holocaust Encyclopedia

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005468>

<sup>144</sup> The Reason for Antisemitism. Why the Jews? Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin (2003)



approximately six million were killed by the Nazis between 1942 and 1945.

### **The Creation of the State of Israel**

By the end of the Second War World, there were thousands of displaced persons who sailed in overcrowded boats to Palestine. However, in an attempt to maintain its friendly ties with the Arab leaders, the British continued the application of the 1939 White Paper and restricted the Jewish migration to Palestine. In order to do so, the British pressured its allied countries to detain the illegal migrants and send them back. Most of the refugees were sent back to British prison camps.

Despite these efforts, within 10 years, the Jewish population had increased by 33% in Palestine, mainly due to a clandestine movement, known as Aliyah Bet. Its objective was to aid Jews to escape from persecution during the World War II and bring them into Palestine.

By 1947, the British Government stated that it was unable to arrive at a solution acceptable to both Arabs and Jews, and withdrew from the Mandate granted by the League of Nations over Palestine. Thus, in April 1947 the issue was handed over to the United Nations, which created a special committee (UNSCOP) to investigate the problem and to recommend solutions.

#### *The United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine (1947)*

The United Nations approved its Partition Plan for Palestine under GA Resolution 181 of 29 November 1947, which sought to divide the country between an Arab Palestine and a Jewish Israel, with Jerusalem designated an international city to be administered by the United Nations.<sup>145</sup> The resolution also stipulated a plan for an economic union between the two proposed states and a plan for the protection of religious and minority rights.

Before the adoption of the Resolution, the Arab countries refused to participate in the investigations of the UNOSCP, opposing any attempt to consider an additional state in the Palestinian territory. Nevertheless, the Resolution was adopted with 33 votes in favor, 13 against and 11 abstentions. All Arab members voted against the resolution.

---

<sup>145</sup> Oh Jerusalem! Dominique Lapierre and Larry Collins (1971) pp. 22

Israel declared independence on 14 May 1948, a day before the British mandate was going to come to an end. The following day the League of Arab States attacked Israel.

*The First Israeli War (1948)*

On 15 May 1948, after the Israeli Declaration of Independence, the League of Arab States issued a Declaration, announcing their responsibilities for restoring order in Palestine and for establishing a single democratic Arab State. The events taking place in Palestine were regarded as a threat to peace and security and therefore an intervention was required.<sup>146</sup>

From the beginning, the Arab military efforts suffered from a lack of coordination and planning.<sup>147</sup> On the other hand, Israel consolidated its position in all the areas allocated to it by the General Assembly Resolution, and occupied substantive fragments of additional zones originally assigned to the Arabs.<sup>148</sup>

As part of the armistice agreement, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank were to be occupied by Egypt and Jordan respectively. On 29 May 1948, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) became the first peacekeeping operation. It is currently known as the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and was given the task to monitor ceasefires, supervise the armistice agreements, prevent isolated incidents from escalating, and assist other UN peacekeeping operations in the region.

*The Second Israeli War (1956)*

By December 1948, the Palestinian refugee situation was out of control. After the Jewish terrorist attack of Deir Yasin, many Arabs fled from Palestine. Many smaller Arab towns and villages were abandoned which were blown up by the Israeli Army. Many of the displaced sought refuge in Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt. The Arab states insisted on their return. Israel refused.

The United Nations adopted Resolution 194 in December 1948 in an attempt to address the refugee situation. It outlined the

---

<sup>146</sup> The Arab League Declaration May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1948. Website: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign+Relations/Israels+Foreign+Relations+since+1947/1947-1974/5+Arab+League+declaration+on+the+invasion+of+Pales.htm>

<sup>147</sup> Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East. A Documentary Record 1914-1956. Vol II. J.C. Hurewitz. Pp 299

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

principles of return, as well as compensation for the property of those choosing not to return. The Resolution was never implemented by Israel, and despite these efforts, the Palestinian Refugee crisis continued.

By this time, Israel had also occupied the larger part of Jerusalem, which was meant to be under international governance. Jordan and Egypt occupied the other parts of the territory assigned to Palestinian. The controversies continued, and in 1956 the President of Egypt, Gamel Abdel Nasser, nationalized the Suez Canal, restricting the freedom of navigation to Israel only through the Straits of Tiran. A war was then fought by Britain, France and Israel against Egypt. This war came to an end only through US intervention, which forced Britain, France and Israel to withdraw their forces.

*The Third "Six Day" Israeli War (1967)*

The third Arab-Israeli war was fought on 5-10 June 1967 by Israel and the neighboring states of Egypt, Jordan and Syria. It started in May 1967 when Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran by sending troops into the Sinai Peninsula, expelling the UNEF force from Gaza and Sinai and taking positions at Sharm el-Sheikh. Israel recalled the agreement made in 1957 as a justification for war.

The attacks lasted six days. Israeli forces destroyed most of the Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian and Iraqi forces. The immediate aftermath was Israeli control over the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip under Egyptian control, the West Bank and Eastern Jerusalem under Jordanian control, the Shebaa Farms in Lebanon, and the Golan Heights in Syria. With these conquered, Israel had occupied a greater territory than the one even claimed by the World Zionist Organization at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.<sup>149</sup>

**The creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization**

Since 1948, the Palestinian issue had been addressed as a refugee problem. The Palestinians did not have a representation on an international or national level to support their interests. It was only in 1964 that the Arab League Summit agreed to organize the Palestinian people and to enable them to play their role in the

---

<sup>149</sup> Origins and Evolution of the Palestine Problem 1917-1988. United Nations (1990) prepared by the Committee of the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Pp 155

liberation of their homeland,<sup>150</sup> as well as calling for the establishment of Palestine.

In the same year, the 1<sup>st</sup> Palestinian Conference was held in Jerusalem recognizing the “Palestine Liberation Organization” (PLO). It adopted, among others, the Palestine National Charter, which defined those Palestinians as citizens who were living in Palestine up to 1947; declared the establishment of Israel illegal, and proclaimed Jerusalem as their capital.

The Palestine Liberation Organization was established as an umbrella organization, comprising numerous organizations, political parties, popular organizations, and independent personalities. The State of Israel and the United States considered its declaration an affront and declared its activities as “terrorist”.

In 1974 the United Nations granted the Observer status to the Palestine Liberation Organization and requested the Secretary General to establish contacts with the Organization.<sup>151</sup>

#### **The Land for Peace Policy**

The basis for Camp David Agreement, brokered by the United States between Israel and Egypt in 1978, was grounded on the Land for Peace Policy, which was based on two principles, namely, (a) the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Occupied Territories, and (b) the termination of all claims or states of belligerency. This trend dominated the peace negotiation process during 1978 to 2001.

Camp David Accords entitled a Framework for Peace in the Middle East, a Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel, and Associated Principles, which outlined the principles that should apply to the relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors. The Agreements were signed by Egypt and Israel in the White House with the United State as witness.

The first agreement had three parts. The first part was a framework for negotiations to establish an autonomous self-governing authority in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, both under the leadership of Jordan and Egypt respectively.

The second agreement related to the Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel, and outlined the withdrawal of Israeli settlements

---

<sup>150</sup> Website of the Permanent Observer Mission Of Palestine to the United Nations <http://www.un.int/wcm/content/site/palestine/pid/12004>

<sup>151</sup> United Nations Resolution 3237 (XXIX) Question of Palestine.

from the Sinai Peninsula occupied during the Six Days War, in exchange for Egypt's recognition and establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel, as well as, the freedom of passage through the Suez Canal and the declaration of the Straits of Tiran as international waters. The process would take three years to complete. This agreement resulted in a United States commitment to economic assistance for both governments. As a consequence, Egypt became the first Arab country to recognize the Israeli State. Currently, the top recipients of United States international aid are Israel followed by Egypt.<sup>152</sup>

The treaty was received with controversy. The Arab nations, especially the Palestinians, condemned it. As immediate reaction to the agreements, Egypt was suspended from the Arab League from 1979 until 1989, and in 1981 the President of Egypt, Anwar El Sadat was assassinated by the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, who considered him a traitor to the Palestinian cause.

*Continuation of the Peace Process*

It was not until September 1991 that the next meeting was held between Israel, Palestine, and the United States in Madrid, Spain. This meeting was preceded by an escalation of violence. The increase of Israeli settlements from 1987 had triggered the *First Intifada*, (translated from Arabic as "call for rebellion"). The meeting did not have any concrete results.

The conversations continued under a series of secret meetings between Israel and Palestine in Norway, which concluded with the Oslo Accord between the Palestinians and Israel in 1993. The plan included the recognition of both an Israeli and a Palestine State, within the framework of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. It also committed the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to eliminate any terrorist practices. In return Israel would gradually cede control of the Palestine territories in exchange for peace.

It also created the Palestine National Authority as the administrative organization to govern parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip on issues related to civil matters and security. This permitted the Palestinians to rule their own territories.

The PLO thus continues to be the sole legitimate representative of the Palestine people in the international arena.

---

<sup>152</sup> US Census Bureau  
[http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/cats/foreign\\_commerce\\_aid/foreign\\_aid.html](http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/cats/foreign_commerce_aid/foreign_aid.html)

However, the Accords did not enjoy the support of the people. It led to the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 by a right wing Jewish orthodox, as well as, the gradual discrediting of the PLO and Yasser Arafat's leadership among Palestinian groups.

In July 2000, a follow up meeting was held in Camp David, expecting to settle all outstanding issues from the Oslo Accord, including Jerusalem, Palestine refugees, Israeli settlements, security and borders. The summit ended without any agreement. Instead it exacerbated both sides, initiating the *Second Intifada*.

### **The Security Approach**

The violence following the Second Intifada had dire consequences for both Palestine and Israel. The discrediting of the PLO, the lack of opportunities for the younger Palestinians, and corruption scandals diminished the leadership of PLO in Palestine and strengthened Hamas. Hamas responded to the basic needs of Palestinians, building an infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, unlike PLO, it did not recognize the State of Israel.

In 2006, Hamas won the elections in the Gaza Strip. Until then, the Palestine National Authority had received financial assistance from United States and the European Union. All assistance was then suspended in 2006 as a result of the Hamas victory in parliamentary elections. The financial assistance was later partially reinstated for the offices of PLO in the West Bank. Both parties clashed with each other, resulting in Hamas' exclusive control over the administration of Palestinian institutions in the Gaza Strip. As a response, Israel imposed an economic embargo on the Gaza Strip.

The Arab League called for a reunification of the Palestine National Authority under one leadership. The division between the PLO (Fatah) and Hamas has also intensified the conflict between Palestine and Israel. The Gaza War of December 2008 showed a large disproportion in the use of force. In response to rocket attacks launched by Hamas from Gaza, Israel launched a massive and disproportionate military campaign against Gaza targeting the entire infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza.

After these attacks, the peace dialogue has continued without any concrete results. This is partly due to the division in the Palestine National Authority. Fatah recognizes the State of Israel and

its rule over the West Bank, whereas Hamas does not recognize the State of Israel and has remained isolated in the Gaza Strip.

Likewise, the increasing numbers of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem has halted the peace negotiations.

### **Conclusion**

The escalation of the Israeli-Palestine conflict is intrinsically embedded in the history of the region, and its people. Jews were denied a land that they could call their own. They were accused of many ills and persecuted for their beliefs. As a result of Christian persecutions, they became a nomadic community condemned to living as a diaspora.

Islam, as a religion had no major problems with Judaism, had always maintained a dominating presence in the Palestinian land in question, but this land was imperially promised to the Zionist movement by the British under the Balfour Declaration, and then partitioned into an Arab and an Israeli State by the United Nations.

That is why most Muslims draw a total difference between Judaism, which is an intrinsic part of Muslim belief, and Zionism, which is seen as an attempt to take control of Palestinian lands.

Unfortunately the partition of Palestinian lands did not bring peace to the region. Instead it exacerbated the differences that contributed to making it one of the greatest centers of conflict in the world today.

All attempts to peacefully resolve the division of the 91,000 square kilometers of this land have been unsuccessful. The Religious-Military approach from 1948 until 1978, the Land for Peace approach from 1978 to 2001, and finally the Security Approach since then, have all failed to bring a resolution to the conflict, and have only resulted in escalating extremism between the two sides.





## JORDAN

**Editor's Note:** The image of Jordan as a plucky and forward looking monarchy is well justified, and it remains one of the strongest allies of the West in the region. However, the spreading Arab discontent resulting from widespread unemployment and disaffection among the youth has affected it too. As a result, Jordan remains a fragile state, with doubts about its ability to hold on to its privileged *status quo*.

### Introduction

Jordan or Transjordan, as it was once known, has been home to numerous civilizations over the centuries and has managed to survive through it all, partly due to its strategic location at the crossroads of the "Holy Land."

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan faces a challenging future as the Jordanian people continue to ask for political reform, the right to elect their own Prime Minister, and improved social conditions through the creation of more jobs.

#### *Early History*

The Transjordan region was prosperous under the Nabatean tribe. It also flourished under the Roman, Byzantine, Umayyad, Ayyubid and Mamluk empires, all of which brought great wealth to the region through important infrastructure developments (roads, forts, theater, caravan houses, bath houses, churches and palaces) and trade. Throughout its history, the region's skillful engineers understood the importance of water conservation in such an arid region, as evident by the construction of dams, reservoirs and canals.

#### *Transjordan: Center of the Monolithic Religions*

The region's proximity to Jerusalem was a qualified blessing. The Byzantine Empire had brought Christianity to the region and a small Christian community had been present a few centuries earlier under the Roman Empire, but the "Holy Wars" (1096 AD - 1187 AD) led Jordan to Christian control and occupation. The crusaders were eventually defeated by the Muslims, and Jordan was liberated.

The Hashemite family ruled the Hejaz region of Arabia, including the holy city of Mecca, from 1201 to 1925. As a host city for pilgrims, they enjoyed a great deal of prosperity and benefited from communications and trade under the rule of the Ayyubid and Mamluks. In 1925, Abdel Aziz bin Saud took over the throne of Hejaz and established the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which led to the end of Hashemite rule over Mecca.

*The Emirate of Transjordan and the Independence of Jordan*

The great Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire raised hopes for a unified Arab state from Syria to Yemen, under the rule of Emir and Sharif Hussein Bin Ali and his three sons.

However, despite their victory over the Ottoman Empire with the help of the British Empire and the French Republic, their aspirations were not realized. In 1919, during the Paris Peace Conference, Hashemite Emir Faisal's demand for independence throughout the Arab world was rejected.

The following year, the League of Nations awarded Britain mandates over Transjordan, Palestine and Iraq. France was given Syria and Lebanon, but had to take Damascus by force by removing King Faisal from the throne to which he had been elected by the General Syrian Congress in 1920. It was a way to further colonize and divide the region amongst the winners of the First World War.

King Abdullah, Hussein Bin Ali's son, managed to reclaim power over Transjordan, which had been divided into three districts by the British, and formed the first centralized government by April 1921. Independence was not however achieved until 1946.

**Relations with Israel**

When the United Nations decided to partition Israel in November 1947, King Abdullah sent troops to defend the Palestinian people. Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq deployed troops as well, but in vain. The Israeli army had more manpower and backing, and was able to exploit the political and military differences among their opponents.

The West Bank along with the old city of Jerusalem remained under Jordanian influence, even though Jerusalem itself was the center of a special United Nations zone. As a result of the 1947-48 war, the two banks of Jordan were united into a single state under Abdullah's leadership. In April 1950, the Jordanian Parliament unanimously approved a proposal to unite the two banks of the

Jordan River to protect it from further Zionist expansion. What is now the West Bank, then became Trans-Jordan.

In September 1970, an armed Palestinian *fedayeen* group plunged Jordan into anarchy when it attempted to ambush King Hussein's motorcade twice. King Hussein ordered the army to take out the extremist group. He received a mixed reaction throughout the Arab world for taking action against these Palestinian guerrillas.

In 1988, King Hussein announced that he would no longer financially contribute to a development program in the West Bank. The Kingdom severed all economic and administrative ties to the West Bank. This measure eliminated the West Bank's representation in the Jordanian legislature.

The PLO was expected to fail in its responsibilities. King Hussein never thought the PLO would establish proprietary rights over the West Bank, but this is exactly what happened as a consequence of the King's actions.

Meanwhile, the Rabat Conference of 1975 gave the PLO, as the only representative of the Palestinian people, the responsibility of negotiating the return of occupied Palestinian lands.

At an early stage, King Hussein also understood the importance of maintaining peaceful relations with Israel more than other immediate regional neighbors, most likely because the two countries shared the longest common border and wanted to maintain peace in the region.

Thus, in 1994, Jordan became the only Arab country other than Egypt to sign a peace agreement with Israel. The process leading up to the agreement began in 1963. Negotiations secretly took place at the home of King Hussein's physician, Dr. Emanuel Herbert, who was Jewish and lived in London.

However, the close relationship between Israel and Jordan has had its ups and downs throughout the years. It was disrupted by the Samu incident, when the Israeli army raided Jordan with tanks and planes in November 1966, and the Six Day War in June 1967.

In 1991, the United States and the Russian Federation co-sponsored the Madrid Conference, which allowed Palestine to negotiate directly with Israel under Jordan's supervision. This eventually led to the signing of a declaration by Israel and Palestine known as the Declaration of Principles (Oslo I) in 1993, paving the way for Jordan to sign its own treaty with Israel a year later.

On October 1994, the Jordan-Israel Peace treaty was signed. It guaranteed Jordan an equitable share of water from the Yarmouk and the Jordan rivers, but more importantly, it defined Jordan's borders for the first time in its history. Jordan could no longer be part of a "Zionist expansion plan."

#### *Consequences of the Six Day War*

This short-lived conflict took place between June 5 and June 10, 1967. The war started when Israel launched a surprise air strike on Egypt, known as the United Arab Republic at the time, taking control of the Gaza strip and the Sinai Peninsula. Jordan attacked Israel and, as a consequence, lost control of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Syria was also attacked and lost control of the Golan Heights.

This outcome resulted in the UN Security Council's adoption of Resolution 242, which requested that Israel withdraw from the Occupied Territories, and for other Middle-East nations to live in peace within "secure and recognized boundaries." The passing of the above resolution was due in large part to the initiative of King Hussein. The text became the basis for negotiations.

The end of the Cold War in 1990 raised hopes for a new beginning, and for the resolution of the Middle East conflict. These hopes were short lived as the second Intifada begun in late September 2000. It led to the deaths of 6,500 Palestinians, 1,100 Israelis, and 64 foreigners.<sup>153</sup>

The conflict ended in 2005, when Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip following Israel's withdrawal from the territory. Israel then constructed a barrier or fence further isolating the occupied territories in the West Bank.

#### **The Palestinian Refugees Issue**

The other consequence of the Israeli/Arab conflict was the eviction of more than half a million people who became refugees because they were evicted from Jewish-occupied Israel. Many of these Palestinian refugees were integrated and granted citizenship in Jordan. No other Arab country offered such opportunities and the Arab League opposed this action on the grounds that this would merely dignify the Israeli occupation and evictions of Palestinian lands.

---

<sup>153</sup> Wikipedia, Second Intifada

More Palestinians were once again forced to leave their land as the result of the Six Day War in 1967. In the end, Palestinians outnumbered Jordanian natural citizens in Jordan, and were to become powerful inhabitants of Jordan, eventually controlling some of its areas and businesses, especially in the private sector.

In 1990, many Palestinian refugees migrated to Jordan again as a result of the Gulf war, and many benefited from the Jordanian policy of granting citizenship to any Palestinian who sought it.

### **The Economy of Jordan**

Prior to the Six Day War, Jordan enjoyed a high rate of economic growth, largely due to a successful construction industry which provided many job opportunities to Jordanians. Tourism from Jerusalem, Bethlehem and the East Bank, and foreign exchange income also contributed to growth. Some Jordanians also worked in the Gulf Arab states and sent remittances back to Jordan, giving birth to a new middle class.

In 1975, as a result of the Lebanese civil war, much of the banking and insurance infrastructure was relocated to Amman, and by the early 1980s, Amman had become one of the most dynamic capitals of the Arab world. Trade also began to flourish between Iraq and Jordan during the Iran/Iraq conflict, because Syria allied itself with Iran during the 1980 conflict between Iran and Iraq.

Jordan benefited from this complex economic interdependency. Jordanian exports to Iraq increased significantly, and more than a hundred and fifty Jordanian companies were established in Iraq. By 1990, Jordan was importing 80 percent of its oil from Iraq.<sup>154</sup> King Hussein himself received a large sum of money from Saddam Hussein. Some believe he was more financially generous than the Syrian or the Saudi leaders. The strategic alliance between the two countries was also based on a shared fear that Iran would emerge as the victor against Iraq, putting Jordan in danger.

However, Jordan's relationship with Iraq suffered tremendous political and economic losses as a result of the Gulf War of 1990 and the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. Jordan wanted to solve the matter regionally, but instead had to uphold the international sanctions imposed on Iraq by the United Nations. It is estimated that

---

<sup>154</sup> A History of Jordan, by Philip Robins, page 153, Cambridge University Press

Jordan lost over three billion dollars in trade and declining revenues. No country in the region was thus more affected than Jordan.

The end of the first Gulf war did not eliminate Jordan's ties to Iraq. The Kingdom still provided humanitarian goods not prohibited under the sanctions regime to the Iraqis, which were imported through Aqaba. Amman was the only outside route to Iraqi officials. Jordan was permitted by the United Nations to continue its exports to Iraq, given its dependency on oil.

Jordanian-Iraqi relations were endangered with the escape of Saddam Hussein's cousin and son in law, Hussein Kamel, to Jordan, from where he continued to oppose the Iraqi regime and made calls for a more democratic government in Iraq. For King Hussein, this created a long-awaited opportunity to bring Iraq back under Hashemite rule. The plot quickly disintegrated when Hussein Kamel was accused of crimes by the Iraqi opposition, and asked by King Hussein to return to Baghdad.

With the adoption of the "oil for food" resolution by the UN Security Council, King Hussein returned to his former policy with Iraq, fearing it would take its business elsewhere.

A few years later, Jordan was able to forge a new alliance with Israel. King Hussein and Prime Minister Rabin signed the Washington Declaration in July 1994, bringing an end to a war that had raged for forty-six years. In October 1994, the Jordan-Israel Treaty of Peace was signed. The treaty not only guaranteed political stability between the two nations, but made it possible for both countries to sign a series of protocols in the fields of trade, transportation, tourism, communications, energy, culture, health and agriculture. Most significant were the cooperation agreements for the Jordan Valley and the Aqaba-Eilat region. Israel also returned 116 square miles of desert land it had previously seized from Jordan.

The agreements were a significant development between the two nations, following Jordan's economic crisis in 1988-1989, its decade-long dependence on the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and the devaluation of its own currency, the dinar.<sup>155</sup>

The end of the first Gulf war in 1991 worsened the economic situation for Jordanians. Some three hundred thousand

---

<sup>155</sup> A history of Jordan by Philip Robins, table page 167, Cambridge University Press

Iraqis moved to Jordan between 1991 and 1996 in search of work in various fields.

The living standards of the Jordanian people fell by one-third between 1988 and 1991, not only because of the devaluation of the dinar, but also because over 30 percent of the population was unemployed. A new social policy was required, especially now that as much 40% of the population lived below the poverty line. The “Social Productivity Program<sup>156</sup>, (a social safety net), has helped thousands of families each year. This was a success story for the Kingdom, according to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

King Abdullah II and Queen Rania, (who does not hold any constitutional power) followed in King Hussein’s footsteps in regards to social policies favoring the poor through the establishment of the Plan for Socio-Economic Transformation (PSET),<sup>157</sup> which aimed to transfer extra income from privatization and foreign aid to education, health and job creation.

At the international level, Jordan signed a free trade agreement with the United States in 2000. The only other countries enjoying this advantage are Canada, Mexico and Israel.

Before the signing of the formal agreement, Jordan, the United States and Israel had already established a trilateral economic committee in 1993 to promote regional economic and development cooperation.

In 1995, they also agreed to the establishment of qualifying industrial zones, where goods with a minimum of Israeli and Jordanian material could enter the United States duty and quota free. The United States also reimbursed 950 million dollars of Jordanian debt, and modernized the country’s armed forces.

US-Jordanian relations strengthened under Abdullah II’s reign, with Jordan backing the “War against Terror” after 9/11. Jordan provided the US with intelligence on Al-Qaeda and the American Government became its main aid provider. Jordan also deployed medical and de-mining teams to Afghanistan in 2003.

Since Jordan was the US’s fourth largest economic aid recipient after Israel, Egypt and Colombia, it came as no surprise

---

<sup>156</sup> <sup>156</sup> A history of Jordan by Philip Robins, table page 183 Cambridge University Press

<sup>157</sup> A history of Jordan by Philip Robins, Cambridge University Press, page 201

when the Hashemite Kingdom aligned itself with the United States during the 2003 American invasion of Iraq.

The rate of unemployment fell between 1998 and 2008, from 15.3% to 12%, although several reports in the international press have described how the Jordanian population, particularly the youth, is suffering from the rise in food and fuel prices and are demanding “faster economic and political progress”.<sup>158</sup>

The global economic crisis has hampered Jordan’s progress, but according to King Abdullah II himself, he has “embarked on a number of mega projects to secure food, water, develop the infrastructure and its position as a regional energy and transportation hub”.<sup>159</sup>

### **Political Reform in Jordan**

The deteriorating economic situation led King Hussein to initiate political reforms through the holding of fair elections in November 1989, in which all Jordanians above the age of nineteen, including women, were eligible to vote. These free and fair general elections were a success as they signaled a return to democracy in Jordan.

The adoption of a National Charter, two years later, was another way to ensure that Jordan was given greater political liberalization while enabling it to remain a legitimate territorial state, a Hashemite monarchy nonetheless, with King Hussein at its head.

The Charter made possible the legalization of political parties and outlined general guidelines for dialogue between executive and legislative organs, as well as between the decision-makers and the political and intellectual elite in matters pertaining to authority, rights and responsibility.

An additional measure adopted in this reform process was that no political party shall accept any financial contribution from sources outside Jordan. It should be noted that the Muslim Brotherhood was the largest political party in the Kingdom, parties of notables were centrist and a few other fragmented parties were leftist.

---

<sup>158</sup> The economist, Article entitled “Jordan’s Monarchy: nervous times ahead” dated February 3rd, 2011

<sup>159</sup> “Our Last Best Chanced: the pursuit of peace in time of peril” by King Abdullah II of Jordan, Viking published by the Penguin book, page 173



Early in his reign, King Abdullah II was criticized for some of his actions, especially in the handling of the Hamas crisis in August 1999, when he expelled three Hamas members out of Jordan. The Jordanian elite felt that the King was more interested in international affairs and in keeping good relations with Israel and the West, rather than domestic politics and in choosing a government which would serve the country well.

In November 2009, parliamentary elections were called due to the growing dissatisfaction of the Jordanian people over the government's performance, and its inability to implement social and economic reform through legislative measures benefiting the population. A new Prime Minister was named and a new government was formed, but this lasted a little over a year.

In February 2011, another government was formed amidst rising discontent among the Jordanian people, who demanded the "comprehensive reform, modernization and development"<sup>160</sup> of their country, with the possibility of electing their own prime minister to form the government.

It remains unclear whether King Abdullah II would be willing, in the near future, to transform his role as absolute monarch into a constitutional monarch, similar to the ones in Great Britain and Spain.

Instability in Jordan's neighboring countries might lead to quicker political reform than King Abdullah II had envisioned. He may be pressured into giving more freedom to his people in order to maintain Jordan as a Kingdom.

### **The Future**

The King's dependency on the major economic powers once again demonstrates that no country can claim to stand on its own. Nation-states must build and maintain close relations with the major powers in order to survive.

The Kingdom has managed to deal with various crises: at the national level, it has strived to make policies which will improve the social conditions of the population, by maintaining a constructive dialogue with its neighbors at the regional level for a lasting peace in the area, and by making economic agreements at the international level to bring prosperity and security to Jordan.

---

<sup>160</sup> The New York Times: "Jordan's King dismisses Cabinet, dated February 1st, 2011

Jordanians, however, remain dissatisfied by the lack of employment opportunities in the country today, and by the high price of fuel and food. Discontent is particularly high among the youth. The tribal Bedouins, who have usually been very supportive of the Hashemite monarchy, have also voiced their opposition even to Queen Rania's political role in the affairs of the state, claiming that "she is a danger to the nation and the structure of the state...and the institutions of the throne".<sup>161</sup> This is despite the fact that she has tried to be a strong voice for women's rights and the vulnerable.

Recent protests centered on the right to elect the Prime Minister could be the beginning of a transition to a more democratic society. Parliamentary reforms must also be implemented in order to make the government more accountable for its actions. It would certainly contribute to reducing discontent among the Jordanian people. Most Jordanians do not question the legitimacy of the monarchy. They simply want to be able to elect their own Prime Minister who would then form the government. Clashes in the street continue.

---

<sup>161</sup> BBC News online, article of February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011 entitled "Jordan tribes criticize Queen Rania's political role"

## KUWAIT

**Editor's Note: Kuwait hit the international conscience only after the discovery of oil in the Gulf, and as a result of the Iraqi invasion in the early 1990s. However, as the following paper will show, Kuwait has a much older presence, as a vital trading entity for centuries, and as a highly educated financial center.**

### Introduction

The State of Kuwait is located at the north of the Arabian Peninsula. It shares a border with Iraq in north-west and with Saudi Arabia in the south. To the east of Kuwait, lies the Persian Gulf. Kuwait covers an area of 17,820 square kilometers (6,880 square miles) and has a population of around 2.7 million.<sup>162</sup>

In the 4th Century, the ancient Greeks colonized an island now known as Failaka. It belongs to Kuwait. The Island is 20 km off the coast of Kuwait city. By 123 BC, the region came under the influence of the Parthian Empire. In 224 AD, the region fell under the control of the Sassanid Empire and came to be known as Hajar. By the 14th Century, the area comprising modern day Kuwait became a part of the Islamic caliphate.<sup>163</sup>

The influence of the desert on early Kuwaiti society goes back to the great Bedouin tribes of the Arabian desert. Kuwait traces the origins of its founding fathers in this tribe. From the Bedouin tribes, Kuwait inherited and modified the structural foundation of its society. The Bedouins are a part of the predominantly desert dwelling Arab ethnic group. Specifically, the term refers to the camel-raising tribes but due to economic changes these Arabs have acquired different lifestyles. The pure nomadic life of the Arabian tribes was centered around pastoral environment. There existed within Arabia two distinct patterns of arid ecological zones. The first socioeconomic activity was sheep herding and the second was camel herding. More mobile than sheep herders, camel herders achieved hegemony in the desert and assumed aristocratic origins

---

<sup>162</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Kuwait](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Kuwait)

<sup>163</sup> Casey, Michael s. The history of Kuwait. Greenwood Pub Group, 2007, page 1-7

known as Sharif Bedouin tribes. Bedouins traditionally had strong honor codes and followed traditional systems of justice. Bedouins are well known for practicing folk music, folk dance and folk poetry.<sup>164</sup>

The Bani-Utuba people founded the small fishing settlement called Kuwait. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century, a tribe from Najd arrived at Kuwait and founded a small Bani-Khalid settlement. Bani Khalid built the fortress from where the name Kuwait, diminutive of Kut or fortress, originates.

The settlement was led by three Utbi families, each having their own responsibilities. The wealthy Al-Khalifa were in charge of pearling and trade. The Al-Jalahima commanded the boats and extended naval protection. Lastly, the Al-Sabah provided the Governor who imposed law and order and handled Kuwait's relations with the Bani Khalid and with the shepherd tribes that provided the community's basic needs.<sup>165</sup>

The Al Sabah family emerged as political leaders in Kuwait. In 1756, the people elected Sabah bin Jaber as the first Amir of Kuwait. Since 1756, fourteen rulers from Al Sabah family have ruled Kuwait.<sup>166</sup>

#### **The Ottoman Empire and Sheikh Mubarak**

Sheikh Mubarak was born into the Kuwaiti's powerful Al-Sabah family in 1837. Son of Sheikh Sabah, Mubarak was the ruler of Kuwait from May 1896 until his death on November 1915.

Mubarak was the member of the Al-Sabah family responsible for maintaining order in the desert, around Kuwait and along the vital Carvan, Najd and Ottoman Arabian regions. Mubarak served primarily as a military leader in many tribal operations including several Ottoman campaigns, most notably in 1871, 1892, and 1894. For his long service, Mubarak received the title *Istabl-i-Amir-e-Payesi* or "The Grand Equerry of his Imperial Majesty." Mubarak was widely known for his ties with the British.

In 1883, when he was sent on an Ottoman diplomatic mission to Bahrain, Mubarak seized power to make his small country independent

---

<sup>164</sup> Casey, Michael s. *The history of Kuwait*. Greenwood Pub Group, 2007, page

<sup>165</sup> Crystal, Jill. *Oil and politics in the Gulf: rulers and merchants in Kuwait and Qatar*. Cambridge Univ Pr, 1990. 18-19.

<sup>166</sup> Rush, Alan. *Al-Sabah: history & genealogy of Kuwait's ruling family, 1752-1987*. Ithaca, 1987

of the Ottoman Empire. When he did not get what he wanted from the Ottoman Empire, Mubarak turned to the British for support.<sup>167</sup>

In January 1899, a secret agreement was signed between Mubarak and Britain. In the agreement he pledged that Kuwait would never cede any territory nor receive agents or representatives of any foreign power without the British Government's consent. In essence, this policy gave Britain control of Kuwait's foreign policy and national security.

### **British Gulf Policy in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

Britain's role in the Gulf was initiated in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century through the activities of the British East India Company. At its inception, Kuwait was an insignificant, relatively peaceful port that the British regarded as a dependent of Basra. Kuwait's close relationship to Basra was based on commercial ties. Basra was Kuwait's main trading partner even after the period of Persian occupation of Basra and the subsequent rise of Kuwait maritime power. This arrangement continued during the Persian occupation of Basra until 1779. During this period, as pointed out earlier, the bulk of caravan trade to Baghdad and Aleppo was transferred from Basra to Kuwait and this included the merchandise of the British East India Company coming from Bombay.

In 1793, when difficulties arose between the Pasha of Baghdad and British officials at Basra, British goods were dispatched from Kuwait instead of Basra. During this period, British were strengthening their control over the Gulf, fearing Russian penetration on one hand and Mohammad Ali's ambitions in the Gulf on the other. In 1839, the British considered the suitability of Kuwait as a naval and military station, but their representations in Kuwait were rebuffed by the sheikh. While Kuwait remained very friendly with Britain the latter's efforts to forestall the development of real political ties between Kuwait and Ottoman Empire failed.<sup>168</sup>

### **Kuwait Today**

The transformation of Kuwait since the discovery of oil in 1938 goes beyond the urban development of impressive architectural buildings, roads and new townships. It changed the life style that was

---

<sup>167</sup> Alghanim, Salwa. *The reign of Mubarak al-Sabah: Shaikh of Kuwait, 1896-1915*. I. B. Tauris, 1998. 1-8

<sup>168</sup> S., Jacqueline. *Kuwait, social change in historical perspective*. Syracuse Univ Pr, 1982. Print.

once dependent on boat building, fishing and pearl diving. Oil exports started in 1946 due to the Second World War. The First Master plan, drawn up in 1952 during the reign of the late Sheikh Abdallah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, provided for the development of Kuwait Town and the creation of new residential suburbs along the coastline. This plan utilized modern planning techniques and became the blueprint for the modernization of Kuwait.

*Democratic structures and practices*

Kuwait is a constitutional monarchy and has the oldest directly elected parliament among the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. The head of state is the Emir or Sheikh, a hereditary office. It has a council of ministers, also known as cabinet ministers. Legislative power is vested in the Emir and the National Assembly in accordance with the Constitution. The National Assembly consists of fifty elected members, who are chosen in elections which are held every four years. Kuwait's constitution and parliament define the parameters of the formal public space of politics in Kuwait. Other public spaces that host limited political activities include the marketplace, voluntary associations, the mosque and kin-based associations such as the Diwaniyya - the traditional meetings usually held in individual homes.<sup>169</sup>

Kuwait's interest in suppressing political activity intensifies whenever opposition rises. Twice in recent Kuwaiti history, in 1976 and 1986, challenges to the regime were perceived as threatening, and public political spaces were shut down. This action took the form of suspension of constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties and the dissolution of the parliament.

The line between state and society in Kuwait remains blurred despite more than half a century of state building that institutionalized the separation of the ruling family from the rest of society. Separation enlarged the power of the ruling family to provide political leadership and to control citizen's access to social and economic status and resources.<sup>170</sup>

The 1962 constitution was not the first document of its kind in Kuwait. Its antecedent was a charter written in 1938, by a small group of merchants who had more or less elected themselves to the first Kuwaiti

---

<sup>169</sup> Ann, Mary. *Stories of democracy: politics and society in contemporary Kuwait*. Columbia Univ Pr, 2000. 59-70.

<sup>170</sup> *ibid*

parliament. These merchants seized the initiative against the ruler Ahmad Al-Jabir whose profound self-centeredness at the height of the great depression threatened to divert the entire income from Kuwaiti's newly discovered oil to his personal use. The merchants cited their grievances against the ruler to establish claims to share in the wealth generated by Kuwait's natural resources and to regain some political authority lost after British intervention had altered the balance of power between state and society in Kuwait.

### **Iraqi Occupation and Kuwait's Democracy**

Kuwait was a close ally of Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war. After the war ended, the friendly relations between the two neighboring Arab countries turned sour due to several economic and diplomatic reasons that finally culminated in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Firstly, Iraq had long considered Kuwait to be a part of Iraq. Secondly, rich deposits of oil straddled the ill-defined border, and Iraq constantly claimed that Kuwaiti oil rigs were illegally tapping into Iraqi oil fields.

During late 1989, several official meetings were held between the Kuwaiti and Iraqi leaders but they were unable to break the deadlock. During the spring and summer of 1990, Saddam Hussein increased his pressure on Kuwait. He demanded that Kuwait stop drilling near the disputed oil field at Rumaila. In August 1990 Iraq launched the invasion by bombing Kuwait City.<sup>171</sup>

The invasion destroyed the myth of diplomatic prowess that had been an important element in Kuwaiti regime's claim to popular support. A broad spectrum of Kuwaitis agreed that the invasion marked a failure of the system itself, not simply of the persons occupying positions of responsibility at the time.

### **The return of normal politics**

The 1992 election was generally seen as a victory for popular government, the constitution and much of what Kuwaitis value in themselves and their political traditions. It also brought back the long conflict between the government and the sitting parliament. The Kuwaiti parliament is both subject and object of contending myths and conflicting interests.

---

<sup>171</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invasion\\_of\\_Kuwait](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invasion_of_Kuwait)

Since 1981 the parliament's culture has been unstable. Inter-personal relations have become more contentious, and as a result institutional autonomy has suffered. Though the parliament is a fragile governing institution, it remains the primary base on which constitutional democracy in the country can be constructed and maintained. In Kuwait voluntary associations and the highly institutionalized and protected network of *Dinwaniyyas* are important arenas for direct political participation.

### **Foreign Relations**

Kuwait is part of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, also known as the Gulf Cooperation Council, is a political and economic union involving six Arab states of the Persian Gulf with many economic and social objectives.

#### *Kuwait and Saudi Arabia*

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are strong allies and cooperate within OPEC and the GCC. In 1976, the Kuwaiti Government nationalized Kuwait Oil Company, and in the following year, Kuwait took over part of onshore production in the Divided Zone between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGOC) produces jointly there with Saudi Arabian Chevron, which, by its 1984 purchase of Getty Oil Company, acquired the Saudi Arabian onshore concession in the Divided Zone.

#### *Kuwait and Iraq*

Kuwait was a close ally of Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war. Kuwait and many other Arab nations supported Iraq against the Islamic Revolutionary government of Iran, fearful that Saddam's defeat could herald a wave of Iranian-inspired revolutions throughout the Arab world. Following the end of the war, relations between Iraq and Kuwait deteriorated. The lack of gratitude from the Baghdad government for help in the war and the reawakening of old issues regarding the border and Kuwaiti sovereignty soured relations between the two nations. Kuwait had heavily funded the 8-year-long Iraqi war against Iran. By the time the war ended, Iraq was not in a financial position to repay the \$14 billion it borrowed from Kuwait to finance its war. Iraq argued that the war had prevented the rise of Iranian influence in the Arab World. However, Kuwait's reluctance to pardon the debt created strains in the relationship between the two Arab countries. During late 1989, several



official meetings were held between the Kuwaiti and Iraqi leaders but they were unable to break the deadlock between the two.<sup>172</sup>

*Kuwait and United States*

Early contacts between the United States and Kuwait were unofficial. Around 1910, a group of United States missionaries started the American Hospital in Kuwait. These early humanitarian activities created an image of the United States as a goodwill state. This was in sharp contrast with Great Britain's image as an exploitative state. One of the reasons for lack of official Kuwaiti foreign relations with the United States was the 1899 agreement between Kuwait and Great Britain, which did not allow Kuwait to establish other foreign relations without the approval of Great Britain.

By the end of World War II, Great Britain was too weak to continue its traditional dominating rule in the Persian Gulf. The United States gradually replaced Great Britain as the force to preserve Western interests in the region. Over the years, the United States adopted a three-fold foreign policy in the Persian Gulf: to assure the free flow of oil from the Gulf to industrialized nations, to contain Soviet communism, and to protect the state of Israel against possible threats from its neighbors.

The First Gulf War made the United States the most important foreign power in the Gulf region. The war laid the foundation for a more active U.S policy towards Kuwait. The United States relationship with Kuwait moved from a hesitant and distant relationship into a relationship of security and cooperation.

The reflagging of Kuwait oil tankers with the United States during the Iran-Iraq War had been the first step in security operations between the United States and Kuwait. In 1985, Iran began attacking Kuwaiti oil tankers to make Kuwait's financial and strategic support for Iraq costly. Kuwait, however, turned to the United States for protection against Iran. The reflagging operation allowed Kuwait to export its oil freely under U.S control.

Kuwait's relationship with the United States has transformed its foreign policy objectives and priorities. The United States remains the only guarantor of Kuwaiti security against its more powerful neighbors.

---

<sup>172</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invasion\\_of\\_Kuwait](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invasion_of_Kuwait)

The U.S.-Kuwaiti strategic partnership intensified dramatically again after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The United States spearheaded UN Security Council demands that Iraq withdraw from Kuwait and its authorization of the use of force, if necessary, to remove Iraqi forces from the occupied country. The U.S.-Kuwaiti relationship has remained strong in the post-Gulf War period.

### **The Future of Kuwait**

Over the past 250 years, Kuwait has grown from a small community of fishermen pearl divers and traders into one of the most influential economies in the Middle East. With as estimated 10% of the world's oil reserves and one of the highest levels of investment outflows per capita, Kuwait will continue to hold a secure position in the world affairs as long as industrialized countries such as the United States remain dependent on oil. Fed by a steady stream of high government revenues and heavy public investments, Kuwait has established itself as one of the region's leading economies, bolstered by a large corps of private investors and a thriving energy sector. Kuwait now can focus its resources and attention on its three main long-term challenges: strengthening its economy, stabilizing its political system and society and developing its defenses and foreign relations.

One of Kuwait's most important long-term goals is planning for a future in which its oil is depleted. Fortunately, the country still has large reserves of oil that will last many years.

In order to reduce the risks and impact of rising and falling oil prices on the Kuwaiti economy, many years ago the Kuwaiti government created the Kuwait Fund for Future Generations (KFFG). The KFFG is a state reserve fund managed by the state run Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA). According to Kuwaiti law, 10% of Kuwait's oil income goes directly to the fund for investment elsewhere. In 2004, KFFG's value was estimated at USD \$70 billion. Experts say measures to restructure Kuwaiti economy are needed not only to diversify the economy but also to reduce Kuwait's reliance on foreign skilled and technical labor.

The global economic and financial crisis has highlighted the long standing need for further diversification of Kuwait's economy, and the enhancement of the role of the private sector in non-oil activities in order to provide job opportunities for the stream of Kuwaiti nationals entering the workforce. Not only would diversification generate

employment, it would also help Kuwait to achieve a steady path of sustainable development. Kuwait foresees a future in which oil and non-oil sectors go hand in hand in a sustainable path of growth and development.

Kuwait's future is intricately linked with resolution of its political issues. If political unity can be achieved, the country's many blessings - an educated population, a century's worth of oil reserves, a booming economy, and the United State as its defender – all promise Kuwait a bright future and a prominent role in the Middle East.



## LEBANON

**Editor's Note: Lebanon was always considered as the perfect example of peaceful relations between different religious communities, until it exploded into communal strife in 1975. That explosion was basically a fall-out of the Israel-Palestine conflict, and the effects of that conflict continue to affect the situation in Lebanon even today.**

### **Introduction:**

The geographic location of Lebanon in the Eastern Mediterranean has shaped its cultural identity on the basis of religious and ethnic diversity.

The history of Lebanon can be traced back more than 7000 years, when the earliest known residents lived in Byblos - one of the world's most ancient cities. Lebanon was home to the Phoenicians who played an important role in creating a naval and maritime culture.

Muslims took control of Lebanon during the rule of the first Caliph, Abu Bakr. This brought about enormous changes in all spheres of Lebanese society. The Ottoman Empire, which lasted 400 years, faced many challenges, particularly with security issues. The roots of present-day Lebanon can be traced back to the conclusion of the First World War, which led to the partition of the Ottoman Empire and the decision of the League of Nations to place Lebanon under the French rule.

Lebanon gained independence in 1943, during Nazi Germany's occupation of France. The first independent Lebanese government was formed on the basis of a power-sharing agreement, which granted representation to various sects. The agreement brought about a Maronite President, a Sunni Prime Minister, and a Shi'a Speaker of the Parliament. The relevant parties to the agreement opted for a confessional political system.

Lebanon's confessional system of government aimed at the political participation of the various religions. Co-existence between Muslims and Christians could best be described by trust and cooperation. Christians and Muslims shared a mutual sense of freedom, prosperity and freedom. It was this diversity and co-existence that made Lebanon so unique. The confessional political system also had its negative

implications, none more evident than a sense of belonging more to a particular religion than to a nation.

Lebanon's best years preceded the Civil War which broke out in 1975. During the years of 1960–1975, Lebanon was a peaceful and prosperous nation. It was a unique attraction for tourists. Its economic stability depended on tourism and banking, and it was known as the “Switzerland and Paris of the Middle East.”

Nevertheless, Lebanon's Civil War, which lasted 15 years, had a devastating impact. Almost 350,000 were killed or wounded, 900,000 displaced, and the economy was paralyzed. The internal strife ended in 1990 with the signing of the Taif Agreement between the warring communities.

### **Ancient History**

Lebanon's history dates back thousands of years. Antique remnants discovered by archeologists reflect the way in which fishing communities lived along the coasts of Lebanon over 7000 years ago. Historical records from around 3000 BC indicate Lebanon as inhabited by a Semitic people whom the Greeks called the Phoenicians. The Phoenician civilization constituted the coasts of present Lebanon, Syria and northern Israel as its heartland. They innovated the naval and maritime trading culture which they sought to spread throughout the Mediterranean region during the period 2500–1200 BC.

The Phoenicians enjoyed trade relations with Greece and ancient Egypt during the rule of the Pharaohs. They exported cedar, olive oil, wine, and textiles, as well as glass, wood and royal purple. They were the first to invent an alphabet with thirty letters. They developed city-states, which were independent, yet all controlled by a king. They built colonies in Cyprus, Rhodes, Crete and Carthage.

During the period 875–608 BC, the Assyrians ruled over Lebanon, and were responsible for destroying all its prosperity. The reign of the Assyrians experienced repeated and unsuccessful rebellions which occurred in the most famous cities of the Phoenician empire, such as Tyre, Byblos, and Sidon. Finally at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century BC, as a result of numerous revolutions and rebellions, the Assyrian Empire was weakened to the point where it was toppled, and was then succeeded by the Babylonians who had already controlled many of the major cities of Phoenicia.

The Babylonians also experienced several rebellions in the Phoenician cities, including Jerusalem and Tyre during the period 685–

636 BC. Finally in the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, while the Babylonian armies were preoccupied with the challenge of suppressing rebellions, their capital was seized by the Persians, and this resulted in the collapse of the Babylonian Empire.

In 539–38 BC, Phoenicia, along with its neighbors, was conquered by Iranian Achaemenids. The Persian Empire divided Sidon, Tyre, Arwad and Byblos and most Phoenician cities into smaller territories. These cities flourished and helped equip the military of the Persian Empire by strengthening the naval power of the Persians during the Persian–Greco War which lasted from 490 to 449 BC.

In 333 BC, Alexander the Great set forth to capture Lebanon's main cities. He succeeded in his efforts, with the exception of Tyre, which eventually fell. The Macedonian forces destroyed parts of the city, killed more than 2000 members of the senior ranks and sold the remaining population as slaves. Following the demise of Alexander the Great, all empires that were under his control were divided among his most senior military commanders. The eastern part of Phoenicia, Asian Minor, and some parts of Syria and Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq) were handed to Seleucus, founder of the Seleucid dynasty. The Seleucid Empire witnessed continued rebellions, struggles and clashes which resulted in the fall of the Empire in 64 BC. This led to the inclusion of Syria and Lebanon as part of the Roman Empire, resulting in a new era of growth and prosperity in Lebanon. The country regained its place as the center of economic and intellectual activity.

In 395 AD, the Roman Empire was divided into two parts – the eastern and western empires. The eastern part, based in Constantinople came under the control of Byzantine Empire, under which Lebanon fell. A number of natural disasters created difficult socio-economic conditions which gave rise to abuse and corruption at a mass scale, and paved the way for the fall of the Byzantine Empire at the hands of the first Caliph of Islam Abu Baker in 634 AD.

### **Rise of Islam**

Following the death of Prophet Mohammad in 632 AD, the first Caliph of Islam, Abu-Bakr, led a mass movement in an effort to expand influence and control throughout the Eastern-Mediterranean region. In 636 AD Muslim forces confronted the Byzantine forces in the historic battle of Yarmuk in the northwestern part of Jordan. Muslim forces captured the region. During their rule, Muslims brought enormous changes in various spheres of society, including socio-economic and

political life. They created an environment in which different sects, ethnicities and tribes would co-exist peacefully.

The Umayyad dynasty would soon emerge as the main power in the region. The new Dynasty would exert control for 100 years under the leadership of the Muawiyah family. Muawiyah recognized the importance of having a powerful navy as a means to consolidate control and suppress any attack by Byzantine forces. He therefore engaged in a serious effort to strengthen his naval capability with support of local shipbuilders. He also deployed most of his troops in the coastal cities of Lebanon to stop raids carried out by Marada - a proxy force operating under the command of the Byzantine authorities against the Muslims. It was during the Umayyad reign that most of the Arab tribes settled on the Syrian and Lebanese shores.

The rule of the Umayyad Dynasty came to an end in 750 A.D. The Abbasids forcibly replaced the Umayyad and exerted control over Syria and Lebanon.<sup>173</sup> The Abbasids also confronted the Byzantine over the sea fronts, which included territories throughout the Mediterranean, as well as areas located between Anatolia and northern Syria. Abbasids kept Beirut as a strategic stronghold against any attack by Byzantine forces. Byzantine forces continued to wage attacks, while continuing to strengthen its military capability until the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>174</sup>

It was during the Abbasid era, and the reign of Caliph Haroon Al Rashid in particular, that Lebanon made important advances in the areas of science, literature and philosophy. Moreover, economic activity increased along coastal borders of both Tyre and Tripoli, much of which consisted of export of goods such as textiles, ceramics and glass products.

The Abbasid Dynasty was succeeded by the rule of Shia Fatimid caliphs, who took control of these lands and exerted control during 996-1021 AD. Their followers, known as the Druze, formed a community comprising of Muslims and Christians.<sup>175</sup>

Lebanon was the heart-land during the Crusades in 1095–1291 AD. In 1099 AD the Crusaders surprisingly crossed the shores in the eastern Mediterranean and captured Jerusalem. They moved towards and conquered the coastal cities of Lebanon: Beirut, Sidon, Tyre and Tripoli. It was during this era that the Maronites demonstrated their trust and

---

<sup>173</sup> Michelle Bisson, Lebanon culture of the World 2007

<sup>174</sup> William W. Harris, Faces of Lebanon 1997.

<sup>175</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanon>



affiliation for the Crusaders. This was perceived by the Arabs as a serious source of tension that had the potential to divide the Middle East. Muslim forces, led by Saladin, and later by Mamluk, launched attacks against the Crusaders, and regained control of all cities and strongholds previously controlled by the Crusaders in Lebanon.<sup>176</sup>

#### **Ottoman Rule:**

In 1516 AD, the Ottomans, led by Sultan Salim I demolished the Cairo-based Mamluk Empire and gained control of Syria and Lebanon. Despite gaining control, the Ottomans decided that it would be best to have the new territories governed by the indigenous Druze Emir, Fakhruddin, instead of ruling it themselves. However, between 1518 and 1585, the Druze initiated numerous rebellions against the Ottomans which were suppressed.

Although the European powers had traded in Lebanon for centuries, in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century they began to reach out to indigenous communities to form political alliances. These alliances were based on mutual interests: protection of indigenous populations in return for access to markets. The Maronite viewed French protection as the best guarantee for political autonomy. The process saw the French forming relations with Maronite Christians; the Russians with Orthodox Christians; and the British with the Druze and Sunnis. A series of internal conflicts among the client communities arose in 1860. The enabled the European powers to exert greater control over Lebanon.<sup>177</sup>

#### **The French Mandate**

In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, France was the sole guarantor of Maronite protection. The conclusion of the First World War saw the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and the League of Nations granted France a mandate to oversee political developments in Syrian and Lebanon. The French immediately endeavored to expand the frontiers of Lebanon, making it more feasible in regards to economy and demography. One of the immediate effects of this expansion was an increase of Sunnis and Shiites in Greater Lebanon.

Nevertheless, the French Mandate also faced challenges; the most significant of which was the conflict between Maronite Christians, who generally supported the concept of an independent Lebanon, and the Sunnis, who favored reincorporation in Syria of the territories which had been annexed by France in 1920.

---

<sup>176</sup> Ellen Krabbe, *Lebanon the Phoenician Pearl* 2001, translated by Kirk McElheam

<sup>177</sup> Division of Congressional Quarterly INC. Washington DC. *The Middle East*,

Lebanon would eventually achieve its independence from France, during its occupation by German Nazis, in November 1943. The foundation of the new Lebanese state was formed by an unwritten agreement known as the National Pact between prominent Muslim and Christian leaders. “The National Pact laid down four principles.

First, Lebanon was to be an independent state. The Christian communities were to cease identifying with the West; in return, the Muslim communities were to protect the independence of Lebanon and prevent its merger with any Arab state.

Second, although Lebanon was an Arab country with Arabic as its official language, it could not cut off its spiritual and intellectual ties with the West, which had helped it attain such a notable degree of progress.

Third, Lebanon, as a member of the family of Arab states, should cooperate with the other Arab states.

Fourth, public offices should be distributed proportionately among the recognized religious groups, but preference should be given to competence in technical positions without regard to confessional consideration”.<sup>178</sup>

Lebanon’s first independent government was formed on the basis of inclusiveness, aimed at ensuring equal representation to various sects of society. Lebanon appointed a Maronite President; a Sunni Prime Minister; and a Shiite Speaker of Parliament. A unique political system, referred to as “Confessional” was thus created.

#### **The Arab-Israeli War**

Lebanon adopted a policy of passive support during the Arab-Israeli War in May 1948. It refused to engage in direct military confrontation with Israeli forces, and opted to provide support to Arab countries through reinforcements and military and logistical support, including armored vehicles. The war had many ramifications, including an influx into Lebanon of over a hundred thousand Palestinian refugees, who were later unable to return to their lands.<sup>179</sup>

#### **The Civil War**

The roots of the civil war in Lebanon date back to April 1975 with the assassination in Beirut of the Christian politician Pierre Gemayel and his close circle of advisers by unknown assailants. It was widely

---

<sup>178</sup> Thomas Collelo, Lebanon a Courtesy Study 2003, Lebanon Current Issues and Background, edited by John C. Rolland.

<sup>179</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanon>

perceived that the assassination was plotted by a group of Palestinians. The assassination led to violent retaliations with Christian gunmen shooting at a group of Palestinians, killing twenty-six.<sup>180</sup>

The ramifications of the conflict were enormous, impacting all facets of Lebanese society. 150,000 people were killed, close to 200,000 wounded and some 900,000 displaced. As a result, Lebanon lost its economic boom which it enjoyed during the 1950s and 1960s.

Lebanon's civil war left the country weak and a victim of interventions by neighboring countries. Once an attraction for tourists, Lebanon transformed to a strategic location where the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) would organize, coordinate and initiate military attacks against Israel. For its part, Israeli forces invaded Lebanon on two occasions, 1978 and 1982, in an effort to dismantle and eliminate all PLO support centers. Following its invasion of Lebanon, Israeli forces remained in Lebanon until the adoption of Resolution 425 by the UN Security Council, calling for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops.

In 1976 Syrian forces invaded Lebanon, and maintained their military presence until 2006, one year after the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Al- Hariri. Syria was considered as the catalyst in Prime Minister Hariri's assassination.

Lebanon's Civil War eventually ended in 1990, following fifteen years of continued violence, characterized by internal conflicts and foreign interventions. Lebanon finally witnessed a new era in with the signing of the historic Taif Agreement, on the basis of which, relevant parties to the conflict agreed to a power-sharing government, as well as drafting a new constitution and national reconciliation strategy.<sup>181</sup>

In August 1990 the new Lebanese Government agreed to amend the country's constitution with a view to implementing a number of important reforms on the basis of the Taif Agreement.

Among the changes that came about was the number of seats in the National Assembly, which were increased to 128 – divided equally between the Muslims and the Christians. In addition, another important provision in the agreement was a call on all armed groups, excluding Hezbollah and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, to disarm and either take part in the national army or reintegrate to normal life.<sup>182</sup>

---

<sup>180</sup> Michel Young, *The Ghost of Martyrs Square*

<sup>181</sup> Kail C. Ellis, *Lebanon's Second Republic 2002, Prospect for the Twenty-first Century*

<sup>182</sup> <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/ci/le/>

The appointment of Prime Minister Rafiq Al Hariri in 1992 generated hope and optimism among the people of Lebanon in the prospect of lasting peace and prosperity in the country. Prime Minister Hariri was a popular figure perceived by the majority of the population as someone who had Lebanon's best interest at heart. Following his appointment, Prime Minister Hariri immediately appointed a new cabinet, and prioritized Lebanon's reconstruction, rebuilding of its economy and attracting foreign direct investment. Given his popularity, Prime Minister Hariri was re-elected as Prime Minister in 2000.

However, Mr. Hariri's life was cut short as a result of a horrific terrorist attack which took place against his convoy, killing him and twenty-members of his entourage. Many believe that the attack was in response to his opposition to an amendment of the constitution calling for an extension in the presidential term of service. Syria was the key advocate for not extending the tenure of the presidency for a third term.

The assassination led to massive demonstrations and violence by supporters of Prime Minister Hariri.<sup>183</sup> Many believe that the Syrian Government was behind the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri. Accordingly, international pressure against Syria reached a point where the Syrian Government decided to withdraw its forces from Lebanon in 2005.

In May 2005, Sa'ad Hariri, son of Rafiq Hariri was elected to serve as Prime Minister of Lebanon by a majority vote. He then formed a coalition government with the inclusion of ministers from Hezbollah. Sa'ad Hariri prioritized substantial political and economic reform. The new coalition government endorsed Hezbollah's right to bear arms as part of a national resistance against any act of aggression by Israeli forces.<sup>184</sup>

The situation between Lebanon and Israel improved during 2000-2006. However, Hezbollah and Israel engaged in a fierce conventional battle following the killing of three Israeli troops and kidnapping of two others on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2006. In retaliation, Israeli air forces struck key Hezbollah strongholds in Lebanon while embarking on a fierce ground operation. The United Nations Security Council adopted the Resolution 1701, calling for an immediate end to the hostilities. The resolution called on Israel to withdraw its troops from Lebanon as well as calling on Hezbollah and other armed groups to disarm. The Security

---

<sup>183</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanon>

<sup>184</sup> <http://www.state.gov>

Council also demanded adoption of strict measures for preventing transport of illegal weapons into Lebanese territory. The Security Council also increased the number of peace-keeping troops from 2,000 – 15,000.<sup>185</sup>

### **The Future**

Religion has played an important role in shaping Lebanon's unique political system where power is shared among the various religious communities. When Lebanon gained its independence from France in 1943, the first independent Lebanese government was formed on the basis of an unwritten agreement. The agreement brought to power a Christian Maronite as President, a Muslim Sunni as Prime Minister, a Muslim Shi'a as Speaker of Parliament, and a Christian Orthodox as Deputy Speaker of Parliament.

Lebanon is considered to be the most diverse society in the Middle East. It comprises eighteen religious groups and communities, of which Muslim Sunnis, Muslim Shi'as and Christian Maronites are the largest. Each of these sects make-up over 20% of Lebanon's population and hold the most powerful political and military portfolios. The Christian Orthodox and the Druze are the second largest sects and assume the second tier of power.

Each religious group has successfully established their community. The Maronite Christians settled in Northern Lebanon; the Druze in Central regions; the Shi'as in the South of the country; and Sunni Muslims in the strategic and commercial coastal cities: Beirut, Sidon and Tripoli.

Since the rise of Islam, Muslims and Christians have co-existed. It is customary for Muslims and Christians to take part in joint religious, cultural and spiritual events. However, the two religions have also experienced times of conflict. The confessional system of government has in certain ways widened the gap between various religious communities. It has helped shape a sense of belonging to a particular religion, instead of a nation. This has paved the way for some groups to forge alliances with neighboring countries to consolidate their position of power. For example, Maronite Christians allied themselves with Israel and countries of the West. Sunni Muslims identify themselves with the Pan-Arab Nationalist Movement and support the Palestinian people.

---

<sup>185</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html>

The Arab-Israeli War in May 1948 opened a new chapter in the intervention by regional and international actors in Lebanon's internal affairs. Southern Lebanon was transformed into a strategic base from which the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) would strategize, plan and conduct guerilla attacks against Israel. On the other hand, Israel would seek to utilize Maronite Christians as a proxy as part of its military endeavor against the PLO. In that regard, Israel would aid and abet the Maronites with logistical, financial military support. Israel also sought to utilize the Maronites in an attempt to achieve a mini-state sympathetic to Israeli interests and objectives. It is evident that peace, stability and prosperity can only be achieved in Lebanon by creating a sense of national unity among the various religious communities.

## MOROCCO AND THE WESTERN SAHARA

**Editor's Note: The dispute over the Western Sahara, like the disputes over Kashmir and Northern Cyprus, continues to fester and threaten the fundamental right of self-determination which is given such a high status in the Charter of the United Nations. As a result, it impacts not just the region of North Africa, but the very credibility of the United Nations itself.**

### Introduction

Africa's longest-running territorial dispute, over a territory that is larger than Great Britain, has now marked its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The conflict between the Kingdom of Morocco and the indigenous Sahrawis over the sovereignty of Western Sahara had been dragging for decades. It is rarely broadcast in the news which is why some have termed it "Africa's forgotten conflict".<sup>186</sup>

Over 75 percent of the Sahrawi population has been living in refugee camps for decades. Agriculture is almost impossible and life is harsh, due to the lack of water. This deserted land is however rich in high-grade phosphates, and the sea offers abundant fish and largely untapped offshore oil and gas deposits.

The conflict originated in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, at a time when the European powers were gradually losing their grip over their African colonies. But Western Sahara became a failed experiment in decolonization, a territory torn between the legitimate aspirations of the indigenous population and a neighbor's claim to equally legitimate domination.

Since then, the United Nations (UN) has been actively seeking a peaceful solution to the dispute. The UN does not recognize Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara and classifies it as a non-self-governing territory. As such, the UN continues to support a referendum in Western Sahara to determine its future. Despite the passage of decades, it has not been possible to organize a referendum, and the dispute continues.

---

<sup>186</sup> Richard Hamilton, *'Groundbreaking' talks on Sahara*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6764161.stm> (March 2011).

## History

Morocco and Western Sahara were originally inhabited by the Berber tribes. The tribal system was based on a strict code of honor. The unity of the tribe lied in their deep-rooted ties of loyalty and solidarity. The Berbers were proud of their freedom, and their allegiance lay with the tribal authority.<sup>187</sup>

The Berber kings had an alliance with Carthage, then with Rome, until the region fell under Roman domination. The Berbers regained their independence after Rome lost the territory in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD.<sup>188</sup> The first Arab expeditions arrived in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century, bringing Islam and the Arabic language. It then moved southward establishing itself in the Berber territories and gradually assimilating the Berbers into Arab culture.<sup>189</sup>

The first kings that unified Morocco were the Idrisids, but by the 10<sup>th</sup> Century they were replaced by a series of Berber dynasties. In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, they were succeeded by two Arab tribes who claimed to be descendants of Mohammed: the Saadids, and the Alawis. These dynasties still rule Morocco today.<sup>190</sup>

Despite several alliances, the different Berber tribes kept a varying degree of independence, and their loyalty to the neighboring Emirs and Sultans was always short-term and depended upon a number of circumstantial factors. The main source of authority came from the Muslim rulers, but beyond the religious influence their nomadic lifestyle and constant wars among the tribes made it impossible to exert control over them.<sup>191</sup>

While it is true that there were instances of close cooperation between tribal leaders and Moroccan Sultans at different points in time, these alliances were invariably ephemeral, and in the age of the European colonies, highly influenced by the presence of France and Spain.<sup>192</sup> The historical maps of the Maghreb show that the territory of Western Sahara

---

<sup>187</sup> Albert Hourani, *A History Of The Arab Peoples* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), pp. 104-108.

<sup>188</sup> Abderrahman El Ouazghari, "El mundo indígena y Roma en el Marruecos antiguo: La religión durante los períodos prerromano y romano" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Granada, 2005).

<sup>189</sup> Op. cit, Hourani

<sup>190</sup> ibid

<sup>191</sup> ibid

<sup>192</sup> Deborah Touboul and Moshe Terdman, "Sheikh Ma al-'Aynayn's Jihad against the French – An Inspiring Figure for Present Sahrawis in Western Sahara", *The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM): Islam In Africa Newsletter* Vol. 1, Number 6 (November 2006): p. 4.



was certainly within the sphere of influence of the Moroccan rulers, but it is difficult to argue that it was ever within the borders of Morocco<sup>193</sup>.

### **The impact of the European colonization**

In the 1880s, as the Ottoman Empire waned and European powers divided the African continent among themselves, Western Sahara fell under the rule of Spain, but not without strong opposition from the local tribal leaders. The European colonizing powers inherited the same difficulties and power struggles among the desert tribes that the former local ruling dynasties had faced, and found it extremely challenging to consolidate their rule. France consolidated its dominion over Morocco in 1912, while Spain struggled to establish itself in the large territory of the Western Sahara, which it named “*Sahara Español*”. It wasn’t until the 1930’s that Spain was finally able to exert some real control over the inhabitants of the inner Western Sahara, with the help of the French military. Western Sahara only became a Spanish province in 1958, after France had already lost Morocco.<sup>194</sup>

As was the case elsewhere in Africa, the arbitrary borders that European colonies imposed between their colonies disrupted the traditional balance of power, the century-old desert routes, the migration patterns, and the socioeconomic relations. Each colony was subjected to the particular laws, language, administration style and way of life of another country, which had an impact upon the cultural identities of the peoples that ended up on either side of the border. In Western Sahara the belated colonization by Spain meant that the inhabitants were able to hold on to the ancient ways of the nomads for longer than in French Morocco, where a large percentage of the population soon became sedentary, and migrated in considerable numbers from the countryside to the cities.<sup>195</sup>

Morocco remained a colony of France until its independence in 1956. Even after Morocco’s independence, Spain held on to the Western Sahara, as well as Ceuta and Melilla, two coastal cities inside Moroccan territory, strategically placed and with key maritime connections to Europe, which are still part of Spain to this day.

### **Sahrawi nationalism and the Polisario Front**

---

<sup>193</sup> Op. cit, Hourani, Maps.

<sup>194</sup> Carlos Ruiz Miguel, *El Sahara Occidental y España: Historia, Política y Derecho. Análisis crítico de la Política Exterior española* (Madrid: Editorial Dykinson, 1995)

<sup>195</sup> Op. cit, Hourani

Detailed historical accounts of Sahrawi nationalism before the 1960's do not abound, but it is certain that it originated among the indigenous inhabitants of the *Sabara Español*, and gradually grew stronger amid a general resurgence of nationalist ideals in the region as a rejection of the presence of the Spanish colonialists.

In December 1960, the United Nations' General Assembly passed Resolution 1514, which contained the Declaration of Independence for colonial countries and peoples, and set forth the principles which were to guide their right to self-determination. In accordance with these principles, the Special Committee on Decolonization declared Western Sahara a non-self-governing territory in 1963. The General Assembly then issued resolutions 2072 (XX) in 1965, and 2229 (XXI) in 1966, which specifically called for the organization of a referendum that would allow the Sahrawis to choose their own fate.

In 1947 Spain had discovered that this deserted land was very rich in phosphate deposits. Spain exploited them from 1970 to 1975. As a result, Spain was loath to relinquish its domination over the territory, and delayed the implementation of the referendum for as long as it was possible.<sup>196</sup>

Sahrawi nationalists started to organize and formed the *Harakah Al-Tabrir Al-Sabra* (Movement of Liberation of the Sahara) in 1967, under the leadership of Mohammed Bassiri. This association was brutally repressed by the Spanish.

In 1973, they initiated a new independence movement and began an armed struggle against Spain. This movement took a Spanish name: *Frente Popular de Liberación de Sagúia el Hamra y Río de Oro*, more generally known by its acronym, Polisario. Since then, the Polisario Front has played the role of representing the Sahrawi people and their struggle.

Those who defend the notion that Western Sahara is an integral part of Morocco have denied the native origin of Polisario, refusing to recognize the existence of the Sahrawi people.

Author Abdelhamid El-Ouali insists that Spain created a "pseudo-Sahrawi nationalism"<sup>197</sup>, and "invented" a Sahrawi people as part of a complicated ploy that involved wresting the territory away from Morocco through the creation of a fake new country.

---

<sup>196</sup> Abdelhamid El Ouali: *Saharan Conflict: Towards Territorial Autonomy As A Right To Democratic Self-Determination*, p. 92.

<sup>197</sup> Op. cit., El Ouali, p. 93.

In other words, according to El Ouali, the early Sahrawi struggle for self-determination was in fact a neo-colonial scheme of Spain, aimed at retaining control of the territory and continuing to exploit the resources, through a friendly puppet regime in Western Sahara.

### **The Madrid Agreement**

By 1974, pressure from the UN forced Spain to finally agree to conduct the referendum, but both Morocco and Mauritania opposed this on the grounds that the territory actually belonged to them. At the behest of the General Assembly, the matter was referred to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). In October 1975, the ICJ rulings upheld the claim of the Sahrawi people to self-determination, by stating that even though there had been historical bonds between some Western Sahara tribes and the Moroccan and Mauritanian royal dynasties, these did not imply the sovereignty of either of them over the territory or the people of Western Sahara.<sup>198</sup>

But in November 1975, King Hassan II of Morocco ordered the "Green March", in which approximately 300,000 Moroccans moved across the border to reclaim the territory, prompting Mauritania to reassert their own claim. Instead of standing by the Sahrawi people and its earlier promise to conduct the referendum, Spain quickly backed out and negotiated a settlement with Morocco and Mauritania, known as the Madrid Agreement.

Through the Agreement, signed in November 1975, Spain agreed to withdraw completely and end its colonial rule over the region, but the territory was split in two between Morocco, which kept the two-thirds in the north, and Mauritania, which kept the southern-most part. As a result of the division and occupation of the territory, thousands of Sahrawis fled Western Sahara, and were allowed by Algeria to settle as refugees in Tindouf.

Two months later, Spain relinquished its hold on Western Sahara.

### **The Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR)**

The partition of Western Sahara was not accepted by Polisario, who immediately started a guerrilla war against Moroccan and Mauritanian forces. From its headquarters in Tindouf, Polisario declared the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in February 1976 and

---

<sup>198</sup> Carlos Ruiz Miguel, *Una documentación esencial para conocer el Sáhara Occidental*  
[http://www.umdraiga.com/documentos/ONU\\_dictámenes/Opinion\\_consultiva\\_16octubre1975.htm](http://www.umdraiga.com/documentos/ONU_dictámenes/Opinion_consultiva_16octubre1975.htm)  
 (March 2011).

then announced its first government. In August that year, Mohamed Abdelaziz, the current SADR president in exile, was elected Polisario's Secretary-General.

In August 1978, a new Mauritanian government started peace negotiations with Polisario. By 1979, Mauritania had renounced all territorial claims and Morocco moved to occupy the areas abandoned by Mauritania. To keep Polisario at bay, Morocco started building a fortified sand wall, which sealed off more than 70 percent of Western Sahara territory. Completed in 1987, the wall extends today over 2,700 km across the desert. The wall is safeguarded with barbed wire, ditches and mine fields, and it effectively separates the portion dominated by Morocco from the strip of land under the control of Polisario.<sup>199</sup> Although greatly curtailed by the wall, the warfare between Polisario and Morocco did not come to an end, but actually lasted for another decade, until 1991.

#### **The unattainable referendum**

The war was expensive and debilitating for both sides: analysts estimate that Morocco's occupation of the territory cost 1.17 million dollars a day between 1976 and 1986.<sup>200</sup> In 1988, UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar approached the parties with a peace plan, which stipulated a bilateral ceasefire, followed by a transition period of up to 8 months that would lead to a referendum, in which the Sahrawis would choose between independence and integration with Morocco. The plan was accepted by Morocco and Polisario. In 1990, the Security Council issued Resolution 658, endorsing the peace plan, and in April 1991 the UN established the United Nations Mission for a Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), whose mandate was to implement the peace plan. A ceasefire was then declared in September 1991.

Both parties seemed to be headed for a peaceful solution, but problems surfaced very soon. The first impasse came about with relation to the identification process, that is, the decision on who would be eligible to vote in the referendum. Initially, identification was to be based on a census carried out by Spain in 1974, which counted the Sahrawi people at 74,000. Moroccans, on the other hand, wanted the

---

<sup>199</sup> BBC News, *World's barriers: Western Sahara*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8343241.stm> (March 2011).

<sup>200</sup> Konstantina Isidoros, "Awakening protests in Morocco and Western Sahara", *Pambazuka News: African awakenings: The spread of resistance* Issue 521, <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/issue/521> (March 2011).

people who had settled in Western Sahara after the Green March to be granted the right to vote, which Polisario obviously refused. Morocco claimed that these people were genuine Sahrawis. Without these latter settlers in the voting roll, Morocco would have lost the vote: the Sahrawis would have won their independence and Moroccan forces would have been forced to leave.

The tensions over voter identification reached such a height that in May 1996 the UN suspended the process and recalled most MINURSO civilian staff. Only the military personnel remained, in order to oversee the ceasefire, due to the serious risk of either party breaking the truce. Ever since, despite repeated diplomatic initiatives, all attempts to revive the referendum process have failed.

### **The Baker Proposal**

Secretary-General Kofi Annan, determined to put an end to the long conflict, appointed former American Secretary of State James Baker as his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara in March 18, 1997. Mr. Baker was charged with mediating between the parties and helping them negotiate a peaceful and mutually acceptable solution. Mr. Baker mediated numerous talks between Polisario and Morocco from 1997 to 2000. Agreements were reached on many points, but everything came to a standstill over the issue of vote eligibility.

In a new bid to break the deadlock, James Baker submitted a new draft peace plan: the "Framework Agreement", known as the Third Way, in the last week of June 2001. According to the plan, Morocco was to be given temporary sovereignty over the territory, and in exchange the Moroccan government would allow the Sahrawi residents a certain measure of autonomy. Over four years, democratic institutions would be put in place that would allow the Sahrawis to exercise self-determination. At the end of this transition period, the referendum on independence, semi-autonomy or integration with Morocco would take place. The plan also settled the question of voter identification: Moroccan settlers who were residents in Western Sahara for over a year would be allowed to vote. This proposal, was rejected by Polisario and Algeria.

In July 2003, the Security Council adopted its new compromise Resolution 1495 which proposed that Western Sahara become a semi-autonomous region of Morocco for a transition period of up to five years, after which the referendum would take place. Polisario formally accepted it, but King Mohammed VI changed the former Moroccan position, and for the first time Morocco refused the proposal because it

included the option for Sahrawi independence, despite the fact that Morocco had previously agreed to include this clause in the referendum. James Baker resigned in June 2004. Mr. Baker was succeeded in his task by Mr. Alvaro de Soto and later by Mr. Peter van Walsum, who supported the same policies as their predecessor.

A new series of talks were conducted in New York between June 2007 and March 2008 under new Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, with the support and participation of Algeria and Mauritania. Unfortunately, the several rounds of talks, known as the “Manhasset Negotiations”, yielded no result. As the BBC reports, “the two sides barely negotiated”.<sup>201</sup> In January 2009 Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed former US ambassador to Algeria Christopher Ross as his new Personal Envoy to deal with the Western Sahara issue. Mr. Ross has visited the area several times, the last in October 2010. So far the process remains deadlock and the status and sovereignty of Western Sahara is still unresolved. Morocco retains *de facto* administrative control of the territory.

#### **Algeria, Mauritania and the Maghreb**

Since the peace negotiations with Polisario in 1978, and the withdrawal of forces in 1979, Mauritania has remained less active than the other actors in the conflict. It recognized the SADR in 1984, but has offered little material help or financial support to its government in exile or to thousands of refugees. It has chosen to maintain a low-profile role. Even though Mauritania’s main trade partners are by far the European Union and China, Morocco remains a key participant in the country’s economic landscape.<sup>202</sup>

Algeria has been the Sahrawis’ most indefatigable ally since the start of the conflict. It has unfailingly supported Polisario, by helping to fund its army and government, allowing the Sahrawi refugees to settle in its territory, and leading the diplomatic efforts to tilt the international scales in favor of Western Sahara. Under General Assembly Resolution 845, each year the Algerian Government offers a large number of undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships to students from Western Sahara, mostly in the fields of science and technology, thus making an invaluable contribution to the education of Sahrawi youth.

---

<sup>201</sup> Laura Trevelyan, *Western Sahara rivals at UN talks*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7299572.stm> (February 2011).

<sup>202</sup> European Commission - Directorate General for Trade, *Mauritania EU Bilateral Trade and Trade with the World* (March 2011).

The Western Sahara issue has significantly hindered North-African cooperation and development. One example is the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), which is a trade agreement for the economic and political cooperation of North African countries. The agreement was signed in 1989, but so far its progress has been minimal, and its main stumbling block has been the rivalry between Morocco and Algeria and their disagreement on the question of Western Sahara.<sup>203</sup> In May 2005, in Tripoli, Libya, the AMU was to hold its first summit since 1994, but King Mohammed VI of Morocco declared he would not attend due to the ongoing dispute with Algeria over the Western Sahara. The summit was subsequently cancelled.

#### **The African Union**

The Western Sahara conflict is undoubtedly an obstacle to the unity of the entire African continent. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) allowed the SADR to attend its meetings in 1982, despite the forceful opposition of Morocco, and welcomed the SADR as a member in 1984, electing Mohamed Abdelaziz as Vice President of the OAU. Morocco promptly left the organization in protest as a strong political message. As the OAU became the African Union (AU) in 2002, once again the members elected Abdelaziz as Vice President, signaling the organization's continued support for SADR's claims.

At the level of individual member states, the AU is virtually split in two over the issue of Western Sahara: Half of them recognize the SADR and have diplomatic relations with it, while the other half suspended or froze relations, or even withdrew recognition. As is the case with Mauritania, many countries maintain strong political and trade ties to Morocco and can hardly be expected to jeopardize them over the issue.

#### **The US and Europe**

The United States and European countries have maintained what may be viewed as an intentionally ambiguous position towards this issue, even though officially they support the UN's efforts to mediate a solution and champion the Sahrawis' right to self-determination. The only major European power that has a clearly defined position towards the Western Sahara is France, who openly endorses Moroccan **position over** Western Sahara.

---

<sup>203</sup> Luis Martínez, "Algeria, the Arab Maghreb Union and Regional Integration", *Euromesco Papers* Paper 59 (October2006): p. 8.

During the years of the Cold War, Polisario was associated with Cuba and Libya, and as a result the United States, along with other western countries, endorsed Morocco and provided critical funds and support for Morocco's war efforts.<sup>204</sup> <sup>205</sup> In addition, Morocco is a relatively liberal Muslim kingdom that has had a long history of good relations with the US, and the two countries even signed a free trade agreement in January **2004**.

It is difficult to say whether an independent Sahrawi republic or a Morocco-controlled Western Sahara would provide greater security and less vulnerability to the influence of Islamic extremism and terrorism. Polisario is a secular nationalist movement, and their political ideology does not involve a strong religious component, but for the United States Morocco has proved a stable friend and partner, that has hitherto managed to ride out the current turmoil in the Middle East.

The economic interests involved in the situation are substantial. The European Union remains Morocco's number one trade partner, amply surpassing the country's import and export totals with the United States, China and India.<sup>206</sup> Both US and European companies have interest in the oil and gas findings off the coast of Western Sahara, as well as in the vast reserves of phosphates and the largely unexploited bounty of fish, which European fishing industries desperately need.

#### **Other actors**

##### *MINURSO*

The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was established in April 1991, through the Security Council's Resolution 690. MINURSO's personnel were 1,000 civilians, 1,700 military and about 300 police officers. The mission's mandate was to assist the Secretary-General's Special Representative as he took the helm of the transition outlined in the peace plan, starting as soon as the ceasefire was achieved and leading up to the much-anticipated referendum. More specifically, its tasks was to supervise the ceasefire and the exchange of prisoners, to oversee the repatriation of the refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and

---

<sup>204</sup> Op. cit., Stephan and Mundy, p. 8.

<sup>205</sup> Carlos Ruiz Miguel, *El Sahara Occidental y España: Historia, Política y Derecho. Análisis crítico de la Política Exterior española* (Madrid: Editorial Dykinson, 1995).

<sup>206</sup> European Commission - Directorate General for Trade, *Morocco EU Bilateral Trade and Trade with the World* (March 2011).



to organize both the registration of voters and the referendum.<sup>207</sup> MINURSO was intended to last about eight months, until the referendum could take place and the transition could be safely concluded.

The mission's target was never achieved, and the transition never advanced beyond the initial steps of the ceasefire. When the UN decided to call off the identification process, five years after its creation, MINURSO was left with only a small component of 230 military observers and troops and 35 international police.

Notwithstanding the fact that it was never fully deployed, MINURSO is a costly peacekeeping operation: it has cost the UN about \$4 million dollars a month since its creation twenty years ago<sup>208</sup>. As often as the Secretaries-General have threatened to pull the mission out of the territory, in a bid to scare the parties into breaking the stalemate, throughout the years the mission has been repeatedly extended by the Security Council, despite the slim chances of a resolution of the conflict in the near future. While it was unable to achieve its original mandate, MINURSO does accomplish a range of important functions in the area, making certain that the ceasefire continues to hold, and providing assistance to the Sahrawi in their many necessities.

*UNHCR, WFP and other entities from the UN System.*

Over 1,000 kilometers from Algiers, deep in the Sahara desert near the town of Tindouf, generations of Sahrawis have lived as refugees for 35 years. Although there are no exact numbers, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UNHCR and other organizations estimate 165,000.<sup>209</sup> The refugees reside in four camps: Smara, El Aaiun, Dakhla, and Awserd.

The Sahrawi refugees depend entirely on humanitarian aid, since the little that they manage to cultivate is not enough to adequately feed them. Most of the international aid is provided by the World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF and UNHCR. The refugees' nutritional

---

<sup>207</sup> United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minurso/mandate.shtml> (February 2011).

<sup>208</sup> UN 'standing firm' on W Sahara, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3833047.stm> (February 2011).

<sup>209</sup> UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2011 UNHCR country operations profile – Algeria, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e485e16> (March 2011).

needs require close to 25,000 tons of food per year.<sup>210</sup> At times, insufficient funding and budget cuts have caused serious food shortages in the camps, and despite over 150 million dollars' worth of assistance over 25 years, malnutrition remains a threat.<sup>211</sup>

*The International Committee of the Red Cross.*

As of 2001, ten years after the ceasefire, nearly 1,500 Moroccan prisoners-of-war were still living in the Sahrawi camps in western Algeria, held captive by Polisario<sup>212</sup>. These Moroccan soldiers were by then the longest serving prisoners of war, as most of them had been held there for over 20 years. According to the Geneva Convention, all the prisoners should have been released at the time of the ceasefire in 1991.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) played a crucial role in the situation of the POWs. It first gained access to the camps in 1994, and started raising international awareness about the physical and mental health of those detained, lobbying for their release while working to keep the humanitarian issue of the prisoners separate from the political question of the future of Western Sahara. The ICRC also repatriated the prisoners as and when they were freed: throughout the years, the ICRC organized all the flights that took the released prisoners from the Polisario camps in Tindouf to Moroccan territory.

Until 2002, the Polisario Front had freed only a handful of prisoners over the years. Starting in 2002, they started releasing them in larger numbers. By July 2003, nearly 1000 Moroccans had been released, and the last remaining 404 prisoners were finally set free in August 2005.<sup>213</sup> Polisario continues to claim that the whereabouts of 151 Saharawi POW captured by Morocco forces during the war and more than 500 political detainees are still unknown.

#### **The issue of the natural resources**

Moroccan inflexibility over Western Sahara may be less a matter of national pride and historical rights, and more a matter of securing resources. Morocco produces less than 1,000 barrels of oil a day and

---

<sup>210</sup> UN News Centre, Western Sahara refugees face looming food shortages, UN agencies report, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=4575&Cr=Western&Cr1=Sahara> (March 2011).

<sup>211</sup> World Food Programme, *Algeria*, <http://www.wfp.org/countries/algeria> (March 2011).

<sup>212</sup> Peter Biles, *Forgotten Sahara conflict drags on*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1191810.stm> (February 2011).

<sup>213</sup> BBC News, *Last Moroccan war prisoners freed*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4162790.stm> (February 2011).

spends heavily on energy import. As analyst Alexis Arieff has pointed out, “Although the [Western Sahara] territory may be a short-term financial liability, its actual and potential resources may be a long-term economic boom.”<sup>214</sup>

According to the latest available data from the World Petroleum Assessment of the US Geological Survey, North Africa still holds some of the largest reserves of unexplored gas and oil in the continent. The Grand Erg/ Ahnet Basin, is thought to hold almost 600 million barrels of oil and over 8,000 billion cubic feet of gas, along with about 400 million barrels of natural gas liquids. This immense reserve is approximately 220,000 sq. mi., equivalent in size to about one quarter of the total territory of Algeria, and is located almost entirely within the said country. Only a small corner of it, measuring about 10,000 sq. mi., is located within the territory of Morocco.<sup>215</sup>

On the other hand, 31,000 sq. mi. of the territory of Western Sahara (on land and off-shore) are part of the so-called Senegal geological “province”, which according to the same source is expected to hold over 2,000 million barrels of oil, almost 19,000 billion cubic feet of gas, and over 500 million barrels of natural gas liquids.<sup>216</sup>

In 2001, Morocco signed a reconnaissance deal and granted an exploration license for the Western Sahara to American and French oil companies. In February 2002, the UN Under Secretary General for Legal Affairs, Hans Corell, ruled that Morocco had no right to award contracts for oil exploration in Western Sahara. He said the exploitation of resources in non-self-governing territories was only allowed if conducted “for the benefit of the peoples of those Territories, on their behalf or in consultation with their representatives”.<sup>217</sup> Mr. Corell also said that if exploration and exploitation of the oil resources of the Territory “were to proceed in disregard of the interests and wishes of the people of Western Sahara, they would be in violation of the principles of international law applicable to mineral resource activities in Non-Self-

---

<sup>214</sup> Op. cit., Arieff, pp. 4-5.

<sup>215</sup> U.S. Geological Survey World Energy Assessment Team, *U.S. Geological Survey World Petroleum Assessment 2000 – Description and results*, <http://certmapper.cr.usgs.gov/rooms/we/index.jsp> (March 2011).

<sup>216</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>217</sup> *Letter dated 29 January 2002 from the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, the Legal Counsel, addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2002/161)*.

Governing Territories”<sup>218</sup>. As a result of this, the foreign oil companies eventually withdrew from Western Sahara, while others indicated that they would not be conducting any work in the territory without permission from the SADR.

The oil would allow the Sahrawis the financial support they need to start re-building their country, so the SADR since 2002 has been undertaking steps to prepare for the future. The government in exile has demarcated 12 offshore exploration blocks, and has conducted two rounds of license offerings, in 2005 and 2008, culminating with the signing of “Assurance Agreements” with several oil companies. The “Assurance Agreements” are to become contracts as soon as the SADR is formally recognized by the UN and admitted to the General Assembly.<sup>219</sup>

According to the SADR Oil and Gas Exploration web page, in 2009 Mr. Corell stated at an international conference that the same legal principles that govern the exploration and exploitation of the oil resources would also apply to fisheries activities, confirming the illegality of the 2005 EU-Morocco Fisheries Partnership Agreement under which EU vessels are allowed to fish in Western Sahara waters<sup>220</sup>. The SADR called on the European Union to suspend the Agreement immediately. Nonetheless, Morocco and the EU continue to take advantage of it, despite the opposition of some European politicians.

### **Conclusion**

What is the best possible solution for Western Sahara: integration with Morocco, autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty or independence?

In the case of autonomy, it is doubtful that it would be much more than a nominal autonomy. How much control the Sahrawis would actually have would depend on the terms under which autonomy is granted, and the mechanisms proposed to protect it. Even in the best-case scenario, there are few guarantees that Morocco would fully respect the terms of autonomy.

In the case of integration, how would Moroccans and Sahrawis coexist? Could the Moroccan government guarantee no discrimination

---

<sup>218</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>219</sup> SADR Oil and Gas Exploration, *Presentation - Oil & Gas License Offering 2008*, <http://www.sadroilandgas.com/publicity.htm> (February 2011).

<sup>220</sup> SADR Oil and Gas Exploration, *EEZ Background*, <http://www.sadroilandgas.com/publicity.htm> (February 2011).

or oppression to the Sahrawis? After decades of conflict, repression and violence, there is deep resentment between Moroccans and Sahrawis, and there are many unresolved issues that would certainly put coexistence under strain.

In the ultimate analysis, the matter is essentially one of decolonization, which is very much on the agenda of the different committees of the United Nations. On this basis, as indicated by the ICJ, perhaps the free exercise of the right of self-determination through a credible referendum might be the best approach for the United Nations.

A Moroccan Western Sahara is perhaps not in the best interest of Africa and the Middle East: letting Morocco expand to double its current size, with unquestioned domination over Western Sahara and therefore unlimited access to its bounty of natural riches, might create an imbalance of power in the region. Even for the United States, allowing Morocco to take over Western Sahara could backfire in the future, in case the current developments in the Arab lead to perhaps an Islamist party at the helm of a country with such strategic significance and large reserves of valuable resources.

For decades, the Western Sahara issue has been a cohesion factor for the Moroccan people. But beyond the “Greater Morocco” nationalist slogans, the reality is that the occupation of Western Sahara, even after the ceasefire, has been very costly to Morocco. For decades it has been draining away the resources that should have been spent on social development, infrastructure and economic growth. Morocco’s military expenditures remain a heavy burden on its economy, and this factor could turn Moroccan public opinion in favor of a final resolution of the protracted conflict. This is especially true now as popular rejection of autocratic rulers is increasing in the region.

Nonetheless, the Moroccan government still has the support of powerful allies within the UN Security Council, and globally. It is an active partner of NATO, and has been extremely supportive of some of the western world’s interests and preoccupations in the region. It is not surprising that so far Morocco has received little pressure by these countries on the Western Sahara issue, and the situation is likely to remain so, as long as the main players continue to benefit from the status quo.



## OMAN

**Editor's Note: Among the six Gulf Cooperation Council states, Oman is noticeable for the remarkably quiet and unassuming nature of its government and people, all the while pursuing a most pragmatic and balanced foreign policy. Its controlling situation at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, and its close relations with Iran and Pakistan, give it its great and enduring strategic importance.**

### Introduction

The name Oman has been linked to the migration of Arab tribes from a place in Yemen called "Uman".<sup>221</sup> It has also been suggested that Oman may have been named after Uman, son of Abraham or Uman bin Saba, the son of Abraham's son Joktan.<sup>222</sup> In fact, the early Roman historian, Yalainous (23-79 AD) acknowledges a city named Omana, which is also mentioned in the writings of Ptolemy.<sup>223</sup>

Situated in the extreme south-eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, Oman shares a desert (a movable overland-body known in Oman as the Empty Quarter) with Saudi Arabia and has a common border with the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen on the south-west. It has a 3,165 kilometer-long coastline that runs from the Arabian Sea to the Indian Ocean. The Sea of Oman lies in the north, where it overlooks and shares the Strait of Hormuz with Iran.<sup>224</sup>

Omanis are famous for their expertise in navigating the monsoon (*mausin* in Arabic), a seasonal changing weather pattern that brings about a rainy and dry season winds, and which impacts the currents of the Indian Ocean.<sup>225</sup> Generally, the winds in the "north of the equator are predictable, blowing northeast to southwest and north to south, then reversing at regular six-month intervals in April and

---

<sup>221</sup> Oman 2009-2010, Ministry of Information, Sultanate of Oman

<sup>222</sup> *ibid*

<sup>223</sup> [www.inoman.com](http://www.inoman.com)

<sup>224</sup> Oman 2009-2010, Ministry of Information, p12

<sup>225</sup> Omani Dhow, [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

October.”<sup>226</sup> The monsoon weather pattern, and the Omani spirit of adventure left their footprints on the basin of the Indian Ocean.

Medieval Oman was also known for its navigators, the most famous of all was Ahmad Ibn Majid - a great sea-captain of legendary fame who sailed the Arabian and the Red Sea. He wrote a handbook in the fifteenth century, entitled “The Book of Useful Information on the Principles and Rules of Navigation”.<sup>227</sup>

By the 10<sup>th</sup> Century, the geographer al-Muqaddasi called Oman’s port, Sohar, the gateway to China and the storehouse of goods from the Orient and Iraq. Evidence of trade with these areas is provided by shards of Chinese porcelain and Iranian pottery excavated in Sohar. It is also claimed that Sohar was home to the famous legendary figure - Sindbad the Sailor.<sup>228</sup>

Since ancient times, Oman also maintained strong ties with all the civilizations, with which it had close commercial links. It enjoyed trade with China, India, Mesopotamia, the Eastern Mediterranean, Nile Valley, and Eastern Africa in particular.

### **Islam in Oman**

In Islamic history, Oman was among the first countries to embrace Islam voluntarily. It has been recorded that Prophet Mohammed contacted Oman’s leaders in 6<sup>th</sup> Century. The first Omani to receive the call and message of the Islamic faith was Mazin bin Ghaduba Al-Tay. Following his revelation, Mazin traveled to meet Prophet Mohammed and dedicated himself to the path of Islam, to obeying its laws and to spreading the word of Islam. With Oman’s strong merchant trading links, it was instrumental in spreading the word to other countries such as Persia, and as far as India, Iraq, the eastern coast of Africa, and China.<sup>229</sup>

From early on, the Ibadhi school of Islam was embraced, and it is still one of Oman’s main religious groups.

One difference from Sunni Islam is that the Ibadhis believe that the Koran was created, while the Sunni hold that it is uncreated. Another difference relates to the process of selecting the leader of the Islamic

---

<sup>226</sup> Monsoon, Robert D. Kaplan

<sup>227</sup> Maritime History of Oman, <http://mo.gov.om>

<sup>228</sup> Monsoon, Robert D. Kaplan, p45

<sup>229</sup> Oman From the Dawn of Islam, Ministry of Information, Sultanate of Oman, [www.omanet.com](http://www.omanet.com)



community as a successor to the Prophet. Ibadhis believe that the most devout and most intelligent Muslim should lead the community, regardless of ethnic origin, class or genealogy, while others, like the Shia, believe that their leader must be a descendant of the Prophet.<sup>230</sup>

From 751 AD, Muscat and Oman choose imams to rule the region as spiritual leaders. This elective theocracy lasted for four centuries until 1154 AD, when Banu Nabhan succeeded in establishing the Nabhanite dynasty. That lasted until 1429 when the hereditary authority was challenged by an elected imam, which became a trait of Omani tradition.

In Oman Sunnis, Shias and Druze have coexisted and thrived for centuries.<sup>231</sup>

### **The Empire of Oman**

The territory of Oman has always benefited from its trade position. But the benefit of a great location also brought the misfortune of foreign invasions in the quest to control and exploit Oman's territorial position.<sup>232</sup>

From the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC until the arrival of Islam, both Muscat and Oman were under the control of either the Persian Empire or the rulers from neighboring Yemen, as well as the caliphs of Medina, present day Saudi Arabia.<sup>233</sup>

In the early 16<sup>th</sup> Century, the Portuguese entered the Gulf of Oman, opening their trade route to India and into China by establishing control of the neighboring region. Hence, the build-up of a permanent garrison on the island of Hormuz after sacking the town of Muscat and other forts along the coasts of Oman. Between the early 16<sup>th</sup> and mid 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries, Portugal ruled the Indian Ocean.<sup>234</sup>

Around this period, the accession of Imam Nasser bin Murshid, as Imam of Oman, in 1624 AD marked the start of the Yaruba rule. Imam Nasser succeeded in uniting the country under his leadership, hence, the name Muscat and Oman. This was the first time, after equipping a powerful naval fleet, he was able to reduce Portuguese

---

<sup>230</sup> Oman: a brief historical sketch, De Nieuwekerk Amsterdam, [www.nieuwekerk.nl](http://www.nieuwekerk.nl)

<sup>231</sup> History of Oman, [www.historyworld.net](http://www.historyworld.net)

<sup>232</sup> *ibid*

<sup>233</sup> *ibid*

<sup>234</sup> *ibid*

influence and free some of the coastal towns and cities from foreign control.<sup>235</sup>

Imam Sultan bin Saif continued using force against the Portuguese and in 1650 AD his forces liberated Muscat. This brought the decline of Portuguese power in the Gulf, as Omani forces drove them out of the region.<sup>236</sup> In the 1690s the Portuguese were completely ejected from Oman, the coastal regions of Mozambique and from Zanzibar. Zanzibar was a valuable property at the time as the British had made it their main slave market in the Eastern African coast.

Zanzibar then became an important part of the Omani empire, and in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the Sultan of Oman, Said ibn Sultan, made it his main place of residence.<sup>237</sup>

The death of the Sultan created a rivalry between his two sons (Majid and Thuwaini) and the territories were split, with Zanzibar and other East African coastal territories going to Majid, and Muscat and Oman to Thuwaini. This was done under the forceful diplomacy of the British who also acted as the “protectorate” of Oman.<sup>238</sup>

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a series of power struggles were witnessed between the interior and the coastal region of Oman, indicating a clear lack of unity despite the fact that British negotiated the Treaty of Al-Sib between the Imam and his allies, and the sultan.

It was in the second half of the last century, under the leadership of one of the descendants of Sultan Thuwaini and Sultan Qaboos, that Oman was finally unified as a nation-state and was declared The Sultanate of Oman.<sup>239</sup>

### **Contemporary Oman**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, under the geopolitical strategy known as “The Great Game”, Britain and Russia competed for the control and access to world markets and resources, primarily in Central and South Asia. At the turn of the last century, British power was challenged by the rise of American naval force. After World War II, a series of Middle East

---

<sup>235</sup> Oman 2009-2010, Ministry of Information, p37

<sup>236</sup> *ibid*

<sup>237</sup> History of Oman, [www.historyworld.net](http://www.historyworld.net)

<sup>238</sup> *ibid*

<sup>239</sup> *ibid*

historical events, like the nationalistic movements, internal and external pressures of the Cold War, ultra-conservative religious arrangements, the Iranian Revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Gulf Wars and the invasion of Iraq by the United States, all had a destabilizing affect on the region and on the internal affairs of Oman.

The discovery of oil and natural gas, and the geo-strategic position of Oman once again placed it on a vital position of global interest. The narrow Strait of Hormuz, which Oman shares with Iran, is a choke-point, through which 60% of the world's crude oil passes.<sup>240</sup>

The year 1970 is marked as a “renaissance” for Oman. It was the beginning of a new era for Oman. Sultan Qaboos bin Said's enlightened approach for transformation via well-planned initiatives for social and infrastructure development projects started during this time. He undertook the challenge of economic diversification and the consolidation of an Omani national identity – a clear departure from a fractured past.

According to analysts, in the 1970s, Oman suffered from internal forces of change that were influenced by regional actors. In terms of domestic environment, the first twenty years of Sultan Qaboos can be identified as the years when initial steps were taken in the direction of state formation and social cohesion. The 1990s are described as the consolidation years.<sup>241</sup> Today, the Middle East and particularly the Gulf region, continues to be a part of mainstream news and media attention.

### **The War on Terror**

The pragmatic policies of Oman have not made it immune to the wave of religious fundamentalism that has swept the Middle East. In the mid-1990s, Omani police and security forces cracked a ring of individuals and weapons, and hundreds of political activists belonging to a highly sophisticated and secret Islamic organization with links to the Muslim Brotherhood which attempted to overthrow the regime were arrested.<sup>242</sup>

Following the arrests, Sultan Qaboos stated that “Extremism under whatever guise, fanaticism of whatever kind, and factionalism of

---

<sup>240</sup> Monsoon, Robert D. Kaplan, p.16-17

<sup>241</sup> Oman's Foreign Policy Between 1970-2008, Emin Akseki, May 2010

<sup>242</sup> Ibid, p. 151

whatever persuasion, would be hateful poisonous plants in the soil of our country, which will not be allowed to flourish.” This is an indication that the tradition of Omani Islamic pluralism is to be respected as part of its national character.<sup>243</sup>

### **New National Initiatives**

During the political climate of the 1990s, Sultan Qaboos replaced the official State Consultative Council with the Shura Council (an advisory council for consultation with local or regional leaders) with an emphasis on greater power sharing and providing wider representation. Some argue that this initiative was the result of a precaution by the government to ease critics. According to other analysts, this happened on the sole initiative of Sultan Qaboos, without any demands from the public.<sup>244</sup>

In 1996, the government announced a new plan named “Vision 2020” addressing challenges that Oman’s economy had to face. The plan focused on three areas: promoting economic diversification, private investment/privatization and human resources. In the 1990s the Sultanate began to search for ways to decrease its dependence on oil revenues, and to achieve replacement results by 2020 when oil reserves are expected to be depleted.<sup>245</sup>

In 2003, Sultan Qaboos declared universal suffrage. Until that time, members of the Council of Shura used to be elected by the electorates determined by the Government. With the new election law, every Omani over 21 years of age has the right to vote. In the 2003 and 2007 elections, members of the Council were elected by the Omani people.<sup>246</sup>

In the last thirty years Oman has come a long way to institutionalize its economy and to develop its infrastructure. In October 2000, Oman was admitted to the World Trade Organization.<sup>247</sup>

### **Diplomatic Independence**

The British withdrawal from the Gulf and the historical developments of the region brought about new challenges for Oman in

---

<sup>243</sup> Ibid, p. 150-151

<sup>244</sup> Ibid, p. 152

<sup>245</sup> Ibid, p. 155

<sup>246</sup> Oman’s Foreign Policy Between 1970-2008, Emin Akseki, May 2010

<sup>247</sup> Ibid, p. 197

relation to its neighbors. Analysts describe Oman's relations with Iran until the Islamic Revolution of 1979 as much closer than those of its relations with its Arab brethren.<sup>248</sup>

After the Iranian Revolution, Oman sought to continue its close relations with Iran,<sup>249</sup> and regarded the Islamic Revolution as an internal matter. Sultan Qaboos stated that "Iran is our neighbor, we have close historical, religious and geographic links with Iran and we are eagerly looking forward to expanding our relations with her in all fields in order to make the region a safer place to live in."<sup>250</sup>

As a regional power, Iran has become more assertive, claiming a leadership role in issues such as stability in Iraq, the future of Lebanon, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. In order to isolate Tehran, the West has tried to convince the Gulf countries that Iranian policies were the main cause for instability in the Middle East.<sup>251</sup> Oman has, on the other hand, advocated that a prosperous and stable Iran would enhance and consolidate the chances of comprehensive peace in the Gulf and the Middle East.<sup>252</sup>

A similar independence is visible in the relations between Oman and Israel. In April 1994, an Israeli delegation participated in the meeting of Middle East Multilateral Working Group on Water Resources held in Muscat. That was the first official visit by Israel to an Arab Gulf state. In November 1994, Yosi Beilin, Deputy Foreign Minister of Israel, paid one-day official visit to Oman. In December 1994, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin visited Oman. In the later part of 1995, Oman and Israel announced that they had agreed to establish trade relations, with Oman becoming the first Arab Gulf country having trade with the Jewish nation.<sup>253</sup>

In 1996, Israel's new Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, visited Oman and the two countries agreed to open Trade Offices in Muscat and Tel Aviv. In addition, Israel offered its expertise in desalination and

---

<sup>248</sup> Ibid, p. 83

<sup>249</sup> Ibid, p. 87

<sup>250</sup> Ibid, p. 88

<sup>251</sup> Ibid, p. 213-214

<sup>252</sup> Ibid, p. 184

<sup>253</sup> Ibid, p. 172-175

other water and agricultural schemes and in 1996 Middle East Desalination Research Center was established in Muscat.<sup>254</sup>

Unfortunately, after Prime Minister Netanyahu assumed power, the relations between the two countries have deteriorated drastically.

Recently, the USA presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, and its accusations against Iran, made it very complicated for the Gulf countries to have normal relations with Iran. Yet, Oman has managed to maintain a relatively independent approach.<sup>255</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In the context of the local, regional and international developments, the visionary approach of Sultan Qaboos has resulted in an atmosphere of positive dividends for Oman. The creation of a cohesive and national identity, has placed Oman on the track of developing into a modern nation.

A stable Oman with ease of access to the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean will increase the strategic location of Oman, as a gateway for the passage of crude oil and natural gas into the world markets. This would serve the Omani interests for a vision even beyond 2020.

---

<sup>254</sup> Ibid, p. 178

<sup>255</sup> Oman's Foreign Policy Between 1970-2008, Emin Akseki, May 2010, p. 212

## QATAR

**Editor's Note: Qatar has evidenced the most extraordinary development over the past two decades. It has become one of the most important states in the world, in politics, in economics, in sports, and in a host of other activities, all as a result of an enlightened leadership, and an aggressively positive and exemplary use of its enormous wealth.**

### Introduction

Qatar lies in the Arabian Peninsula, between Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf. It has an area of only 11,586 square kilometers and has a population of around 900,000, making it one of the smallest countries in the region.

Yet, it is regarded as one of the richest Gulf States and has the second highest per capita income, and the world's highest economic growth rate in 2010.<sup>256</sup>

Qatar was part of the Ottoman Empire and later the British Empire. It gained independence in September 1971.<sup>257</sup> After its independence, Qatar transformed itself from an under-developed state into an economically wealthy, politically stable and socially progressive country.

In the past, Qatar's economy relied heavily on pearling and fishing. However, after 1940, oil and gas reserves were discovered which helped develop the country's economy.

Qatar is now one of the richest states in the Gulf region due to its oil and gas reserves.

### Early History

Qatar has a rich and vibrant history. Archaeological evidence suggests that Qatar has been inhabited before the sixth millennium BC, making it one of the fifteen states which formed the cradle of

---

<sup>256</sup>Central Intelligence Agency, "The CIA World Fact Book: Qatar", CIA, 2010

<sup>257</sup>New World Encyclopedia Contributors, "Qatar", New World Encyclopedia, 2007, <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Qatar>

humanity.<sup>258</sup> An ancient site was discovered at Shagra on the South-East of Qatar. Other findings of stone tools and pottery at Al-Khore, Bir Zekrit and Ras Abaruk reveal that Qatar was closely linked to the Al-Ubaid civilization which was dominant in the fifth and 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC in the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates.<sup>259</sup>

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC, during the Bronze Age, Qatar became a trade hub as it was the main trading route from Mesopotamia to the Indus Valley settlements in India.<sup>260</sup>

During the Persian Sasanid Empire, the Arabian Gulf, and in particular the ports of Qatar, became a major hub for trade. Copper, spices, sandalwood, teak, and black wood from the East were exchanged for shipments of purple dye, clothing, pearls, gold and silver, with Qatar providing the bulk of the purple dye and pearls for trade.<sup>261</sup>

Until the 7<sup>th</sup> Century AD, Qatar and the other Gulf regions were idol worshippers. However this changed when Islam came to the region. Prophet Mohammad sent his envoys to Qatar and the surrounding areas in 628 AD, converting the people of the Arabian Peninsula to Islam. Today, over 77% of Qatar's population is Muslim.<sup>262</sup>

Qatar saw a steady increase in trade activities during the next few centuries. In the Umayyad period (661-750 AD) Qatar was viewed as a top trading centre for camels and horses. This had very important economic implications as these animals were able to carry goods to the interior areas of the Gulf region.

During the Abbasid period (750-1258 AD), the pearling industry developed considerably in the rich waters around Qatar. Qatar produced some of the most beautiful and valuable pearls, and the demand for Qatari pearls increased in the Eastern lands.<sup>263</sup>

### **Foreign Involvement**

Due to Qatar's strategic importance in the Gulf, many foreign nations saw the value of either controlling or establishing strong ties with

---

<sup>258</sup> The State University, "Qatar History Background: Reserves, Thani, Bahrain, Peninsula, country and Arab",

<http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1242/Qatar-HISTORY-BACKGROUND.html>

<sup>259</sup> Amiri Diwan, "history of Qatar", 2010

[http://www.diwan.gov.qa/English/Qatar/Qatar\\_history.htm](http://www.diwan.gov.qa/English/Qatar/Qatar_history.htm).

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "The CIA World Fact Book: Qatar", CIA, 2010,

<sup>263</sup> Amiri Diwan, "history of Qatar", 2010

[http://www.diwan.gov.qa/English/Qatar/Qatar\\_history.htm](http://www.diwan.gov.qa/English/Qatar/Qatar_history.htm).



Qatar. Qatar's modern history began in the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century when the present Al-Thani ruling family of Qatar, which originated from the Al-Maadhid (a branch of Bani Tamim) tribe of Ushaiqir in the province of Al-Washm of Nejd (now in Saudi Arabia), arrived in the southern part of Qatar and soon became the predominant family of the region. In the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century the family moved to the northern part of Qatar in the areas of Zubara, Ruwais and Fuwairat, where they established extensive pearling operations.<sup>264</sup>

From the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the Portuguese established trade points in the Gulf. However, they imposed harsh measures upon the locals. Aid was finally sought from the Ottoman Empire and the Portuguese were driven back. As a result the Arabian Peninsula had strong ties and obligations to the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire began expanding in the Arabian Peninsula in 1871 as it realized the strategic importance of Qatar and the surrounding states. The ruling Sheik, Mohammed Bin Thani was against Ottoman rule of Qatar, but his son, Jassim Bin Mohammed al-Thani, accepted Ottoman sovereignty in 1872.

Jassim was often at odds with the Turks; however, he did not openly speak against their rule, because he hoped that they would aid him in quieting down the sheikhs in other towns who opposed his rule, particularly regarding neighboring Bahrain's claims on the town of Az Zubarah.<sup>265</sup> Inevitably a dispute broke out between Qatar and Bahrain over the town and Qatar managed to retain it. Qatar and Bahrain continued to have territorial disputes. The major dispute between them was over Hawar Islands. This dispute ended in June 2001 when the case was referred to the International Court of Justice. The ruling declared that Bahrain had ownership over Hawar main, but Qatar received Zubarah on its mainland. The end of this territorial dispute resulted in better relations between the two countries although, sporadic disagreements over maritime claims still occur.<sup>266</sup>

Britain recognized Qatar as a separate state from Bahrain in 1867 and offered the country protection from other Arabian states. The

---

<sup>264</sup>Central Intelligence Agency, "The CIA World Fact Book: Qatar", CIA, 2010,

<sup>265</sup>Amiri Diwan, "history of Qatar", 2010

[http://www.diwan.gov.qa/English/Qatar/Qatar\\_history.htm](http://www.diwan.gov.qa/English/Qatar/Qatar_history.htm)

<sup>266</sup>Nations Encyclopedia, "History Qatar: Problem, tariffs, infrastructure, future, power", 2010, [www.nationsencyclopedia.com](http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com)

Ottoman rule finally ended in 1914 when the Turks left at the beginning of World War I. The British then recognized Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani as ruler, and a treaty was signed between the two sides, giving control of Qatar's foreign policy to Britain. In return, the British promised to protect Qatar from all aggression by sea and to lend their offices in case of a land attack. A 1934 treaty granted more extensive British protection thereby giving Britain direct rule over Qatar.<sup>267</sup>

The foreign involvement in Qatar set the country back not only in its social and political development, but economically as well.

### **Independence**

In 1968 Britain declared its intent to relinquish its power over the Gulf States. A meeting ensued between Qatar and the other eight former British protectorates. The aim was to form one country. However, agreement could not be reached between the nine different states. Therefore, Qatar and Bahrain became independent countries; while, the other seven territories joined together to form the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

At its independence in 1971, Qatar was a poor nation. Pearl fishing had suffered during the great depression and cultivated pearls had become a wide-spread practice in Japan, which lowered the value of Qatari pearls dramatically.<sup>268</sup> Due to Britain's control of Qatar's foreign policy, its international trade was virtually non-existent. Independence ensured that Qatar had full control over its government and resources for the very first time.

Ahmed Al-Thani was the first independent ruler and Amir of Qatar. In 1972 his cousin, Sheikh Bin Hamad, took over through a peaceful coup which was supported by the al-Thani family. In 1995, Hamad bin Khalifah al-Thani overthrew his aged father in another bloodless coup. It was discovered that his father had been using state funds to finance his own expenditures. This practice was severely damaging the Qatari economy. Amir Hamad froze his father's bank accounts, and used the money to develop Qatar further in terms of setting up natural gas infrastructure. He gave the right to women to vote

---

<sup>267</sup>New World Encyclopedia Contributors, "Qatar", New World Encyclopedia, 2007, <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Qatar>.

<sup>268</sup>The State University, "Qatar History Background: Reserves, Thani, Bahrain, Peninsula, country and Arab", <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1242/Qatar-HISTORY-BACKGROUND.html>

and to run for municipal elections in 1999. He also drew up a new constitution for Qatar in 2003, which saw the development of an elected parliament. The media was also given a freer range as can be seen in Qatar's main television broadcast, Al Jazeera which was launched in 1996 and is now available worldwide. Amir Hamad's rule has helped in the political, social and economic development of Qatar.<sup>269</sup>

Qatar's history has led to the country adopting a dual legal system of Sharia and Civil Law. The Sharia system, which is the law that governs Muslims was introduced into Qatar after the advent of Islam. However, when Britain assumed protectorship over Qatar, it introduced a western legal system into Qatar in order to deal with the non-Muslim inhabitants and immigrants. After independence Sharia law became the principal system again. However, Amir Hamad bin Khalifah al-Thani recognised the problems with this system. Therefore, he created the Adlia Court to deal with cases involving foreigners and Qatari nationals. Over the years the Sharia Court has ceased to apply the law over all Muslim matters, rather it focuses on Muslim status and family issues such as divorce, inheritance, criminal offences within families etc., while, the Adlia Court which is fully independent of Sharia Law deals with cases of labour, trade and other public and international cases.<sup>270</sup> This dual legal system aids in making Qatar more liberal and diverse than other Gulf States.

### **International Relations**

Qatar has been a leading and active member in various international organisations. It joined the United Nations (UN) in 1971. It obtained chairmanship of the Group of 77 in 2004. It was elected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for 2006-2007. It holds the Presidency of the General Assembly for 2011-2012.

It has played a large part in offering relief services to countries in need, such as Lebanon in 2006, when the country was attacked by neighbouring Israel. It also pledged \$40 million in relief for Gaza in February 2009. On 30 November 2010, Qatar along with the UN, launched a humanitarian appeal for 2011. The appeal aims at providing

---

<sup>269</sup>Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Digital Documentation Centre, "Qatar: The duality of the legal system", <http://ddc.aub.edu.lb/projects/pspa/Qatar.html>

humanitarian relief to 50 million people worldwide. The appeal is the largest in the history of consolidated appeals.<sup>271</sup>

Qatar is also an active member of the following UN organizations: United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); UN Development Program (UNDP); UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); UN Commission on the Status of Women; UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); UN Industrial Organization (UNIDO); UN World Tourism Organization (WTO). Qatar also participates actively in protecting the climate; it was the 134<sup>th</sup> country to sign the Kyoto Protocol on 11 January 2005 which aims at fighting global warming and stabilizing green house gases.<sup>272</sup>

Qatar played a major role in the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) which was formed in May 1981. The GCC has seen many successes over the years and helps bind the Gulf States into a bloc that has considerable standing in world affairs. The current Secretary General is Abdul Rahman bin Hamad al-Attyah from Qatar.<sup>273</sup>

Problems arose in the GCC when Saudi Arabia and Qatar had a border dispute in 1992. Qatar declared that Saudi Arabian troops had attacked one of its border posts, killing two guards. Saudi Arabia denied that it was trying to expand into Qatar; it claimed that it was fighting between local tribes that had caused the incident. Subsequently Qatar suspended a 1965 border agreement with Saudi Arabia. It also withdrew its military force from the GCC Peninsula Shield base in Saudi Arabia. In October relations improved due to mediation efforts by Kuwait. However, Qatar continued to display its dissatisfaction with Saudi Arabia by refusing to join the GCC meeting of Ministers in November 1992 in Abu Dhabi and Kuwait. Egypt then conducted a mediation agreement between Qatar and Saudi Arabia in which they agreed for a committee to formerly draw the borders between the two countries. In March and October of 1994, Qatar once again accused Saudi Arabia of using military force on the border and refused to attend the GCC meeting in

---

<sup>271</sup>Qatar Mission, "Permanent mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations", 2010 [www.qatar.mission.org](http://www.qatar.mission.org)

<sup>272</sup>Central Intelligence Agency, "The CIA World Fact Book: Qatar", CIA, 2010,

<sup>273</sup> Gulf Cooperation Council, "The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf"

November 1994 in Saudi-Arabia. In 2002 the border dispute was finally settled and Qatar and Saudi Arabia have resumed friendly relations.<sup>274</sup>

Today Qatar and Saudi Arabia rely on each other for trade and often enter into trade with foreign powers together. The border dispute between the two countries did not result in any major conflict due to the intervention of the GCC and other Arab states. If more disputes were settled in such a manner it would reduce the number of pointless wars which place financial and political strain on the involved countries.

### **Oil and Gas**

The Gulf region is rich in oil and natural gas. The first oil reserves in the region were discovered in Iran in 1908. Britain showed a lot of interest in this discovery in the region. They aided in discovering oil at Dukhan in Qatar in 1940. However, due to the Second World War, oil exploration was halted and only resumed in 1949. In 1951 Qatar was already producing 46,500 barrels a day. The second stage of oil investment in Qatar started in November 1952 after signing an agreement with the Dutch Corporation Shell, which was named later Qatar Shell Limited Corporation, for the exploration of oil in Qatari regional waters. Off shore oil production began in 1966 when oil was discovered at al-Idd Al-Sharqi. The off shore discoveries increased Qatar's production to 230,000 barrels a day.

After independence Qatar was able to manage its own oil affairs. In 1977, it nationalized all the oil companies, giving the administration of oil affairs to two major companies: Qatar Shell ltd and Qatar oil ltd. In 1971 Qatar discovered the largest natural gas field in the world. It took some years to establish the gas fields and production only began in 1992. The Ras Laffan Company for Natural Gas was established in 1993 with a production capacity of 10 million tons of natural liquefied gas to be exported to Asian markets, in particular to South Korea. Qatar also began laying down pipes so that it may supply the surrounding Gulf States with natural gas.<sup>275</sup>

Today most of Qatar's wealth stems from its oil and natural gas reserves. In 2010, oil and gas accounted for over 50% of the total GDP, 85% of exports and 70% of government revenue. The countries

---

<sup>274</sup>Arab German Consulting "state of Qatar: Saudi Arabia dispute", 2010, [www.arab.de/arabinfo/qatar-government.htm](http://www.arab.de/arabinfo/qatar-government.htm)

<sup>275</sup>Embassy of Qatar, "history of oil discovery", 2010, [www.qatarembassy.net/oil\\_history.asp](http://www.qatarembassy.net/oil_history.asp)

industrial sector saw the world's highest growth rate at 27%.<sup>276</sup> In 2009 Qatar was the 15<sup>th</sup> highest oil exporter in the world. It exported 1.066 million barrels a day.<sup>277</sup> Qatar is currently 5<sup>th</sup> in the world in terms of natural gas production with 56,780,000,000 cu.m.<sup>278</sup>

Qatar's rich supply of oil and natural gas has led to extensive foreign investment in the country by big economic powers. For instance, the stock of U.S foreign direct investment in Qatar was \$7.1 billion in 2007 and it continues to grow each year. Also in 2007, the U.S. imported over \$484 million's worth of goods, mainly included oil and gas. This amount too continues to increase each year.<sup>279</sup> Due to increased opportunities in Qatar, many have sought work in the country. Most of the foreign workers are from Iran. This ensures friendly and cooperative relations between the two countries.

### **Current Issues**

Qatar is part of The League of Arab States (Arab League). Qatar joined the League in 1971 after obtaining independence and has been an active and contributing member since its admission. Its actions have been particularly relevant in the case of developments in North Africa.

The North African Arab countries do not operate under the same ruling system as the Gulf countries. This is mainly due to a more direct form of colonialism in these countries. When these countries gained freedom, they tended to breed autocratic leaders who often used harsh measures to stay in power.

When protests broke out in Tunisia in December 2010 against its autocratic government, many international states supported the cry for democracy. Qatar, which has a strong position on upholding freedom and human rights, called for a new regime in Tunisia. After weeks of protests which often resulted in violence and left over 66 civilians dead, President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, who had been in power for 23 years, finally left Tunisia and an interim government was set up.<sup>280</sup> The

---

<sup>276</sup>Central Intelligence Agency, "The CIA World Fact Book: Qatar", CIA, 2010,

<sup>277</sup>US Energy Information Administration, "world oil net exporters", EIA, 2009, [www.eia.doe.gov/countries/inex.cfm?pl=exp](http://www.eia.doe.gov/countries/inex.cfm?pl=exp)

<sup>278</sup> Countries of the World, "natural gas exports: 2011 country by rank" 2011,

<sup>279</sup>Office of the United States Trade Representative, "Qatar", 2011, [www.ustr.gov/countries-regions/europe-middle.../qatar](http://www.ustr.gov/countries-regions/europe-middle.../qatar)

<sup>280</sup> The Gulf Times, "Tunisian leader leaves country amid protests", 15 January 2011, <http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp>

successful toppling of Tunisia's autocratic government sparked other uprisings in the region.

Trouble then broke out in Egypt in January 2011 when protesters demanded the resignation of President Mubarak who had been in power for thirty years. The protests were forcefully covered by Al-Jazeera, and during the protests Egypt's outgoing information Minister shut down all Al Jazeera offices in Egypt. Qatar saw this as an attempt by the government to oppress the Egyptian people. Finally, Mubarak also had to step down, and Qatar's position was proven right.

The focus then shifted to Libya, where Muammar Gaddafi has been in power for 42 years. Qatar has been one of the loudest in condemning the violence in Libya and imploring Gaddafi to step down. However, unlike Tunisia and Egypt's leaders, Gaddafi responded with violence. He condemned Al Jazeera for twisting the events in his country. However, Qatar continued to urge Gaddafi to step down and was one of the main voters to expel Libya from the Arab League.<sup>281</sup>

Unrest has also broken out in the states of Bahrain, Oman, Yemen and Iran. Qatar, as the stalwart of the region, is directly involved in urging and aiding diplomatic actions in these countries to end the unrest. All turmoil in the Arab world has sent the Gulf economy spiraling downwards. However, Qatar is receiving offers for increased foreign investment because it is viewed as a stable rich state, and this will boost Qatar's economy.

### **The Future**

Qatar has a bright future ahead of it. Qatar has oil reserves of 15 billion barrels which should enable continued output at current levels for 37 years. Also, Qatar's reserves of natural gas exceed 25 trillion cubic meters, about 14% of the world total and third largest in the world.<sup>282</sup>

Qatar's status in the world led to its being rewarded the 2022 Football World Cup. This will bring considerable inputs not only to Qatar, but the entire Gulf Region. The bid has caused Qatar to put into motion certain infrastructure plans such as a Metro railway system, and the completion of the 40 km long Friendship Bridge between Qatar and Bahrain.<sup>283</sup> Qatar is also focusing on tourism and implementing plans to

---

<sup>281</sup> Gulf News, "Qatar rejects Gaddafi's criticism of Al Jazeera", 24 February 2011, <http://www.gulfnews.com/news/gulf/Qatar.htm> [accessed 28 February, 2011].

<sup>282</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "The CIA World Fact Book: Qatar", CIA, 2010

<sup>283</sup> *ibid.*

host world cup fans and is building 12 new stadiums. Over the next 12 years, Qatar will construct 120 new hotels, 2 state-of-the-art convention centers and exhibition centers. Currently Qatar receives a million tourists each year and hopes to expand this number by 20% in 5 years. Plans to extend Doha's airport have already been put into motion and will be completed in 2012.<sup>284</sup>

**Conclusion**

Qatar has a bright future. Many other nations can learn from Qatar's past, in particular its peaceful political governance and its good international trade relations. The increased economic activity that is taking place in Qatar due to the successful bid for the 2022 Football World Cup demonstrates Qatar's ability to develop. This development will aid the Gulf region as a whole and will hopefully allow other Gulf States to learn from Qatar's success, and to follow in its footsteps.

---

<sup>284</sup> ITP Business Publishing, "Hoteliers gear up for 2022 World Cup" 8 February 2011, <http://www.hoteliermiddleeast.com/10337-report.print>.



## SAUDI ARABIA

**Editor's Note: Saudi Arabia is the focal center of the Islamic world, and consequently occupies a position of preeminence on the global stage. In addition, it is the largest supplier of oil to growing energy hungry populations, and the only one which has the elasticity to increase or decrease oil production at will in keeping with world demand. Its position is thus unrivalled.**

### Introduction

Saudi Arabia was founded in 1932 by Abd Al-Aziz bin Abd al-Rahman Al Saud.<sup>285</sup> Its boundaries with Jordan, Iraq, and Kuwait were established by colonial powers in the 1920s, with two neutral zones; one with Iraq and the other with Kuwait. The country's southern boundary with Yemen was partially defined by the 1934 Treaty between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, further defined in a June 2000 treaty. An agreement on the Saudi-Qatar border was not reached until March 2001. Saudi Arabia has yet to fully define its borders with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman.

Saudi Arabia is one of the most sparsely populated countries in the world. It has an estimated population of 28.7 million, with 90% Arab and 10% Afro-Asian inhabitants. Physically, Saudi Arabia occupies about two million sq. km. (784,233 sq. mi.), or slightly more than one-fifth the size of the continental United States. Its government is an absolute monarchy, and Islam is the main religion in the country.<sup>286</sup>

Saudi Arabia is now among the leading economic powers in the region. It has an oil-based economy, and possesses about 20% of the world's proven petroleum reserves. It is the number one oil producer and exporter in the world.<sup>287</sup>

### Pre-Islam Arabia

According to some of the earliest sources, the Arabian Peninsula was historically called Arabia. According to ancient writings of Herodotus, Arabia was part of eastern Egypt, Sinai and Negev. Meanwhile, during the reign of Darius (521-486 BC), Persia recognized

---

<sup>285</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sa.html>

<sup>286</sup> <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3584.htm>

<sup>287</sup> the History of Saudi Arabia/ Alexei Vassiliev/New York university press/2000/P 11

Arabia as part of the Arabiya district, situated between Assyria and Egypt.

Arabian society was extremely diverse in its peoples and traditions. The peoples of Arabia were members of different tribes that were bound together by the notion of kinship. Arabia had an economy predominantly based on agriculture, pastoralism and hunting. The main language in the peninsula was Arabic, and the religion was originally based on the notion of polytheism.

### **Emergence of Islam (610 AD)**

Prior to the emergence of Islam, the majority of the population were living in a period of history normally referred to as the “Jahiliyya Days” or “Days of Ignorance”. A variety of gods and goddesses were worshipped. The majority of Arabian inhabitants were engaged in polytheism and paganism, though the effects of Christianity and Judaism were seen in some parts of Arabia.<sup>288</sup>

Islam emerged in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century in Mecca. It was founded on the belief that Prophet Muhammad received revelations from Allah (God). According to the Holy Quran, the core of the message was “There is no god but God, and Muhammad is his Messenger.” The term Islam comes from the Arabic word-root s-l-m, which has a general reference to peace and submission. Specifically, Islam means submission to the will of God, and a Muslim is one who exercises that submission.<sup>289</sup>

According to recent data, the Islamic community or Ummah is comprised of approximately 1½ billion Muslims, or somewhere between a fifth and a quarter of the world’s population. Thus, Islam is recognized as the second largest religion after Christianity and the fastest growing religion in the world.<sup>290</sup>

### **The Expansion of the Caliphate**

After the death of Prophet Muhammad in 632 AD, the Arabian Peninsula witnessed the beginning of the caliphate period, during which Caliphs Abu Bakr (632-634 AD), Umar (634-644 AD), Uthman (644-656 AD) and Ali (656-661 AD) ruled over the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>291</sup>

During the course of their rule, the four Caliphs of Islam played a historic role in the expansion of Islam both within the peninsula and beyond. Each had his own unique contribution in the area.

<sup>288</sup> <http://www.answering-islam.org/authors/gilchrist/muhammad/chapter1.html>

<sup>289</sup> [http://www.cqpress.com/context/articles/epr\\_islam.html](http://www.cqpress.com/context/articles/epr_islam.html)

<sup>290</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam>

<sup>291</sup> Islam and politics/ John L. Esposito/ Syracuse University press/1998

Abu Bakr “Siddiq”, the first Caliph, helped bring stability to the entire area. This enabled him to launch several campaigns against both the Sassanid Empire (based in present day Iran) and also the East Roman Empire (Byzantine Empire in present day Turkey), which, at the time, posed a serious threat to Arabia’s borders. Umar “Farouk”, the Second Caliph, played a significant role in expanding the Islamic Empire to not only the Sassanid Persian Empire, but also into two-thirds of the Eastern Roman Empire. This marked his reputation as a great political and military leader. Usman “Ghani”, the third Caliph, succeeded Umar Farooq and facilitated the expansion of Islam beyond Persia into Khorasan (present-day Afghanistan) in 651 AD, and led the conquest of Armenia.<sup>292</sup> Ali “Asadullah”, the fourth Caliph, drew his greatest legitimacy from his relationship as the son-in-law of the Prophet, and as a remarkable general responsible for outstanding victories.

Each of these first four Caliphs were chosen by public consent. Unfortunately, a debate started as to whether Caliphs should be chosen freely by public consent, or whether they had to be exclusively from among the family descendants of the Prophet himself. That debate led to the schism between the Sunni and Shia traditions.

### **The Ottoman Empire**

Until the rise of the Ottoman Empire, the Arabian Peninsula was under the control of two Arab Empires based in Damascus and Baghdad respectively.

Around this time, the Peninsula sank into disunity, and its relative political influence gradually declined. In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, much of the Arabian Peninsula came under the nominal rule of Ottoman Empire<sup>293</sup>, which was one of the greatest, most extensive and longest-lasting empires in world history.

When Sultan Selim II conquered Syria and Egypt in 1517 AD, the Sharif of Mecca (this was the title of the governors of Hejaz in western Arabia), had acknowledged the supremacy of the Ottoman caliph, but maintained a great degree of local autonomy.

From that time onwards, Hejaz was under the jurisdiction of the Ottoman governors, but the effective rulers were the Hashemite Grand Sharifs.<sup>294</sup>

---

<sup>292</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caliph>

<sup>293</sup> <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33533.pdf/page 2>

<sup>294</sup> <http://www.turkeyswar.com/campaigns/arabia.htm>

### **The Arab Revolt**

The first Ottoman–Saudi War occurred from 1811 to 1818, between Egypt (under the reign of Muhammad Ali Pasha) and the army of the first Saudi State, which eventually led to Ottoman victory.<sup>295</sup>

The Arab Revolt was initiated by the Sharif Hussein bin Ali (the Emir of Mecca from 1908-1917) with the aim of securing independence from the ruling Ottoman Turks and creating a single unified Arab State. The British government in Egypt sent a young officer, Captain Lawrence, to work with the Arabs. Lawrence's major contribution to the revolt was convincing the Arab leaders (Faisal and Abdullah) to co-ordinate their actions in support of British strategy.<sup>296</sup>

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, Saudi Arabia was under control of different tribal leaders, for instance, the Rashidi in Ha'il (an oasis city in Nejd in northwestern Saudi Arabia), the Sharifian in Hijaz. The early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century witnessed the disintegration of the previous local Emirates in Arabia and the rise of Al-Saud Dynasty. The support of the British enabled the Al-Saud Dynasty to unite the country and form the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.<sup>297</sup>

### **The Al-Saud Dynasty**

The house of Saud take their name from Muhammad bin Saud, better known as Ibn Saud (son of Saud), the ruler of Diriyah in central Arabia, and founder of the first Saudi state in 1744. The name Al-Saud came to signify his clan. Today, the surname Al-Saud is carried by any descendant of Muhammad bin Saud.<sup>298</sup>

The fortunes of the Al-Saud began to change with their adoption of the Wahhabi movement, a religious movement or a branch within Sunni Islam associated with Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. Sealed in 1744, the historical alliance between the Wahhabi religious reformer and the Al Saud ruler of Diriyah enabled the emergence of the religious emirate in central Arabia also known as the first Saudi State.<sup>299</sup>

The house of Saud has gone through three phases: the first Saudi State, the second Saudi State and the Modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The first Saudi State was founded by Muhammad bin Saud and

---

<sup>295</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman-Saudi\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman-Saudi_War)

<sup>296</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab\\_Revolt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_Revolt)

<sup>297</sup> Madawi Al- Rasheed/ *A History of Saudi Arabia*/ Cyndicate of the university of Cambridge/ 2002/ Page 26,30,39,43 and 44

<sup>298</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House\\_of\\_Saud](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Saud)

<sup>299</sup> Madawi Al- Rasheed/ *A History of Saudi Arabia*/ Cyndicate of the university of Cambridge/ 2002/ Page 15,16,18

lasted from 1744 to 1818. During this time, the capital of the first Saudi State was Diriyah. It was during this era that a number of neighboring countries, including Yemen, Oman, Syria and Iraq and territories that make up present-day Saudi Arabia were conquered. Many attribute this success to the efforts of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab and his descendant. Abdul-Aziz would eventually assume the throne following his father's death in 1765. Abdul Aziz was succeeded by his son Saud bin Abdul-Aziz, whose son, Abdullah bin Saud, would take the throne following his death.

The Second Saudi State was founded by Turki bin Abdullah bin Muhammad. Riyadh was the capital of the Second Saudi State, which is remembered in his story as the era in which the rule of the House of Saud was restored in Central and Eastern Arabia. This period was marked by a series of internal conflicts within the Saudi family.

The modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was founded in 1932 by King Abdul-Aziz bin Abdurrahman al-Saud. After his death in 1953, his sons, King Saud, King Faisal, King Khalid, and King Fahd, ruled Saudi Arabia until 2005, when King Abdullah became the current King of Saudi Arabia.<sup>300</sup>

### **Discovery of Oil Reserves**

Before the discovery of oil in the Arabian Peninsula, it would be difficult to speak of a unified entity such as the Saudi Arabian economy. Before the 1930s, the region's economy depended chiefly on subsistence agriculture, some trade in dates, and the provision of services to pilgrims traveling to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.<sup>301</sup>

Abdul Aziz ibn Abdul Rahman Al Saud granted the first oil concession to British investment group in 1923, which went on to fail in 1928.<sup>302</sup> After 1928, Saudi Arabia witnessed a number of attempts to explore petroleum and mineral resources in what is known today as the Eastern Province Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. For much time, these efforts did not yield any results. However, in May 1933, the government of Saudi Arabia granted a concession to Standard Oil of California to explore and produce oil in an area of 495,900 square miles in the eastern parts of the Kingdom. This concession has evolved during the past 75 years, and helped enable the emergence of the Saudi Arabian Oil

---

<sup>300</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House\\_of\\_Saud](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Saud)

<sup>301</sup> <http://countrystudies.us/saudi-arabia/34.htm>

<sup>302</sup> <http://countrystudies.us/saudi-arabia/40.htm>

Company (Saudi Aramco), which is now the world's number one petroleum company.<sup>303</sup>

Today, Saudi Arabia possesses 20% of the world's petroleum reserves and is the largest exporter of petroleum. The petroleum sector accounts for roughly 75% of budget revenues, 45% of gross domestic product, and 90% of export earnings. Apart from petroleum, the Kingdom's other natural resources include natural gas, iron, gold, and copper.<sup>304</sup>

### **Saudi Arabian Society and Culture**

Traditionally, Saudi Arabia has been grounded in a conservative cultural life. Society and culture are dominated by the values of Islam, following from Wahhabi ideologies. The ideals of Wahhabism are seen in both Saudi Arabia's society and culture. Islam is the dominant religion of the Saudi Arabian peoples.<sup>305</sup> The great majority of the people of Saudi Arabia are Arab and Muslim, and much of the daily revolves around Islamic observances and practice. The effects of these influences are evident in the legal, political, cultural, and economic lives of the Saudis. These influences are also evident in daily life, as there are not many publicly celebrated holidays and the drinking of alcoholic beverages is forbidden. It is not acceptable for men and women to meet out in social settings, and women follow the Islamic dress-code which requires them to dress in the Hijab.

### **Form of Government**

The form of government in Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy.<sup>306</sup> The King is the also the Prime Minister. The Crown Prince is the "Deputy Prime Minister."<sup>307</sup> The Monarch holds supreme executive, legislative and judicial authority. In practice, the king delegates these functions to state agencies, institutions and individual, such as the Majlis Al-Wukala (the Council of Ministers), the Royal Diwan (the Deputies of the Council of Ministers), the Diwan al-Malazim (Grievance Board). The Ministry of Defense, the General Staff of the Armed Forces, and the Commander of the National Guard operate and prepare the recommendations on whose basis all royal decrees are issued.<sup>308</sup>

---

<sup>303</sup> [http://www.mopm.gov.sa/mopm/detail.do?content=history\\_oil\\_and\\_gas](http://www.mopm.gov.sa/mopm/detail.do?content=history_oil_and_gas)

<sup>304</sup> [http://www.opec.org/opec\\_web/en/about\\_us/169.html](http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/about_us/169.html)

<sup>305</sup> <http://www.mapsofworld.com/saudi-arabia/society-and-culture/>

<sup>306</sup> <http://www.wisageek.com/what-is-a-monarchy.htm>

<sup>307</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King\\_of\\_Saudi\\_Arabia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_of_Saudi_Arabia)

<sup>308</sup> Alexei Vassiliev /the History of Saudi Arabia/ New York university press/2000/P 436

The Saudi Arabian constitution as the Supreme Law of the land, is based on the principles of the Holy Quran. The Basic Law was adopted in 1992 by Royal Decree, which specifies that the King must be chosen from among the sons and grandsons of the first King, Abdul-Aziz al-Saud, and the succession to the throne is determined by the royal family with the approval of religious leaders (Ulama).<sup>309</sup> The monarchy remains the key source of power at every level of the Saudi Arabian government.

### **Sources of Political Tension**

Saudi Arabia has faced with numerous internal and external tensions in its history. Much of the internal tension has stemmed from the Al-Saud family nitself, and tension from external influence has come from opposition group outside of the Al-Saud dynasty.

The history of feuds inside the Al-Saud family goes back to the death of King Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud in 1953, when the new state of Saudi came close to collapse as a result of a political struggle between two Saudi brothers, Saud and Faysal.<sup>310</sup>

The history of tensions from outside the Royal Family dates back to between 1950 and 1960. External opposition groups included the nationalist and leftist movement, but these groups had minimal impact on Saudi Society. Currently, the main opposition to the Royal Family is confined to those who identify themselves as liberals with leftist tendencies.<sup>311</sup> Much of the political opposition to the Saudi regime comes from groups that desire political, economic and social reform in Saudi society. These groups have increased their political pressure on the Saudi regime since the deployment of US troops in Saudi Arabia during the early 1990's.

The Gulf War had many diverse effects on Saudi society, among which included an increase in the number of Islamist opposition groups. Much of the opposition to government policy emanates from Shiite resentment over claims of second class status, and limited rights to freely practice their religion. The Saudi Monarchy initiated a comprehensive set of measures to address the threat posed by opposition groups, and bring about reform. In this regard, it established the Shura Council,

---

<sup>309</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics\\_of\\_Saudi\\_Arabia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Saudi_Arabia)

<sup>310</sup> Madawi Al-Rasheed/ A History of Saudi Arabia/ Cyndicate of the university of Cambridge/ 2002/ Page 106

<sup>311</sup> Paul Aarts & Gerd Nonneman/ Saudi Arabia in the balance/ New York university Press/ Page 200, 235

convened three important conferences on national dialogue, and convened partial municipal elections, all of which have played an important role in maintaining social cohesion and enabling Saudi citizens to express their views about the future of the country. Nevertheless, it's noteworthy that the effort to achieve political stability during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Saudi Arabia has also seen measures which contradict democratic principles. Thus, the survival of the Saudi regime is rather the product of a weak political opposition and awareness among the general public.

### **Foreign Policy**

As the birthplace of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century, Saudi Arabia has played a significant role in the expansion of the Islam inside and outside the Arabian Peninsula. Additionally, the presence of two of the holiest cities in Islam - Mecca and Medina - has enabled the country to be recognized as the center of the Islamic world.

Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the Middle East. Its vast oil reserves had enabled the country to become the number one producer and exporter of oil in the world, and to assume political and economic sway both regionally and internationally. This, coupled with Saudi Arabia's historical religious significance, has enabled Saudi Arabia to play a crucial role in the expansion of Islam, as well as to address contemporary challenges facing the Islamic world through various means, including mediation and financial assistance in post-conflict stabilization efforts. Therefore, Saudi Arabia will remain a dominant player in the region in the near and distant future.

#### *Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States*

Saudi Arabia's foreign policy is focused on cooperation with the Gulf States, the unity of the Arab world, solidarity with Muslim countries, and adherence to the principles of the UN Charter.

Such cooperation takes place bilaterally, and through various regional and international organizations. Saudi Arabia's close relations with the Gulf countries are premised on a number of factors. These include commonality in their political and economic systems, historical connections, as well as their common geographical location.<sup>312</sup> The Gulf countries established the Gulf Cooperation Council in 1981 to advance their political and social objectives. The Council is composed of the six

---

<sup>312</sup>

<http://www.mofa.gov.sa/sites/mofaen/aboutKingDom/KingdomForeignPolicy/Pages/KingdomPolicy34645.aspx>



Gulf countries, and aims to strengthen cooperation in all areas within the group.<sup>313</sup>

Overall, Saudi Arabia has friendly relations with the Gulf countries based on many similarities that lead to close relationships in different arenas in the region.

#### *Saudi Arabia and United States*

The history of Saudi-US relations dates back to pre-World War II, when the US recognized the newly founded Saudi State in 1931.<sup>314</sup> Saudi Arabia and United States have had full diplomatic relations since 1933.<sup>315</sup> Both countries have enjoyed fruitful and strategic cooperation ever since. Notably, oil reserves in Saudi Arabia were a key factor in the promotion of Saudi-US relations. This cooperation commenced with Saudi Arabia's decision to grant an oil concession to the US-based Standard Oil of California in 1932.

The first bilateral meeting at the most senior level took place in 1945 between President Roosevelt and King Abdul-Aziz. Cooperation between Saudi Arabia and the US substantially increased ever since. The importance of Saudi Arabia in US foreign policy is attributed to many factors, including its strategic location, its vast oil reserves, and its unique standing in the Islamic World.<sup>316</sup>

#### *Saudi Arabia and Iran*

Cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia date back to 1928, when Tehran opened its embassy in the Hijaz.<sup>317</sup> The visit of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia to Iran in 1966 was the first conducted by a Saudi Monarch. The objective of the visit was to strengthen cooperation in various areas between the two countries. In return, the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, made an official visit to Riyadh. Relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reached a peak during the years 1968-1979.

Saudi-Iran relations took a different path following the Iranian Revolution in 1979. The regime of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini openly

---

<sup>313</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab\\_states\\_of\\_the\\_Persian\\_Gulf](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_states_of_the_Persian_Gulf)

<sup>314</sup>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saudi\\_Arabia\\_%E2%80%93\\_United\\_States\\_relations#Diplomatic\\_vists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saudi_Arabia_%E2%80%93_United_States_relations#Diplomatic_vists)

<sup>315</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saudi\\_Arabia\\_%E2%80%93\\_United\\_States\\_relations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saudi_Arabia_%E2%80%93_United_States_relations)

<http://www.ibnsaud.info/main/3433.htm>

<sup>316</sup> Paul Aarts & Gerd Nonneman/ Saudi Arabia in the balance/New York university Press/Pages 375, 377 and 396

<sup>317</sup> <http://khavarmiane.persianblog.ir/post/5>

questioned the legitimacy of the Saudi regime. A number of factors have contributed to the deterioration of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran. These include sectarian tensions, the effects of the Iraq-Iran War, and cooperative relations between Saudi Arabia and the United States.<sup>318</sup>

Over the past decades there have been numerous incidences in which relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran have strained. These include, (a) reciprocal accusations between Saudi and Iran, implicating covert support to Shiite and Sunni sects during conflicts across the Middle East, including Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen; (b) Iran's adventure with nuclear proliferation which remains a serious source of concern for Saudi Arabia in particular; (c) differences on the unresolved Palestinian-Israeli conflict in which Saudi Arabia's initiation of a comprehensive effort to settle the dispute between Palestine and Israel is seen by Iran as opposed to its own hard-line position; (d) sectarian differences on the issue of the Hajj Pilgrimage in the belief that Shia pilgrims are mistreated; and (e) concerns about the strategic partnership between Saudi Arabia and the United States.

To summarize, the above mentioned sources of tensions have deteriorated the relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The likely outcome is that Iran and Saudi Arabia will continue to utilize sectarian groups across the Middle East to advance their geo-strategic regional goals in the region.

### **The Arab Spring**

The recent wave of mass demonstrations and uprisings in the Middle East has brought monumental changes in the political dynamics of the region. The new desire for change is expressed mainly from the youth, encouraged by factors such as lack of employment opportunities, inadequate justice, corruption, violation of human rights, and a lack of opportunity for the people to determine their political destiny.

The question of the impact on Saudi Arabia brings different scenarios to mind: The first is that the current situation in the region will not affect the status quo in Saudi Arabia because it has demonstrated flexibility in its reform process since the early 1990's. Accordingly, the level of discontent among the general population is far less that which existed in Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, Libya, Syria and Yemen. To prevent any large scale demonstrations, leading to a national uprising, the Saudi Monarchy has taken numerous preventive steps. These include the

---

<sup>318</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran\\_%E2%80%93\\_Saudi\\_Arabia\\_relations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran_%E2%80%93_Saudi_Arabia_relations)

establishment of an anti-corruption committee, and the provision of financial assistance packages to those segments of the population in greatest need.

In trying to predict Saudi Arabia's future, one must also take into account the future succession of the Kingdom. King Abdullah has proven an effective reformer in comparison to his predecessors. Many believe that Saudi Arabia will experience further reforms if the throne is passed to one of the Abdul Aziz grandsons instead of his sons. However, the appointment of the new Crown Prince belies this hope.

Saudi Arabia's current policy of addressing grievances through financial assistance alone will serve as a long-lasting solution for meeting the needs of the Saudi people. The time has come for Saudi Arabia to embark on a comprehensive reform agenda; one that will ensure the people of Saudi Arabia that their rights will be upheld. Failure to do so could inevitably result in further turmoil and internal crisis, similar to that in Egypt and Tunisia. However, given the current situation, it seems most likely that the Saudi regime will spare no effort to address the grievances of the Saudi population in all areas.



## SOMALIA

**Editor's Note: Most of our knowledge of Somalia is formed by the movie *Black Hawk Down*, and the media coverage of piracy in the Gulf of Aden. However, there is much more to Somalia, as the following pages will show.**

### Introduction

Somalia occupies a vast amount of territory within the Horn of Africa, with an estimated population of ten million inhabitants.<sup>319</sup> Because of Somalia's strategic location adjacent to the Arabian Peninsula, the Middle East has had a profound influence on the development of Somalia. This influence can be traced from the 7<sup>th</sup> Century Koreishite immigration from Yemen, to Somalia's admittance into the Arab League in 1974.

A primary source of this influence is economic activity. Somalia's participation in the Red Sea Trade began over a thousand years ago in the cities of Zeila, to the north, and Mogadishu, to the south. These two cities established a Muslim centre of commerce, influencing the Somali Islamic identity. Somalia succeeded in creating profitable trade relationships with Persia, Mesopotamia and Egypt, and established deep historical ties with the Arabs.<sup>320</sup>

Throughout the 12<sup>th</sup> Century the Adal Sultanate, which is present day Somaliland, was the centre of commercial trade with the Middle East. The early trading settlements may have paved the way for the 10<sup>th</sup> Century population movements to the west and south.<sup>321</sup> For the following centuries, Somalia prospered and flourished with mosques, theological schools and religious shrines.<sup>322</sup>

Somali culture is dynamic, and primarily based upon a societal clan structure. Somalis display individualism and loyalty due to their belief that the clan family is superior to a national identity. A well-maintained balance of kinship (*silatur-rahim*) is present in the social, political and economic culture of the Somali people.

---

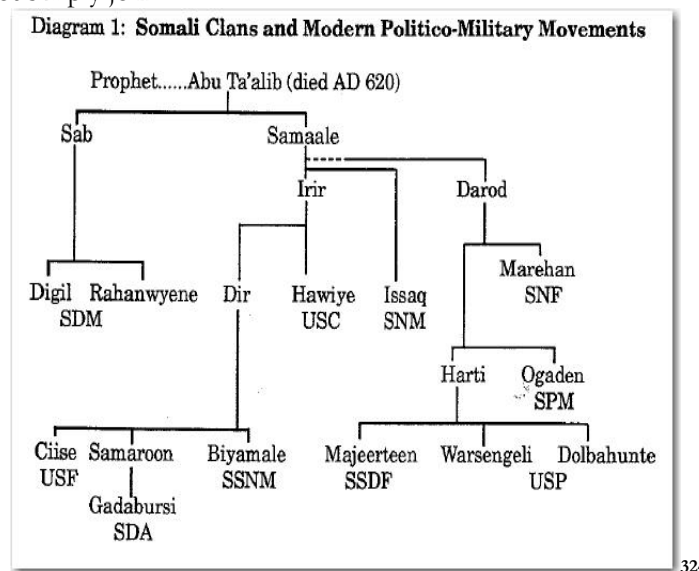
<sup>319</sup> A population estimate based upon the last census held in 1975.

<sup>320</sup> Abdi-Nur Hagi Mohammed, *Anatomy of a Failure* (Community Concern Somalia, 1999).

<sup>321</sup> Ioan Lewis, *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland* (Hurst Publishers Ltd., 2008), p.2.

<sup>322</sup> Adal Sultanate < [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adal\\_Sultanate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adal_Sultanate)>

Although 95% of the population are ethnic Somalis and share a common culture in a traditional society, they are divided into six clan families: Dir, Isaaq, Darod, Hawiye, Digil and Rahanweyne. These clans are further sub-divided according to agnatic descent. Each clan leader is elected according to hierarchy after the incumbent expires. Most importantly, clans are based upon ancestry; Somalis are born into a clan and cannot simply join.<sup>323</sup>



Centralised government and politics were balanced between major clan families since the establishment of the Somali state. Alliances are formed between clans for protection and political motives, which can outweigh the sense of nationalism and a unified country.

### Colonialism

Somalia's prosperity drew the interest of imperial powers. Britain, Italy and France were three important western European powers that were part of the colonial regime in the late 1800s. The British controlled the north and southeast, the Italians occupied the south and north east and the French controlled the northwest. After Somalia became independent in 1960, British and Italian Somaliland joined to

<sup>323</sup> Mark Bradbury, *The Somali Conflict. Prospects for Peace* (Oxford: Oxfam, 1994), p.18.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

form present-day Somalia, and the French territory remained autonomous as the separate nation of Djibouti.

The influence of the European powers has deeply affected Somalia. Each European power established a different political system to suit the economic goals for its region.<sup>325</sup> Some could argue that the colonial regime was the beginning of Somalia as a failed state, as clans were too large and scattered to operate as an organised state. Additionally, differences between Italian and British rule made it difficult to combine the two areas as a unified nation. The colonial system of governance created an unbalanced political, economic and social system to the Somali social stratification. In the north, the British only implemented a livestock system (i.e. camels, goats), creating limited economic gains. On the other hand, the Italians developed a more comprehensive administrative plan with a more agricultural based economy to the south (i.e. citrus fruits, banana plantations) to transform its economy. Consequently, this disparity created an apprehensive attitude between the two colonies.

### **Independence**

Sayid Mohammed Abdille Hassan, also referred to as the Mad Mullah, was a religious nationalist leader who sought to unify and lead the Somalis against foreign control from 1900-1920.<sup>326</sup> The emergence of the Mad Mullah and his dervishes were the first to challenge colonial rule in the north. However, the British successfully repelled this challenge to their rule.

The British attempted to introduce democracy, resulting in the formation of various political parties throughout Somalia. The Somali Youth League (SYL) was the first political party in Somalia, and played a significant role in the formation of a national identity and the fight for independence in the 1950s. Until the military coup of 1969, Somalia practiced an elected parliamentary system of government made up of the legislative branch, executive branch and the independent judiciary, with the goal of becoming a model democracy in Africa.<sup>327</sup>

Somaliland declared independence in June 1960. The union of the colonial states was an initiative to reunite all five Somali territories as

---

<sup>325</sup> Somalia – History and Background <

<http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1376/Somalia-HISTORY-BACKGROUND.html>

<sup>326</sup> Alice Bettis Hashim, *The Fallen State. Dissonance, Dictatorship and Death in Somalia* (Maryland: University Press of America, 1997), p. 59.

<sup>327</sup> WSP Somali Programme. *Rebuilding Somalia: Issues and Possibilities for Puntland* (London: Haan Associates, 2001), p. 7.

represented on the Somali flag, and to bridge the gap between North and South political orientations. The development of the new Republic was not favored by many Somalis, as unemployment, political disintegration and corruption rose. Unfortunately, it was difficult to find a practical balance between traditional and modern political systems. The elite abused power for political advantage and personal gain, and caused the democratic experiment to crumble.

The SYL won the majority of parliamentary seats on the country's first national election after independence in March 1964. Marked as a historical event in African history, Somalia held the first peaceful and constitutional transfer of presidential power in an African country. However, the President, Abdelrashid Ali Sharmarke, was killed in a bloody military coup in October 1969, and Siad Barre assumed leadership of the government. From this point forward, Somalia has been mired in internal and external conflict.

### **The Barre Regime**

Upon taking control after the coup, Siad Barre, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, dissolved the Constitution and the High Court, prohibited political activities, banned political parties, and declared scientific socialism.<sup>328</sup> The country was renamed the Somali Democratic Republic with a new governing body of high-ranking military officials, the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC). The SRC's goal was to enforce law and policy functions based on the ideology of the Quran and Karl Marx. The Barre regime aimed to end tribalism, misrule and corruption.

Barre thought of tribalism as a "disease" that obstructed development in Somalia and in the Third World. Tribal headmen were replaced by local dignitaries known as "peacekeepers" (*nabod doan*), who enforced community identification over lineage affiliation. Barre and the SRC resettled over 140,000 nomadic pastoralists in farming communities and in coastal towns to work in agriculture and fishing, however, most Somalis yearned to return to the nomadic lifestyle.<sup>329</sup>

The SRC also established Somali as the country's official language and viewed foreign languages a threat to national unity. Since Somalia's independence, Italian and English were the two languages used

---

<sup>328</sup> Ioan Lewis, *Blood and Bone. The Call of Kinship in Somali Society* (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1994).

<sup>329</sup> Federal Research Division Library of Congress, *Somalia: A Country Study*. (Washington, D.C., Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data, 1993), p. 39.



in government administration and education. The Somali Language Committee considered Arabic, Latin and indigenous scripts, before adopting a standard orthography and literacy campaign. The SRC's goal was to make the entire population literate in two years, as the estimated literacy rate in 1972 was only 5%. As of the most current report, Somalia's literacy rate was estimated by the UN at 24%.<sup>330</sup>

The Ogaden War in 1977 was a turning point in the rule of Siad Barre and his regime. Millions of refugees came to Somalia as a result of the war, and increased state and societal burdens. The government illegally solicited refugees into the regime and forced them into the army. Additionally, Barre who was the Somali head of a United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) project for refugee relief, allegedly embezzled millions of dollars from its budget.<sup>331</sup>

Diplomatic setbacks and isolation had risen throughout the 1980s under Barre. The Somali regime was charged with political and economic violations, including violation of human rights documented by Amnesty International and Africa Watch, and faced pressure to devalue the Somali shilling by the IMF and World Bank. Aid, particularly sent by the United States, was cut drastically.

The popularity of the Barre regime had quickly decreased, and the constitutional rule was challenged by the clan power of the Majeerteen, Hawiye and the Isaaq. Barre and his regime controlled the capital of Mogadishu, a Hawiye sub-clan region, until the end of 1990. After twenty years of rule, Siad Barre was presented with a Manifesto, signed by clan leaders, intellectuals and former government officials, demanding his resignation so peace and order could be restored. Somalia was in pandemonium, as inflation, food shortages and prices increased. Eventually Barre was defeated by warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid and his rebel group, the United Somali Congress (USC). Somalia was in a state of disarray, while economic and social institutions no longer functioned.

### **Civil War and Collective Identity**

After military dictatorship, the line defining right and wrong became distorted. Conflict between clan-based militias and warlords destroyed the government in 1991, destabilized American humanitarian aid in 1993, and took countless lives in Mogadishu. Still, Somalia continued to function without a central government.

---

<sup>330</sup> Federal Research Division Library of Congress, p. 44.

<sup>331</sup> Harshim, p. 105.

Trends of warlordism, piracy and Al-Shabaab began during the Civil War, and are still ongoing. Mogadishu is a xenophobic battleground between the UN-backed government, and the al-Qaeda linked al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab, formed from remnants of the Union of Islamic Courts, is the largest insurgent group. It controls southern Somalia and has imposed strict Sharia law with harsh punishments.

The civil war caused internal displacement and population movements. Most of those displaced were members of north-eastern clans who came from Mogadishu and southern parts of the country.<sup>332</sup> The emigration of Somalis to the north-east has increased the rural population and strained resources.

The situation in Somalia has changed drastically since the Transitional Federal Government formed in 2004. The north was divided into two separate states. The south, which includes the capital of Mogadishu, was highly controlled by the Union of Islamic Courts before the establishment of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). In October 2004, Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed was crowned interim president.

Today, the Transitional Federal Government and the Union of Islamic Courts are the two major players within Somalia. The TFG currently controls part of the capital, keeping Islamist insurgent groups from taking over the remainder. After the fall of the Barre regime, the TFG is viewed optimistically through the eyes of the international community as a way to return stability to all of Somalia.

For over 100 years, Somalis have not had a government that puts the best interests of the Somali people first. They have endured corruption and incompetence. In order to move from a failed state towards a viable state, Somalia needs investment from abroad. A long term commitment of both people and resources are required to see significant results.

### **Economic Trends**

Somalia is potentially rich in human resources. Traditional and modern production of livestock, agriculture, frankincense and myrrh contribute to the Somali economy. It is argued that a large portion of the revenue must be reinvested into local development to increase prosperity within the economic sector.

---

<sup>332</sup> WSP Somali Programme, p. 14.

Exports consist of livestock (sheep, goats, cattle camels), bananas, hides and skins and fish, with the majority sent to the Middle East. Fisheries are threatened by agricultural pollution, industrial pollution and severe overfishing.

The livestock trade peaked in 1982 at 80% of Somalia's total foreign exchange earnings. The following year, Saudi Arabia, the chief importer of Somali livestock, declared a rinderpest ban. The limitation on exports combined with increased inflation led to exports earning less than one-third of the millions that were imported, resulting in a trade deficit in the hundreds of millions.<sup>333</sup>

In addition to external factors that harm the Somali economy, there are also environmental concerns that affect the Somali economy. Currently, the production of charcoal is the most negative environmental activity within Somalia. According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), Somalia produced 4.8 million sacks of charcoal, 80 per cent of the product was exported to the Middle East. Producing charcoal requires the removal of the acacia nilotica tree. Excessively cutting down the acacia nilotica tree contributes to deforestation. An established government must manage and control the destructive activities involved with the Somali charcoal trade, particularly to the Gulf states. Without effective regulation, the charcoal industry will have long term negative environmental effects on the state.

Outside factors also influence economic trends because the Somali economy is extremely dependent on remittances. The UN found remittances amounted to 67% of the Somali economy in the late 1990s. Many Somalis survive only from money sent abroad. Households relying exclusively on money abroad have more than likely increased today.

### **Employment Trends**

Somalis have worked in the Middle East oil industry since the oil boom of the 1950s, particularly in Saudi Arabia. The Gulf States also offered employment for educated Arabic-speaking Somalis. They pursued religious education, business opportunities, and escaped the unstable political situation. Because the Gulf States did not ratify the Refugee Convention and did not provide protection during the 1970s, Somalis were unable to secure asylum as part of their migration. This limitation on Somali migration became evident during the Gulf War,

---

<sup>333</sup> Ioan Lewis, *A Modern History of Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa* (Longman Publishing Group, 1980), p. 238.

when over two million Somali migrant workers were expelled from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq.<sup>334</sup>

Recently, piracy has become an attractive job alternative for Somali men. Limited job opportunity and lack of law enforcement have increased Somali pirate attacks on the Gulf of Aden, which is now considered one of the world's most dangerous waterways. Somali pirates are hijacking oil tankers and earning tens of millions of dollars in ransom, as international navies are failing to divert and contain the problem. With little risk and high aggression, Somali piracy is a lucrative business which sustains the economy.

### **Looking Ahead**

It is difficult to look ahead optimistically in regards to Somalia's future, but not impossible. First and foremost, regional and internal conflict must be stabilized before any outside governmental intervention can be effective. Leadership bears the definitive responsibility for their collapse. Somalia has lacked leadership, and requires a capable and competent leader to succeed.

A current study argues that Somali internal war resulted from social inequality, economic decline and access to weapons. Social inequality creates three problems: decline in the investment of social capital, political instability and severe poverty. Somali inequality stems from class and ethnic based points of view, not upon the control of production or education.<sup>335</sup>

As tensions increased, people relied on tribal connections in order to survive, however unequal distribution of resources was based on clanism, tribalism and regionalism. Somalia has received hundreds of millions of dollars in aid, but that aid was invested under misguided economic policies. A reduction in economic aid after the end of the Cold War contributed to economic decline, and increased conflicts and internal wars. Weapons became a means of survival and self-defence during the economic downfall of the 1980s.<sup>336</sup>

On the other hand, Somalia received large amounts of economic and military aid from foreign powers until the late 1980s due to its strategic location. A reduction in economic aid after the end of the Cold War contributed to its economic decline. Once conflict and inflation

---

<sup>334</sup> Sarah Collinson, *Globalization and the Dynamics of International Migration: Implications for the Refugee Regime* (UNHCR: New Issues in Refugee Research 1999), p. 1-31.

<sup>335</sup> Osman and Souaré, p. 83-107.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

increased, aid and a stable economic situation decreased, doctors and nurses sold off medical supplies, teachers sold grades, and soldiers sold weapons. Eventually when the government collapsed in 1991, the country was overstocked with weapons.<sup>337</sup>

### **Conclusion**

After the fall of the Barre regime, Somaliland declared independence from Somalia in May 1991. Elections held in June 2010 demonstrated a peaceful transfer of power in Somaliland. With the recent independence of Southern Sudan, the people of Somaliland (and Puntland) could use Southern Sudan as a model to vote for secession.

The Djibouti peace process presents a framework for building peace and stability in Somalia; however, Somaliland refuses to participate. Would Somaliland function better if it were forced to remain part of Somalia to influence peace and prosperity? Could Puntland place the corner stone for the reconstitution of the Somali nation? One thing is definite; it will take more than time to turn a failed state back to normality.

---

<sup>337</sup> Ibid, p.104-107.



## SOUTH SUDAN

**Editor's Note: The emergence of South Sudan as the 193<sup>rd</sup> member state of the United Nations is the result of two centuries of colonial rule. It is a trend-setting example of the right of self-determination, and the long struggle that this right always entails.**

### Introduction

To comprehend the evolution of the concept to self-determination as political, social and economical right by the people of Southern Sudan, it is imperative first to examine the genesis of the establishment of the contemporary Sudanese state in order to appreciate its inherent political contradictions.

Before the invasion of the Sudan by the Turko-Egyptians in 1821, Sudan consisted of different kingdoms and tribal communities that owed allegiance to no formal authority or government. Pivotal to the establishment of the modern Sudanese state, are the events which occurred in Egypt in 1805. After the defeat of the French by the combined British and Turkish military and the eventual withdrawal of French forces from Egypt in 1801, the Ottomans appointed Muhammad Ali as Egypt's pasha with the intention of restoring order. As the governors of the Ottoman Empire, Egypt was divided into several provinces, each of which was placed under a Mamluk Bey (governor) responsible to the Pasha, who in turn answered to the Porte, the term used for the Ottoman Empire. The new Pasha had ambitions of building an expanded Ottoman empire which was wealthy and able to create more markets. The main commodities of interest to the Ottoman Empire were slaves, gold, ivory and timber.

To operationalize its expansionist ambitions, Muhammad Ali with the help of 10,000 Albanian troops defeated the Mamluks and in 1811 launched a seven-year campaign in Arabia. He then sent 4,000 troops to invade Sudan with the objective of destroying the Mamluks completely and reclaim it for Egypt. As a result pasha forces defeated the Mamluks, and conquered Kurdufan.

Muhammad Ali's immediate successors, Abbas I (1849-1854) and Said (1854-1863) paid little attention to Sudan. However, the reign of Ismail Pasha (1863-1879) revitalized Egypt interest in the Sudan. In 1865 the Ottoman Empire ceded the Red Sea coast and its ports to Egypt. Two years later, Egypt organized and garrisoned the new provinces of

Upper Nile, Bahr al Ghazal, and Equatoria and, in 1874, conquered and annexed Darfur.

Until 1843 Muhammad Ali maintained a state of monopoly on slave trading in Egypt. The authorities sold licenses to private traders who competed with the government in conducting slave trade. In 1854 Cairo ended state participation in the slave trade, and in 1860, in response to European pressure, Egypt prohibited the slave trade. However, the Egyptian army failed to enforce the prohibition against the private armies of the slave traders.

To add insult to injury, Ismail Pasha appointed a notorious Arab slave trader, called Rahman Mansur az Zubayr, as governor of the newly created province of Bahr al Ghazal in southern Sudan. Zubayr used his army to pacify the province and to eliminate his competition in the slave trade. These slave trade practices by Zubayr angered the British who together with the Ottomans were ruling the Sudan. When Gordon was appointed governor general of the Sudan, he ended Zubayr's slave trading, disbanded his army, and sent him back to Cairo.

In January 1899, an Anglo-Egyptian agreement restored Egyptian rule in Sudan but as part of a condominium, or joint authority, to be exercised by Britain and Egypt. The agreement designated territory south of the twenty-second parallel as the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

The British governor general, who was a military officer, reported to the Foreign Office through its resident agent in Cairo. In practice, however, he exercised extraordinary powers and directed the condominium government from Khartoum as if it were a colonial administration. Sir Reginald Wingate succeeded Kitchener as governor general in 1899.

After restoring order and the government's authority, the British dedicated themselves to creating a modern government in the condominium. The British devised a system of a separate administration for the two countries. To ensure the survival of their newly formed separate system of administration between the North and the South of Sudan, the British adopted the policy which came to be known as the Closed Districts Ordinances of 1920.<sup>338</sup>

As a result of this policy, the Passport and Permits Ordinance was promulgated in 1922. The Ordinance required the use of passports and permits for travelers shuttling between the two countries of North and South Sudan. The Permits were to specify the conditions and

---

<sup>338</sup> Richard Cockett, *Sudan, Darfur and the Failure of an African State*, p.39



purposes of the visits, plus trade order that was enacted in 1925. This law required all northerners to obtain permits to conduct business in southern Sudan. Language Policy was also developed and enforced by British administration in Southern Sudan in late 1928. This policy adopted English as the official language in all Southern Sudan regions, and approved use of various local languages: Dinka, Bari, Nuer, Latuko, Shilluk and Zande in public affairs; and rejected Arabic as an official language in Southern regions; and Juba formerly (Gondokoro) becomes a regional capital of political, administrative and business for Southern Sudan regions.

Equally, in an effort to prepare the North Sudan for self-rule, the North Sudan Advisory Council Ordinance was enacted in 1943.<sup>339</sup> The ordinance covered all six North Sudan provinces: comprising of Khartoum, Kordofan, and Darfur, Eastern, Northern and Blue Nile provinces. The Council was empowered to advise the condominium authority on how to administer North Sudan in certain specific areas. The members of the Advisory Council were all North Sudanese. The Ordinance had no express or implied application to the territory of South Sudan. The product of this policy established South Sudan as a separate political entity from Northern Sudan, while Northern became associated with Arab and Islam, on the other hand, Southern Sudan became associated with Christianity and Africanism.

### **The Civil War**

The start of the Sudan's first civil war in August 1955 was one of the momentous events in the entire history of the people of Southern Sudan. It marked the beginning of a united Southern Sudan resistance against the domination and colonization by the North and Arab Sudan. However, it is important to examine some crucial events that preceded the start of the civil war between North and South Sudan. During the Second World War, some of the British colonial officers questioned the economic and political viability of the southern provinces as separate from North Sudan.

These feelings among some of the British Officials were necessitated mainly by North Sudan Arabs criticism of the British Southern Policy of Closed Districts Ordinance. As a result of these pressures in 1946 the Sudan Administrative Conference was held and it resolved that Sudan should be administered as one country.

---

<sup>339</sup> Ann Mosley Lesh, *Prolonged Conflict in the Sudan, Prolonged Wars – A Post Nuclear Challenge* 1994, 101-107.

Furthermore, the conference delegates agreed to readmit Northern administrators to Southern posts, abolish the trade restrictions imposed under the "closed door" ordinances, and allow southerners to seek employment in the north. Khartoum also nullified the prohibition against Muslim proselytizing in the south and introduced Arabic in the south as the official administration language.

This joint venture by the British and the Arab of North Sudan was rejected by the people of Southern Sudan based on many reasons. First, instead of establishing an advisory council for the South Sudan similar to that of North Sudan, the resolutions of the Administrative Conference held in Khartoum in 1946 were viewed by South Sudanese as advocating colonization of the South by the Arab North.

The conference was held on behalf of the South Sudanese people without them having their own representatives as the initial intention of the convening of the conference was to discuss the administration in North Sudan only, which explained the lack of attendance by the British administrators in South Sudan. In fact, the British colonial officials responded to the Sudan Administrative Conference by charging that Northern agitation had influenced the conferees and that no voice had been heard at the conference in support of retaining the separate development policy for the south. The administrator advised that northern domination of the south would result in a southern rebellion against the government, however, this wise advice fell on deaf ears.

As the voices of dissent in the south became louder, the British and their North Sudanese allies decided to convene what became known as the Juba Conference in 1947. This conference did not reassure the people of South Sudan about the intentions of the British and the Arab North. Instead, it turned out to be a conference where southern chiefs were informed about the irreversible decision to hand over South Sudan to the new colonial masters from North Sudan.<sup>340</sup> Equally, South Sudanese viewed the resolutions of the 1946 conference as part of a conspiracy between the British and North Sudanese supported by Egypt to hand over South Sudan to North Sudan as a colonial territory.

The apprehension by the South Sudanese people against the North Arab manifested itself violently in August 1955. During the month of August 1955, Southern army units protested their transfer to garrisons

---

<sup>340</sup> Dunstan M. Wai, *The African-Arab Conflict in The Sudan* (African Publishing Company, New York & London 1980) Chapter 6

under northern officers. The rebellious troops killed several hundred northern Sudanese, including government officials, army officers, and merchants. The government responded by executing seventy southerners for sedition. However, this action made the people of the south more determine to end their colonization by the Arab north. Those mutineers who survived escaped to the bushes of south Sudan and formed a resistance movement against the Arab dominated government of the Sudan.

Equally, in 1954 in preparation for the eventual independent of the Sudan, the northern Sudanese minority elites started the policy of Sudanization.<sup>341</sup> The concept of Sudanization entailed the replacement of British/Egyptians civil servants that had been administering and running the Sudan, with Sudanese citizens. The policy managed to replace 800 British/Egyptian with northern Sudanese with the exception of six southern Sudanese appointees, while the north kept for themselves a handsome lion share of 774 jobs. This was not only an under-representation of the south which constituted 30% of Sudanese population; it was blatantly a new colonization of the south by the northern Arabs replacing their British masters.

While the civil war was dragging in the south, people in the north was preparing to exercise their rights to self-determination in the parliament to determined their political, social and economic future in the Sudan. As part of the 1946 conference and the indication by the British that they did not have any interest in continuing their colonization of the Sudan, the people of north Sudan where given the option through right to self-determination to opt for unity with Egypt or to form their independent state. In December 1955, the Sudanese parliament, under Azhari's leadership, unanimously adopted a declaration of independence, and in January 1956, Sudan became independent republic. Azhari called for the withdrawal of foreign troops and requested the condominium powers to sponsor a plebiscite in advance of the scheduled date.

Although the Sudanese parliament voted overwhelmingly in favor of an independent republic, Sudanese political parties did not have a road map in the form of a permanent constitution to govern the country. Instead, the Constituent Assembly adopted a document known as the Transitional Constitution, which replaced the governor general as head of state with a five member Supreme Commission that was elected by a parliament composed of an indirectly elected Senate and a popularly

---

<sup>341</sup> Richard Cockett, *Sudan, Darfur and the Failure of an African State*, p. 45

elected House of Representatives. The Transitional Constitution also allocated executive power to the Prime Minister, who was nominated by the House of Representatives and confirmed in office by the Supreme Commission.

Sudan became an independent Republic in January 1956 and Ismail Azhari became its first Prime Minister. The rebels in the south Sudan demanded a form of federalism with the North. However, such calls were regarded as criminal and seditious. The northern Sudanese slogans at the time were "no federation for one nation, federation is separation". Instead the north Sudanese elites embarked on their program of Arabization and Islamization of the entire Sudan, including South Sudan.<sup>342</sup>

The new government introduced laws that were perceived by the people of south Sudan as un-acceptable and provocative. Friday instead of Sunday became the official holiday in the entire south Sudan. The Christian Mission Schools were closed in the south and Islamic Schools were introduced and primary schools children in the south were given Muslim names and studying of the Koran became compulsory in the south.

### **The Numairy regime**

While the different governments came and went in Khartoum the war in the south became very intense, especially in 1964. The Any Nya movement which came to be known as South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) under the leadership of Joseph Lagu became a formidable military force to be reckoned with. As a result of the military confrontation between the south and the north, some Sudanese military officers under the command of Ja'afar Numairy staged a coup d'etat against the elected democratic government that came to power from civil uprising in 1964. Numairy articulated that his government intended to grant the people of south Sudan greater regional autonomy within the framework of a new united socialist Sudan.

Numairy, heavily blamed various northern Sudanese government for failing to resolve the problem in the south and decided to put a comprehensive vision as to the resolution of the southern question in a four point program as follows: (1) promulgation of an amnesty law for Southern Sudanese refugees; (2) economic social and cultural development of the South; (3) appointment of a minister for Southern

---

<sup>342</sup> Francis Deng, and War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in the Sudan, the Brookings Institution 1995, and P. 137.

Affairs; and (4) training of personnel. This constructive and visionary policy by Numeiry in trying to resolve the Southern Question, the SSLM engaged seriously with the new regime. In 1972 a peace agreement was reached between the government of the Sudan and the SSLM in Ethiopian capital, and hence it became known as the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement.

Under the provisions of the Addis Ababa Agreement the whole south would be one region, with its own government and assembly and elected executive. English rather than Arabic, was recognized as the principle and working language in the South, and the Anya Nya guerrilla forces would be gradually absorbed into the army and would serve in the South. This agreement convinced the people of South Sudan to drop their initial demand for total independence in return for substantial self-rule and protection from pressure and interference from the Khartoum.

Five years after the signing of the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement, Numeiry reconciled with the head of the Islamic brotherhood under the leadership of Dr. Hassan Al-Turabi. Dr. Al-Turabi played great role in influencing Numeiry's government policies and hence Numeiry embraced a political Islam. In 1977 Numeiry's government began a comprehensive plan to Islamize Sudanese laws and in 1983 the government officially adopted new Islamic civil and criminal codes which became known as the "September Laws".

Numeiry went further to abrogate the most important clauses of the Addis Ababa Agreement. He suspended the autonomous status of the South. To make matters worse, after the discovery of oil in the South by Chevron Oil Company, Numeiry took a political decision to locate the oil refinery in the North, near Kosti. The export of oil to the international market was to generate hard revenues which would be channeled to develop the north. This decision was received with contempt and outrage by the South. A new civil war then started 1983.

The military garrisons of Bor and Pibor mutinied against Numeiry orders to transfer them to north, a situation similar to the first war in 1955. Numeiry decided to repress the Mutineers and after a long battle, the mutineers withdrew to regroup in Ethiopia. The overall command of the new group movement was assumed by Col. John Garang de Mabior, an ex- Anya Nya officer and who held a Ph.D. from the United States of America. The main objective of the new movement (Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement/ Sudan People Liberation Army, SPLM/SPLA) was the total liberation of the whole Sudan from Northern and Southern Sudanese bourgeoisie and bureaucratic elites,

religious fundamentalism and the reactionary commanders of the former Anya Nya II.<sup>343</sup>

At its genesis the new southern rebellion faced serious difficulties as to what should be their main political objective. Dr. John Garang and some of his colleagues wanted the liberation of the whole Sudan, based on new political and social dispensation. They wanted to create a new unified Sudan under a socialist system that afforded democracy and human rights to all nationalities and guaranteed freedom to all religions, beliefs, and outlooks. These they believed can be realized through protracted revolutionary armed struggle.

SPLM gained support from different African Socialist governments such as Ethiopia, and equally, from some of the Arabs countries such as Libya.

The state of affairs in the SPLM continued the same with the objective of establishing a New Sudan until 1991. In August 1991 three senior commanders and members of the Military High Command called for the overthrow of Dr. Garang and split from the main SPLM and formed what was known as the Nasir Faction.

The new splinter group articulated that the people of South Sudan should be given the right to self-determination. This demand was found to be attractive by the government in Khartoum and hence in 1992 the new splinter group signed a document with the government of the Sudan accepting the exercise of right to self-determination by the people of Southern Sudan. In 1995 the northern opposition parties signed similar document accepting the notion that the people of Southern Sudan should be accorded the right to self-determination in a fair and democratic environment.<sup>344</sup>

Although the Sudanese political forces both from the North and South had accepted that the people of South Sudan could exercise their right to self-determination with the two options of either confirming unity or session, nevertheless, the concept of right to self-determination was indeed intellectually and political controversial. Despite that, the North had to agree finally to conduct a referendum in the South to determine the future dispensation of the territory.

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion of the historical referendum in South Sudan and the official announcement of the result, which overwhelmingly favored

---

<sup>343</sup> Abel Alier, *Southern Sudan: Too Many agreements Dishonoured*, (London 1990).

<sup>344</sup> The Asmara Declaration

the creation of an independent South Sudan as the newest member of the international community has no doubt introduced a new phenomenon in Africa's geo-politics. The argument that the colonial borders and hence state sovereignty should not be challenged is legally and academically flawed. This has given hope to many marginalized people across Africa and the third world in demanding for the right to self-determination. It has further, established that the exercise of right to self-determination is not a threat to state sovereignty as long the state in question complies with the norms and provisions of international law.





## SYRIA

**Editor's Note: The history of Syria is of a large country that covered Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, and parts of Turkey. It was only as a result of World War I that Britain and France decided to carve up the region among themselves. The consequences of that colonial arrogance remain visible till today.**

### Introduction

Syria, which is often described as the Cradle of Civilization lies at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea at the doorway to Asia and the Middle East. With a land area of 185,180 square kilometers, Syria is bordered by Turkey on the north, by Iraq on the east, by Lebanon and Mediterranean Sea on the west, by Jordan on the south, and by Israel on the southwest.

Syria's glorious history with significant contribution to the civilization of the world goes back several millennia. As the cradle of Judaism and the birthplace of Christianity it originated two of the great monotheistic religions and prompted the rise and development of the third and last-Islam.

Moreover, the secrets of agriculture, metallurgy, invention of the very first alphabet, philosophy, language of trade, and systems of urbanization all were developed in Ancient Syria.<sup>345</sup>

Today's Syria was once part of a larger area that included what are now the countries of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, Israel, and part of Turkey.

Historically, Syria's vulnerable geographical location between the Mediterranean Sea and desert made it a marchland between many conquerors and empires from various directions.

As a battlefield for the political destinies of various dynasties, Syria rarely ruled itself; it was fought over for centuries and consequently controlled by different factions, including Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Persians, and the Ottoman empires.<sup>346</sup>

### Ancient Syria

---

<sup>345</sup> <http://www.ibnhanibay-syria.com/en/home.html>

<sup>346</sup> [http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country\\_studies/syria/all.html](http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country_studies/syria/all.html)

In the third millennium BC, Sumer, a kingdom of non-Semitic peoples that formed the southern boundary of ancient Babylonia, sent expeditions in pursuit of cedar from the Ammanus and gold and silver from Cilicia. The Sumerians most probably traded with the Syrian port city of Byblos, which was also negotiating with Egypt for exportation of timber and the resin necessary for mummification.<sup>347</sup>

In 1600 BC, Egypt mounted a full attack on Greater Syria and brought the entire region under its suzerainty. During the 15<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries BC, the area was in tremendous political upheaval because of the growing Assyrian power pressing from the east and invasions of Hittites from the north.

In 1400 BC, the Hittites expanded their empire throughout Asia Minor and wanted to control the trade routes that ran along the Euphrates River into Syria. In their attempts to gain supremacy in Syria, the Hittites clashed with the Egyptians and gradually took over more and more of the country. Following the battle of Kadesh in 1285 BC, a peace treaty divided Syria.<sup>348</sup>

As the principle center of attraction, Syria, during the second and first millennia BC, witnessed successive invasion and occupation by various major powers like Canaanites, Arameans, Phoenicians, Sumerians, Assyrians, and Babylonians as part of the general disruption and exchanges associated with the sea peoples.

Towards the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC, Syria fell under the domination of the Persian Empire, and two thousand years of Semitic dynasties ended. The Great Darius I (521-486 BC) divided the extensive Persian Empire into twenty satrapies (provinces) and Syria constituted one satrapy with Babylonia.

During the two hundred years, Persian rulers built imperial roads connecting the empire across the Euphrates with the Syrian coastal cities and fortified the coastline. Persian influence on material culture was slight; the predominant architecture and arts were Syro-Babylonian in inner Syria; and a Greco-Egyptian impact was, however, clear on the coast and in the south.<sup>349</sup>

By 336 BC, a young and energetic Macedonian known to us as Alexander the Great, created the Greek empire and the gradual infiltration of Greek commercial and cultural influences into Syria was accelerated by its military conquest.

---

<sup>347</sup> Syria: A country Study by Thomas Collelo

<sup>348</sup> Western Civilizations: Ideas, Politics, and Society ninth edition

<sup>349</sup> Achaemenid, History of Iran: Two Centuries of Persian Rule (538-331 BC) by Adnan Bounni

After liberating the Greek cities of Asia Minor and defeating the numerically superior Persian army at Issus in 333 BC, Alexander founded the city of Alexandretta (Iskenderun, in the part of Syria now in Turkish hands) near the site. The defeat of Persian Empire was the beginning of western rule over Syria.

Following the sudden death of Alexander the Great in Babylon in 323 BC, Greater Syria was divided into two empires one under Ptolemy, the other under Seleucus. Contemporary Syria was under the Seleucids. The Seleucids built Apamea as their Military base using Latakia as their main port. They also built the fortress of Doura Europos. All these cities were built under Greek architectural design and planning.

The Hellenistic Empire combined both Western and Eastern cultures with a predominantly Greek system and outlook, dominated the world in a tangible way for about the next 300 years.

In the early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC, because of disputes between the dynasties established by Alexander's former generals, Macedonia, the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucids, war and territorial jockeying was almost constant. While the growing Roman power slowly continued to expand, and the importance and wealth of Syrian cities like Damascus, which was a crucial stop on the emerging Silk Road, drew the attention of the Roman Empire.

In 191 BC, a relatively small Syrian army of 10,000 met a Roman force of twice its size at the famous Spartan battlefield of Thermopylae. The Roman army was crushed and forced to flee back to Asia. Over the course of the next year, the Romans pressed their advantage and overwhelmed a hastily recruited Syrian army at Magnesia. With this defeat, the Seleucid dynasty began to falter and external pressures from Arab Nabataeans, Armenians and the Parthian Empire took its toll.

In 66 BC, a campaign led by Pompey the Great essentially brought the whole region, Syria included, under Roman control. In 64 BC, Syrian Kings were ousted, and Pompey officially annexed Syria as a Roman province.<sup>350</sup>

Under the Romans, the great city of Antioch (called "the Athens of the East" at that time) was the capital of Syria; civilization and agriculture greatly developed; population increased and nomads settled inside the territory; ports and trade routes with the Far East were significant economic forces and contributed to the prosperity of Antioch and northern Syria. Moreover, throughout this time, Christianity was

---

<sup>350</sup> <http://www.unrv.com/provinces/syria.php>

spreading through the Empire and the community of Christians founded in Antioch by St. Paul.

In 324 AD, Constantine the Great took over from Diocletian, and laid the foundation of the Byzantine Empire by moving his capital from Rome to Constantinople (Istanbul) in 330 AD. The Byzantine Empire which was a mix of Greek, Roman and Christian cultures, dominated Syrian history for centuries. During this period, Christianity began to flourish under imperial patronage and the Emperor Theodosius I named Christianity the official language of the Roman Empire.

Byzantine Syria presents a different picture from Roman Syria. It was, on the whole, a Christian land. In fact this is the only period in which Syria has been a fully Christian country. Sandwiched in between the pagan Roman and the Arab Moslem, the Byzantine period was therefore unique in Syrian annals.

#### **The Arab Muslim Period**

With the rise of Islam, the Islamic expansion reached Syria under the Caliph Omar Bin Al Khattab and the country was taken over from the Byzantines in 636 AD. Damascus became the capital of the Umayyad dynasty in 661 AD.

During the Umayyad rule, Damascus turned into the center of culture, architecture, art, science and administration of the Muslim world, which eventually stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the borders of China.<sup>351</sup> Most Syrians converted to Islam; Arabic language replaced Aramaic; foreign trade expanded; and educated Jews and Christians, many of them Greek, found employment in the caliphate courts, where they studied and practiced medicine, alchemy, and philosophy.

Under later dissolute caliphs, the Umayyad dynasty began to decline at a time when both Sunni and Shia Muslims in Iran began to press against Umayyad borders. In 744 AD, an all-out civil war among all those hoping to control the caliphate began in eastern Iran and rapidly spread over the whole Umayyad Empire.<sup>352</sup>

In 750 AD, Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib, the youngest uncle of Prophet Muhammad, succeeded in overthrowing the Umayyad dynasty and established the Abbasids, which lasted in various forms until the Mongol invasion in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. The newly established Caliphate decided to shift the capital of the Islamic Empire from Damascus to a city further east to Baghdad in 762 AD.

---

<sup>351</sup> The first Dynasty of Islam, the Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750, by G.R. Hawting

<sup>352</sup> Voyages in World history by Valerie Hansen and Kenneth Curtis

Moving the capital from Damascus to Baghdad, Syria became a dependent province of the Caliphate with a declining population; its loyalty was suspected for Umayyad sentiment lingered on; and greatly neglected under the Abbasid Dynasty.

Abbasid rule over Syria was precarious and often challenged by the independent Muslim princes and Byzantine armies. At a time when the Abbasid state was torn within it and shattered, Abu Ali Hasan founded the Shia Hamdanid kingdom and ruled northern Syria from Aleppo. The Hamdanid dynasty ruled throughout the 10<sup>th</sup> Century and became famous for their achievements in science and letters. In Europe it was known for its persistent attacks against Byzantium. The Hamdanid kingdom fell in 1094 to Muslim Seljuk Turks invading from the northeast.

During the same period, the Shia Fatimids established themselves in Egypt and drove north against Syria. The Fatimids were less tolerant of subject peoples than their predecessors. Intolerance reached its height under caliph Abu Ali Mansur al Hakim (966-1021 AD), who destroyed churches and caused Christians to flee to the mountains.

Muslim rule of Christian holy places, overpopulation, and constant warfare in Europe prompted the Crusades, the first major Western colonial venture in the Middle East. Between 1097 and 1144 AD Crusaders established the principalities of Edessa (in northeast modern Syria), Antioch, Tripoli, and the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. The politically fragmented area was an easy conquest for the Europeans.

The first Muslim threat to European entrenchment came not from within Greater Syria but from Zangi, the Amir of Mosul (in modern Iraq). Zangi took Edessa in 1144 AD and his son, Nur ad Din, secured Damascus, extending the realm from Aleppo to Mosul. When the last Shia Fatimid caliph died, Nur ad Din secured Egypt as well. Eliminating Sunni-Shia sectarianism, the political rivalry that had so aided the European venture, he invoked jihad, holy war, as a unifying force for Arabs in Greater Syria and Egypt. The jihad was to liberate Jerusalem, the third holiest city to Muslims. It fell to Nur ad Din's lieutenant, Salahuddin al Ayubbi, to recapture Jerusalem. Salah ad Din, a Kurd, unified Syria and Egypt, a necessary preliminary, and after many setbacks, captured Mosul, Aleppo, and the string of cities from Edessa to Nasihin. He besieged Jerusalem in September 1187 AD, and in nine days Jerusalem surrendered.

Salahuddin inflicted Islam's mightiest blows against the Crusaders, raised Muslim pride and self-respect, and founded the Ayyubid dynasty, which governed Egypt until 1260 AD. During his lifetime, he created harmony among Muslims in the Middle East and gained a position of affection and honor among them that remains strong to the present, particularly in Syria.

After Salahuddin's death in 1192 AD, his Ayyubid successors quarreled among themselves, and Syria broke into small dynasties centered in Aleppo, Hamah, Homs, and Damascus. By the fourteenth century, after repelling repeated invasions by Mongols from the north, the Mamluk sultans of Egypt, successors to the Ayyubids, ruled from the Nile to the Euphrates. Their great citadels and monuments still stand. In 1516, the Ottoman sultan in Turkey defeated the Mamluks at Aleppo and made Syria a province of a new Muslim empire.<sup>353</sup>

#### **Syria under the Ottoman Empire**

In the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, the nomad Muslim Turks from the central Asia, who had been led by Ottoman, founded a small kingdom amid the ruins of the Mongol wrecked Seljuk Empire in northwest Turkey. The Ottomans soon began to absorb the other states; invaded Europe; and conquered all of the Middle East in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>354</sup>

The Mongol invasions in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries and their devastating attacks on Aleppo and Damascus weakened Syria, and eventually, Syria surrendered in 1516.

Under the Ottoman Empire, Syria was divided into several provinces and ruled through pashas who governed with unlimited power over the land under their control. At the beginning, several attempts were made to restore Syria's former glory; mosques, souks, and caravanserais were built all over the country; and Damascus was made the major entrepot for Mecca. It acquired almost a holy character to Muslims because of the countless pilgrims who passed through on the Hajj. Although for centuries the basic allegiance of the majority Sunni Muslims population was to the Ottoman Islamic State, several groups or regions developed into socio-political autonomies and/or maintained their communal religious identities, notably Alawis, Druze and Christians.<sup>355</sup>

The Age of Exploration in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries gave rise to the wealth of maritime powers such as England and Spain and discovery of new trade routes by Europeans declined Syria's overland

---

<sup>353</sup> [http://atheism.about.com/library/FAQs/islam/countries/bl\\_SyriaCaliphates.htm](http://atheism.about.com/library/FAQs/islam/countries/bl_SyriaCaliphates.htm)

<sup>354</sup> The Ottoman Empire A Short History by Suraiya Faroghi translated by Shelley Frisch

<sup>355</sup> Modern Syria from Ottoman Rule to Pivotal Role in the Middle East Onn Winckler

trade and leaving it a mere province in the also weakened Ottoman Empire. With the traders from the West came missionaries, teachers, scientists, and tourists whose governments began to clamor for certain rights. France demanded the right to protect Christians; the British acquired similar rights and established the Levant Company in Aleppo; and by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Russians had claimed protective rights over the Greek Orthodox community.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, European powers had begun to take advantage of Ottoman weakness through both military and political penetration, including Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, subsequent British intervention, and French occupation of Lebanon.

### **French Mandate and Independence**

Following the outbreak of the First World War, the governments of England and France with the assent of Imperial Russia concluded the Sykes-Picot Agreement in May 1916, which defined their respective spheres of influence and control in Western Asia after the expected collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The Agreement, which was signed secretly, divided the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire outside the Arabian Peninsula. The agreement was exposed after the Russian Revolution of 1917.<sup>356</sup>

After the breakup and subsequent fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, Lawrence of Arabia and British officers encouraged Amir Faisal, the leader of the Arab Revolt, to take control of Damascus and set up a government. When Arab nationalists proclaimed Faisal king of Greater Syria and his brother, Abdullah, king of Iraq<sup>357</sup> in April 1920, the Principal Allied Powers of World War I gathered in San Remo, Italy to decide the future of the former territories of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>358</sup>

On the basis of previous agreements, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire split the geographic area of greater Syria between England and France and control of these territories became formalized by the League of Nations. England held control of modern Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine, while present-day Syria and Lebanon came under French mandate and King Faisal was forced into exile.

During the French rule, the area was divided into two main separate administrative units under a single high commissioner: Lebanon and Syria. The division plan was more successful in Lebanon because of the extensive Maronite support for French policies, while in Syria, two

---

<sup>356</sup> <http://algassania2.mam9.com/t399-the-sykes-picot-agreement>

<sup>357</sup> Syria and Lebanon by Terry Carter, Lara Dunston, Andrew Humphreys

<sup>358</sup> Remembered Yesterdays by Robert Underwood Johnson

thirds of the population were Sunni Muslim Arabs who opposed foreign and Christian rule.

The existence of various minorities in Syria, however, offered opportunity for divide-and-rule tactics. Therefore, Lebanon was made a separate state in 1920, and Syria was cut into four semiautonomous areas on the basis of ethnic and religious differences: Damascus, Jebel Druze, Aleppo, and Latakia. Parts of traditionally Muslim areas, like Tripoli, were also sliced away in 1920 and attached to Lebanon. Later, in 1925, Damascus and Aleppo became unified under the title of the state of Syria and a government was elected to carry on most functions while remaining under the umbrella of the French Mandate. Jebel Druze, and Latakia, however, remained separate with their own governments and constitutions until, under the 1936 Franco-Syrian Treaty, they were again merged back into Syria. Within the state of Aleppo, Iskenderum received a separate administration as part of the Franklin-Bouillon Agreement of 1921, ending hostility between Ataturk's regime and France.<sup>359</sup>

In 1938, soon after French and Syrian leaders had reached agreement on a treaty providing for substantial Syrian independence, the French government refused to ratify the treaty, partly because France regarded control of the area as vital to its military position. The following year, France ceded to Turkey the former Turkish administrative district of Alexandretta, in which the ancient Syrian capital of Antioch is located.<sup>360</sup>

With the fall of France in 1940, the mandates came under the control of the Vichy Government. In 1941, British troops, accompanied by Free French forces, wrested control of Syria and promised to support its independence. Two years later, a new nationalist government was formed under the presidency of Shukri al-Kuwatli and the last French troops left Syria in April 1946.

### **Modern Syria**

From the departure of French troops through the late 1960s, Syria experienced a period of instability and political turbulence which was characterized by both internal and external factors. Lack of unity among Syrian leaders and competition over political and economic positions which led to a series of military coup d'états; undermining civilian rule in the country; involvement of newly independent Syria in the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 and creation of United Arab Republic by

---

<sup>359</sup> The Middle East Today by Don Peretz

<sup>360</sup> [http://www.countriesquest.com/middle\\_east/syria/history/the\\_french\\_mandate.htm](http://www.countriesquest.com/middle_east/syria/history/the_french_mandate.htm)



integration of Egypt and Syria under the leadership of Jamal Abdul Nasser are among the most important factors affected Syria enormously.

During this period, Cold War struggles also dominated the Middle East. The West was seeking to prevent communist ideology from gaining further adherents in the vulnerable and strategically important Middle East oil supplier, while in Syria, Arab nationalism and socialism with a strong determination to reunite Arabs into one state were central ideology concept among the Syrian intellectuals. The spread of this ideology led to creation of the Arab Socialist Baath Party in 1947. Soon promises of socialism and secularism attracted Syrians of rural and minority backgrounds, including the Alawi who joined the party in large numbers. This minority religious group, who used to constitute the weakest community in Syria, acquired power through Baath and quickly occupied key positions in various military services. As a consequence, Baath gradually took control of the army and became a growing political force in the country. Its ideological objectives also reached to other Arab countries; however, the only countries it has ever held power in are Syria and Iraq.

The 1963 coup which transferred the authority from Sunnis to the Alawis, reshaped the political feature of Syria and brought the Baath Party to power. Under the Baath rule, Syria took a more aggressive stance towards Israel and its foreign policy was determined by the Arab-Israeli dispute, which resulted in a number of cross-border incidents leading to the 1967 war. This Arab-Israeli war in which Syria lost part of its territory, the Golan Heights, transformed the country from a weak and unstable state into a more militarily powerful and assertive player in the region.

Today, Syria as a major party to the Arab-Israeli dispute plays a very important role in the regional affairs and peace process in the Middle East. Its exceptional geostrategic location at the very heart of the Middle East and the recent political policies by President Assad have positioned the country as an influential regional force. However, a prosperous and peaceful Syria needs fundamental political reform with democratic values and economic development to fill the existing gap between people and the Government.

#### **Syria-Turkey Relations**

Syria and Turkey shares a long border and various historical and cultural values that tie the two nations together. Nevertheless, a number of problems such as self-annexation of Hatay Province to Turkey in 1939, Syria's support for the Kurdistan Worker's Party, and water dispute

resulting from the Southeastern Anatolia Project deteriorated the relations between the two countries.

The existing crack-down in Syria against its dissidents have been strongly and publically condemned by Turkey.

#### **Syria-Iraq Relations**

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and formation of modern states of Syria and Iraq, efforts were made to unite both into one country. However, when Syria and Iraq were ruled under the Baath Party, distrust between the rival Baathist regimes and charges of the interference in each other's internal affairs built up over three decades of hostile relations.

During this period, Syria broke diplomatic relations with Iraq and later joined the anti Saddam Hussein coalition. After the collapse of the Saddam regime, relations between the two countries have seen remarkable developments. Mutual visits of high level delegations and resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 2006 have led to a number of economic cooperation agreements.

#### **Syria-Lebanon relations**

Division of Syria and Lebanon into separate colonial administrations, and later the creation of Lebanon as a sovereign and independent state, could not weaken the desire to reunite both countries into one state among many Syrians. This aspiration has also dominated Syria's foreign policy over the decades and until recently, Syria never formally recognized Lebanon as a state.

The outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975 gave Syria the strategic opportunity for a military intervention. Thus, at the request of the Lebanese President, Syria moved troops into Lebanon and retained firm control over much of the country for years.

In 1991, Syria and Lebanon signed the Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination in which Syria ensured Lebanon's independence and sovereignty. Nevertheless, a number of issues such as Israeli occupation of Lebanon, breakdown of peace negotiations between Syria and Israel and Palestinian uprising delayed the full implementation of the Treaty.

The Assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri in February 2005, built deep anti-Syrian sentiments in Lebanon, which led to the departure of Syrian troops after nearly 30 years. Three years later, Syria recognized Lebanon's sovereignty for the first time; nonetheless, Syria's support of Hezbollah has strained the relations between the two countries for some time.

**Syria- Jordan Relations**

Syria and Jordan share common historical roots and values. However, after the division of Syria and the independence of both countries, the relationship between the two sides is mainly marked by different stances of key players in the region and a number of regional agreements. Therefore, both neighbors' relations have gone through steep ups and down between normal diplomatic relations and armed confrontation.

In 1970, the tensions between Damascus and Amman exacerbated when Syria supported the Palestinian Liberation Organization against Jordan, which resulted in the break off diplomatic relations between the two countries.

After the First Gulf War, the relations gradually improved, and later, the changes in the leaderships in Jordan and Syria respectively, enhanced mutual understanding and boosted trade and economic relations between the two sides.

**Syria-Israel Relations**

Since the Arab-Israeli war in 1948, relations between Syria and Israel have been marred by territorial disputes and characterized by periods of hostility and ceasefire talks.

The Six-Day War of 1967 in which Syria lost an important strategic location, the Golan Heights, inflamed nationalist feelings and helped to radicalize Syrian politics.

For the last few decades, the search for peace and to recover the lost territory was the central driving force of Syrian policy, and all diplomatic and military resources were mobilized to attain this objective.

Since the 1991 Madrid Conference in which Syrian and Israeli peace talks began for the first time, efforts were made to bring the two sides into peace negotiations and open a direct channel of dialogue but it seems the unwavering positions of both countries and interfering of some players in the region preventing them from reaching peace agreement.

**Syria-Iran Relations**

After the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, common animosities toward Israel have drawn secular Syria and religious Iran together. Today, both countries as strategic alliance created great potential to influence regional geopolitics and peace process in the Middle East.

**Syria-Russia Relations**

The Middle East as a major source of oil was of strategic importance to the United States and Soviet Union during the Cold War.

As both powers vied for preponderant influence in the region, the Soviet Union maintained its political and strategic interests in the Arab- Israel zone by backing the Arabs in their dispute with Israel.

Following the victory of Baath Party, the relations between Syria and the Soviet Union became close. Soon the Soviet Union involved heavily in providing weaponry and military training to Syria as a strategic alliance.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, in spite of common interests between Damascus and Moscow, the relations have not been warm. However, since 2005, the relations between the two countries have undergone a dramatic improvement which resulted in Syria purchasing billions of dollars of armaments from Russia.

#### **Syria-United States Relations**

The relations between Syria and the United States of America have always been tense and hostile. Syria's strong ties with the former Soviet Union, its longstanding relationship with Iran as a strategic alliance, and its supporting of Hamas and Hezbollah have been of great concern to the United States. Syria has also been accused of supporting various terror groups in the region, of interfering in Lebanese internal affairs and of developing weapons of mass destruction. For its part, Syria categorically rejects the accusations and often strongly criticizes the United States policy in the Middle East.

## TURKEY

**Editor's Note: Despite Arab memories of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey is slowly turning towards the Middle East, and emerging as a strong influence and power broker. This is partly because of its enlightened secularism, partly because of its successful economy, and partly as a reaction to the unnecessary obstacles that were created in its application for membership in the European Union.**

### Introduction

As one of the largest countries in both Eastern Europe and the Middle East, Turkey has an extremely rich cultural heritage that perhaps no other land has witnessed over the last nine thousand years.

The most important phases of Turkey's history include the rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire and the political impact of this fall on the Middle East and on Turkey itself, the founding of the Turkish Republic by Kamal Atatürk, who turned Turkey into a secular republic and launched revolutionary social and political reforms in order to modernize Turkey, and the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) to power in 2002 among fears of eroding Turkey's secularity.

Although some critics accuse Turkey of pursuing an "Islamic" foreign policy, the fact remains that the AKP has not ended Turkey's membership in NATO nor given up on Turkey's long term goal of joining the European Union. European Union (EU) membership has been a primary goal of the AKP government, and significant social and economic reforms have taken place during their administration in order to qualify Turkey for its membership.

Despite that, the increasing interest of Turkey in the Middle East and its potential to play an effective regional role, in the uncontrolled hotspots (Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Israel), makes it hard for Turkey to escape a tendency of being reactive rather than proactive.

However, Turkey's eagerness to play third party roles in the management and resolution of regional conflicts, particularly the

Arab-Israeli one, might be slowed down by some factors in the region, including the radicalization in the region, the further polarization of regional politics, and the increasing rift between Turkey's Western allies and its regional friends which could have serious restraints on Turkey's soft power roles, at least in the medium term. Turkey's foreign relations with certain countries in the region are discussed.

The recent revolutions in North Africa Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen and Bahrain have attracted the attention of Turkey. The entire region is undergoing enormous changes and many parties, including Turkey, have begun to reconsider their positions on what is happening.

### **History**

The history of Turkey encompasses the history of Anatolia, the history of the Turkish people, and the history of the Ottoman Empire, which was a vast, cosmopolitan, pan-Islamic state that developed from a small Turkish emirate in Anatolia and became a world power for centuries.<sup>361</sup>

Turkey is spread over a geographical area of 769,604 km<sup>2</sup>, bordered by eight countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, and has a population of approximately 73 million. Turkey still holds a very strategic position on the world map and tackled the challenges of the future through its journey along the road towards modernization, secularism and democracy. Today, Turkey has a vibrant society, a dynamic economy, an active political life and great confidence in its future.<sup>362</sup>

### **The Rise and Fall of the Ottoman Empire**

The Ottoman Empire lasted more than six centuries from 1299 to 1923. At the height of its power in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries, the empire spanned three continents (Europe, Asia and Africa), controlling much of Southeastern Europe, Western Asia and North Africa.<sup>363</sup>

During the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries, the Ottoman Empire extended its borders deep into Europe and North Africa. The innovation of the Ottoman military and navy aided this expansion

---

<sup>361</sup> History of Turkey, <http://countrystudies.us/turkey/2.htm>, history, Turkey

<sup>362</sup> *Turkey - the Bridge between East and West*,  
<http://www.avrupaforumu.org.tr/turkey.htm>,

<sup>363</sup> Ottoman Empire, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman\\_Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire)

significantly. The state also flourished economically thanks to its control of the major overland trade routes between Europe and Asia. Sultan Selim (1512–1520 AD) dramatically expanded the Empire's eastern and southern frontiers by defeating Shah Ismail of Safavid Persia, establishing Ottoman rule in Egypt, and creating a naval presence on the Red Sea. Selim's successor, Suleiman the Magnificent (1520–1566 AD), captured Belgrade in 1521 AD and the southern and central parts of Hungary. In the east, the Ottomans took Baghdad from the Persians in 1535 AD, gaining control of Mesopotamia and naval access to the Persian Gulf. By the end of Suleiman's reign, the Empire's population totaled about 15,000,000 people.<sup>364</sup>

The Ottoman naval superiority was challenged by several factors which included: (a) the growing sea powers of Western Europe, particularly Portugal in the Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean and the Spice Islands; (b) the establishment of naval routes to Asia by the Europeans, which resulted in serious negative economic consequences on the Ottomans and curbed their control of overland trade routes, (c) the superiority of the Europeans in military technology, and (d) growing religious and intellectual conservatism.

As a result, the Ottoman Empire faced challenges in defending itself against foreign invasion and occupation, and lost much of its territory in the Balkans and North Africa, which became independent in all but name, and later came under the influence of Britain and France. In Europe, the Greeks declared war on the Sultan in 1821, and many parts of the Ottoman Empire achieved independence including Serbia, Moldavia and Montenegro.

In mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, the Ottoman Empire was called the "sick man" by the Europeans for its weakening military and economic capacity and for other reasons that included the incompetency of Sultans, corruption, and the rise of nationalism among ethnic groups.

The Ottoman Empire came to an end, as a regime under an imperial monarchy, in November 1922. It formally ended, as a de jure state in July 1923, under the Treaty of Lausanne, and was succeeded by the Republic of Turkey in October 1923.

---

<sup>364</sup> Ottoman Empire, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman\\_Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire)

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire marked the end of a primary unifying force in the Islamic world, and left the Middle East region at the mercy of foreign powers. The Sykes Picot agreement essentially divided up the Middle East territories amongst the powers of Britain and France, while giving up Constantinople and the Dardanelles to Russia. However, the fading of this force contributed to creating strong nationalist sentiments among various Arab nationalist and liberation movements that swept the Middle East, leading to the creation and independence of many Middle East states.

Atatürk is the founder and first president of the Turkish Republic. He aimed at building on the ruins of Ottoman Turkey a new country and society patterned directly on Western Europe. He equated Westernization with the introduction of technology, the modernization of administration, and the evolution of democratic institutions.<sup>365</sup>

Ataturk established a single party regime that lasted almost without interruption until 1945, and launched revolutionary social and political reforms to modernize Turkey, which included granting rights to women, abolishment of Islamic institutions, and introduction of Western legal codes, dress, calendar and alphabet. Ataturk pursued a foreign policy based on the principles of preserving the independence and integrity of the new Republic, neutrality, and friendship with Turkey's neighbors.

### **The Current Landscape**

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) entered the Turkish political scene in August 2001 under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan.<sup>366</sup>

The AKP portrays itself as a moderate, right-wing conservative party with plans to combine elements of Islam with Turkey's everyday democratic and secular lifestyle. The Party won a landslide victory in the 2002 general elections, and its leader, former Istanbul mayor Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is currently the Prime Minister of Turkey.

Under the Justice and Development Party (AKP), Turkey has become closer to the Middle East than to Europe. During its

---

<sup>365</sup> History of Turkey, <http://countrystudies.us/turkey/2.htm>, history, Turkey

<sup>366</sup> Justice & Development Party, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/tu-political-party-akp.htm>



first term, the AKP leadership emphasized its commitment to Turkey's traditional grand strategy and vigorously pursued EU membership, perhaps in part to assuage fears both at home and abroad about its supposedly hidden Islamist agenda. However, in its second term started in 2007, AKP has shown an increasing interest in the Middle East region.

#### *Relations with Iran*

Turkish-Iranian relations have been peaceful since 1923. A period of coldness in bilateral relations existed following the Islamic revolution in 1979 due to the conflicting ideologies of secular Turkey and the religious leaders of Iran.<sup>367</sup> Nevertheless, the economic and political relations between the two countries have significantly improved in the recent years after the two countries signed a number of cooperation agreements. Turkey supported the Iranian President Ahmadinejad after the hotly contested June 2009 presidential elections, and defended Iran's nuclear program by accusing the West of treating Iran unfairly over its nuclear program and by questioning the Western stance toward Israel, which allegedly owns nuclear weapons.<sup>368</sup>

#### *Relations with Lebanon*

Matters between Turkey and Lebanon have never been tense.<sup>369</sup> However the bilateral relations have been developing since the beginning of the 2000s and following the Turkish-Syrian rapprochement started in 1999.<sup>370</sup> The political groups in Lebanon hold Turkey in high regard because they think Turkey has an influence on Syria, and is capable of using its leverage on Syria on issues relating to Lebanon.

#### *Relations with Syria*

Though Turkey shares its longest common border with Syria, and has geographic, cultural, and historical links with it, the Turkish-Syrian relations have long been strained. This friction has been due to disputes over Turkey's annexation of Hatay Province in 1939, water disputes and Syria's support for the outlawed Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). However, the relations

---

<sup>367</sup> Foreign Relations of Turkey, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign\_relations\_of\_Turkey

<sup>368</sup> Turkey-Iran Relations, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/oct/26/turkey-iran>

<sup>369</sup> Foreign Relations of Turkey, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign\_relations\_of\_Turkey

<sup>370</sup> Turkey-Lebanon Relations, <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-198405-turkey-lebanon-relations-in-the-light-of-hariris-visit-to-ankara.html>

improved greatly since October 1998; when PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan was expelled by Syrian authorities.<sup>371</sup> Turkey then maintained strong relations with the Baath regime in Syria and helped in alleviating the serious regional and international isolation of Syria following the assassination of the former PM Hariri in Lebanon.

Turkey also succeeded in playing a mediating role between Syria and Israel in their indirect negotiations starting 2008, but the talks made no significant headway and were suspended following the Israeli military offensive in Gaza the following year in 2009.<sup>372</sup> Syria urged Turkey to mediate new indirect talks with Israel. Recent events have seriously strained relations again.

#### *Relations with Israel*

Turkey was among the first Muslim countries to recognize Israel in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>373</sup> Since then, Israel has been a major supplier of arms to Turkey. Military, strategic, and diplomatic cooperation between Turkey and Israel were accorded high priority by the governments of both countries, which share concerns with respect to the regional instabilities in the Middle East.

However, tension arose between the two countries over Israel's December 2008 – January 2009 bombing of the Gaza Strip, and the diplomatic relations were near breaking point over the flotilla incident in 2010, which resulted in the killing of nine activists by Israeli Defense Forces causing great outrage in Turkey.

Some critics believe that the real motive behind the AKP's attempts to gain regional power is to score victories on a front other than the Europe particularly after Turkey's failure to join the EU to date. Other reasons may include the current tensions and changing realities in the Middle East region which cannot be ignored by Turkey.

The important question is Did Turkey achieve its goal? In fact Turkey attempted to play an effective role in the region, but so far nothing tangible. For example, Turkey could not play an effective role in narrowing the gap between Iran and the world powers, or

---

<sup>371</sup> Foreign Relations of Turkey, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign\\_relations\\_of\\_Turkey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_relations_of_Turkey)

<sup>372</sup> The Associated Press, <http://www.680news.com/news/world/article/109823--syria-says-any-indirect-peace-talks-with-israel-must-be-mediated-by-turkey?ref=topic&name=topic&title=>

<sup>373</sup> Conflicts with Israel, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim\\_world](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim_world)

defusing the crisis in Lebanon, or achieving tangible progress in peace talks between Syria and Israel.

### **Turkish Iranian Competition**

There is much debate about the Turkish-Iranian competition in the Middle East region especially after the recent initiatives and visits made by Turkish officials to some Arab countries. In fact, matters are coming to a head in relations with Syria. In Lebanon, Turkey offers political sponsorship to the Sunnis, while Iran perceives the Shiites and Hezbollah as part of its security. In Gaza, Iran provides rockets, funding and training to the "Jihadist" movements and instigates military confrontations, while Turkey sends humanitarian aid and extends political support to Hamas leaders in an attempt to lift the blockade and move Hamas to the political square.

Although it seems that the Middle East region looks like an arena for Turkish-Iranian competition, it cannot be claimed that Turkey wants to compete with Iran in the region. In fact, Turkey avoids any situation that can be considered a Turkish competition to Iran's policy in the region. Even more, Turkey supports Iran in its nuclear dispute and Erdogan, together with the Brazilian president, tried to find a way out for Iran during the last few months after the failure of the 5+1 talks. It is also well known that Turkey, for more than one reason, is eager to establish better relations with its large neighbor Iran, but in the meantime, it is anxious to proceed with its Arab policy and balance its interests in the region. Turkey will not be in conflict with Iran over Lebanon or Syria or any other country in the region or support Iran in its war against the West or the United States, or Israel.

### **The Current Wave of Revolutions**

Turkey has been closely following the popular revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen and also the protests and demonstrations erupted in other countries such as Bahrain and Syria. Turkey declared its support for the legitimate demands of these people for reform and democracy and urged the leaders of these countries to listen to their people.

During the Egyptian revolution, Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan advised the Egyptian president to listen to the demands of his people and instigate change. He also called for a transitional government built on consensus and free elections to be

monitored by international observers. As for Libya, in a carefully worded address, the Turkish Prime Minister cautioned the Libyan administration against taking "cruel steps" to crush a popular uprising that has swept across the country, saying this would only fuel the violence. He hoped in a recent statement that Gaddafi will take measures to stop the ongoing bloody violence, expressing in the meantime that Turkey, a NATO member, opposes any sort of NATO's military intervention in Libya, warning that such a move could lead to dangerous consequences.<sup>374</sup> An even stronger position has been taken in the criticism directed towards President Bashar Al-Assad of Syria

### **The Bid to Join the European Union**

Turkey's bid to join the EU has been subject to much debate. Turkey, which has not succeeded so far in joining the European Union, is the first Muslim nation to be considered for E.U. membership, and was found by a 2002 survey as the least popular of 13 candidate countries, among them Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Slovakia.<sup>375</sup> Proponents of Turkey's membership, which include the United States, argue that bringing Turkey into the Western fold would help spread democracy in the Middle East and improve regional security. U.S. President George W. Bush, for example, has remarked that Turkey's acceptance would "prove that Europe is not the exclusive club of a single religion." Critics contend that Turkey must first improve its record on human rights, and point to Turkey's continued military occupation of Cyprus as further evidence that it is not yet ready for E.U. membership.

The concerns over Turkey's bid to join the EU vary enormously. Cultural, geographical, economic and political issues have all caused concern in certain quarters across Europe.<sup>376</sup> Some of these issues are perfectly valid and need addressing, but other issues seem to stem from outright racism and xenophobia.

*Geographically:* There are accusations that Turkey is not "European" and that the EU is a "Christian club".

---

<sup>374</sup> **Erdogan: Gaddafi Must Appoint Legitimate Libya President,**  
[http://www.novinite.com/view\\_news.php?id=126211](http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=126211)

<sup>375</sup> Report Card: Turkey and EU Membership?: Introduction,  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/episodes/turkeys-tigers/report-card-turkey-and-eu-membership/introduction/583/>

<sup>376</sup> The Challenge of Turkish Accession to the European Union by Richard Corbett,  
<http://www.globalaffairs.es/en/the-challenge-of-turkish-accession-to-the-european-union/>

*Politically:* There are several issues that Turkey needs to address such as human rights record, political reforms, relations with Cyprus and Greece, and the Kurdish issue. Addressing these issues is vital for Turkey's compatibility with the values the EU.

*The Cyprus Problem:* Turkey's refusal to recognize the Greek Cypriot government and its opposition to grant the Greek Cypriot traffic access to Turkey's airports and harbors caused the EU Council of Ministers to sanction Turkey and suspend its talks on 8 out of 35 areas

*The influence of Turkish military over political affairs:* The relationship between the military and the government in Turkey is very unique amongst European countries and raised concerns over Turkish membership of the EU. In no other European country does the military enjoy as much influence in political affairs as the Turkish military. The military is staunchly secular and sees itself as the defender of this secular ideology, and will intervene in government affairs when they perceive secularism to be under threat. Although that may appear desirable in the current international climate, the matter is different for the Europeans who simply believe that the military must be under the sole control of the civilian government, not opposed to it and certainly not in the position to overrule it.<sup>377</sup>

### **The Future**

Turkey's evolution over the next few years is determined by internal as well as external challenges. As the Republic of Turkey approaches its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023, different scenarios could be derived for Turkey's future.

The first scenario is that Turkey will be more conservative and this is clear from the trends observed during the past decade, which have seen the decaying of secular politics, and the rise of a dominant religious conservatism in both society and the state. The second scenario is a reconciled democratic state assuming that the AKP, like other dominant political movements, is likely to fade leaving the room for greater conciliation of the presently opposing ideologies. Finally, the last scenario is the return to military

---

<sup>377</sup> Richard Corbett, British Member of the European Parliament Deputy Leader of the European Parliamentary Labor Party of European Socialists  
<http://www.richardcorbett.org.uk/GlobalAffairs> is not liable for author's opinion

administration and this could happen if the rift in Turkish politics deepens and other factors combine to lead to the forced downfall of the Islamic conservative leadership.<sup>378</sup>

The last scenario is the most likely scenario to happen especially that the Turkish military believes that its duty is to intervene if Turkey's secular model is under threat to prevent Turkey slipping into Islamic ways, as happened in other countries in the region such as Iran. As for Turkey's membership in the European Union, there is still a long way to go before a consolidated democratic Turkey will be able to join the EU.

Turkey's challenge is to turn the formal reforms of its political and juridical institutions into social practices. In December 2005, the court case against the Turkish Novelist Orhan Pamuk, meanwhile bearer of the Literature Nobel Prize 2006, clearly indicated that this is a difficult process. So far, the right of freedom of expression and the state-centered nationalism of the Turkish state apparatus have clashed on various instances.

### **Conclusion**

Turkey has always been at the crossroads of the East and the West in terms of both geography and national identity.

Since the rise of the AKP in 2002, Turkey has been trying to reconcile the ideals of "secularism" with Islam. The current Islamist government of Turkey is portrayed as an example of a "modern" and "moderate" Islam that should be welcomed by the West. Some views inside and outside Turkey believe that the rise of Islamists is a betrayal of Turkey's secularist and modernist roots.

In the meantime, Turkey's eagerness to play third party roles in the management and resolution of regional conflicts, particularly in the Arab-Arab conflicts and the Arab-Israeli conflict, might be slowed down by some factors, including the radicalization in the region, the further polarization of regional politics, and the increasing rift between Turkey's Western allies and its regional friends, which could have serious restraints on Turkey's soft power roles, at least in the medium term.

Despite the numerous initiatives launched by Turkey in the region, Turkey failed to play an effective role in bringing together

---

<sup>378</sup> Prospects for a 'Torn' Turkey: A Secular and Unitary Future? By Svante E. Cornell and Halil Magnus Karaveli  
<http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/silkroadpapers/0810Turkey.pdf>

parties of conflict together and this is attested by the unsuccessful mediations undertaken so far by Turkey in the region, most notably the Turkish unsuccessful mediation in Qatar, where Turkey failed to secure agreement among the Lebanese parties, and the Turkish unsuccessful mediation to bring a rapprochement in the views of Iran and other West countries over Iran's nuclear program in the meetings hosted by Turkey for this purpose last year.

As for the present internal reality of Turkey, in spite of the clear division between the ideals of secularism and Islam, the question of Turkey's accession to the European Union, which is regarded as the culmination of a nearly 100 years struggle to modernize Turkey, has been recently receiving less attention by the Turkish military. This is largely because the military realizes that Turkey's accession to the EU would curtail the military's ability to meddle in politics, while the military believes that its duty is to intervene if Turkey's secular model is under threat to prevent it slipping into Islamic ways, as has happened in other countries in the region.

Nevertheless, Turkey remains a vibrant country with a bright future in its region and globally. Memories of the Ottoman Empire notwithstanding, it is slowly emerging as a power broker in the Middle East, with an increasingly assertive foreign policy.





## YEMEN

**Editor's Note:** Yemen is one of the very old civilizations in the Middle East, with a history and a people rooted in traditions. The wave of change in the Middle East has now made it follow Tunisia and Egypt in toppling a regime that had lasted for decades. As in Egypt, however, the future remains uncertain for this country because of the many internal tensions.

### Introduction

Yemen is an Arab country located in the southwest of the Arabian Peninsula on the Eastern shore of Red sea and its capital is Sana. It shares borders with Saudi Arabia in the North, with Oman in the West, and with Gulf of Aden in the South. It has a total area of 555,000 square km and a population of 24,000,000 according to the statistics of 2010. The majority of its population comprises of Arabs with a few Jewish inhabitants.

### The Kingdom of Sabaa

There are various references to the story of Kingdom of Sabaa and Queen of Sheba. The Evangelists believed that the queen of Sheba ruled their kingdom in 715 BC<sup>379</sup> while the Muslims called her Bilqis, as mentioned in the Holy Quran.<sup>380</sup> King Solomon was informed by a bird that: "I have come to thee from Sabaa with tidings true. I found a woman ruling over all of them; she has been granted everything and she has a wondrous throne, but I found her and her people worshiping the sun, instead of Allah". Solomon was not satisfied and requested to see her. The queen was brought before Solomon and eventually she converted to Islam.

The Kingdom of the Queen of Sheba was endowed with wealth, power and wisdom. The capital city of Yemen, Sabaa, was built in 10,000 acres, with an estimated population of 310,000. Maarib was the largest city in the South of Arabian Peninsula. Its economy depended on agriculture and trade of frankincense. The Sabaeans were skilled workers. They built dams across the Wadi

---

<sup>1</sup> Ancient South Arabia - Anciom the Queen of Sheba to the Advent of Islam - Klaus Schippmann

<sup>380</sup> Stories from Quran - Authors Ali Mohamed Al Bajaji -Mohamed Ahmed Jad Al Mawla-Mohamed Abu Al Fadhel Ibrahim page 146, and page 145

Dhana and Wadi Say la. On either side of the Wadi Dhana there were two gardens. The Quran describes it as the most fertile land on earth. The Sabean civilization was well respected. They had knowledge of physics, mathematics and geology. They built dikes to reduce the risk of floods and distributed the waters through small canals into fields. The ancient inscriptions of South Arabia which date back to the 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC, and are considered as the oldest written language in the region, depicts the Sabeans vision in documenting their daily life and culture.

### **Islamic History**

Islam emerged in Mecca, Saudi Arabia in 610 A.D. It came to Yemen around 630, during Prophet Muhammad's life time, when Yemen was under the Persian reign of Khusraw II. Prophet Muhammad predicted the demise of the Khusraw II. The king was killed by his son Badhan. Badhan converted to Islam with his followers. He sent a message to Prophet Muhammad informing him of his conversion. In response, the Prophet allowed him to continue his rule.

The northern part of Yemen was ruled by the Zaidi Imamate - a small tribe in the region. By 1897 their rule weakened due to internal conflicts and eventually collapsed. The Ottomans moved into the northern part of Yemen in the 1830's, and took over Sanaa. The Ottomans had a hard time controlling the region due to the resistance by the Zaidi Imamate. Zaidis were able to rule the northern parts of Yemen, and the Ottomans controlled rest of Yemen. The Yemenis tried to liberate their country and in 1918 succeeded to force the Ottomans to withdraw from North Yemen. Imam Yahaya bin Mohammed strengthened his control over North Yemen. There were now two divided states, one in the north and the other in the south.

The British interest in the region started to grow gradually with the establishment of the British East India Company and they decided to control Aden coast to use it as a coaling station for their ships as well as to protect them from the danger of piracy. The economy of the region flourished with the opening of the Sues Canal in 1869. In order to have a stronger hold of the region the British made an agreement with the Ottomans in 1904 known as the "De Facto Agreement" agreement. But the guerrilla riots lead by National Liberation Forces (NLF) resulted in the withdrawal of British forces

from Aden. The NLF established a new state calling it the People's Republic of South Yemen. In December 1970, the name was changed to The People's Democratic Republic of South Yemen and all political parties were amalgamated into the Yemeni Socialist Party which had close ties to the Soviet Union.

### **The Unification**

Despite the separation of the two Yemens and the differences in their ideologies the two countries had good relations. An initiative of unification was launched by the intervention of the Arab League in 1979. The first movement to achieve this goal began during a summit meeting between the two heads of states held in Kuwait on March 1979. The sole obstacle hindering the negotiations was the disagreement on the leadership after the unification and negotiations failed due to this disagreement.

The two parties resumed negotiations in 1988. They focused on border issues as oil had been discovered around the border areas. An agreement was made for a joint venture to explore oil. Efforts continued to unify the two states and a draft agreement of unification was agreed upon in May 1990 to establish a new state that would be called Republic of Yemen. According to this agreement, Ali Abdullah Saleh was nominated the President of the new-born state and Ali Salem Al Bead was nominated Vice President. Differences between the two leaders led to a civil war in May 1994. South Yemen declared its independence, but was not recognized by the international community. The civil war came to an end in July 1994 after the southern troops were defeated

### **Internal Tensions**

Yemen has a long history of civil wars which began with the intervention of the British and the Ottomans. The conflict of interest led to instability. The weaknesses of the indigenous people were exploited by the colonizers who settled in the region for fourteen decades. Yemenites did not share a common ideology. They were only united for oil. Differences still exists as the Southerners are seculars who were under the social regime of Soviet Union for decades, whereas the Northerners were ruled by tribal factions for centuries. Saudi Arabia's intervention in the border disputes has further complicated the situation.

Saudi Arabia had many clashes with Yemen on its borders. They agreed to resolve this problem at Taif treaty in 1934 but continued their conflicts over oil reserves near the borders.<sup>381</sup>

Saudi Arabia and Yemen resumed negotiations in 1992. The Treaty of Taif was renewed in June 1995 and the two countries established a framework to settle the disputed border. There are some disputed island in the Red Sea. Yemen has often blamed the Saudis for interfering in their internal affairs. The future of the borders remains somewhat uncertain and unclear.

The borders between Saudi Arabia and Yemen were always a source of political dispute. Despite many treaties between the two countries tensions remain. During the first Gulf war when Iraq occupied Kuwait, Yemen supported Iraq as a retaliation against Saudi Arabia's hostilities. The Saudis in response backed Southern rebellions and several hundred thousand Yemenis workers were expelled from Saudi Arabia.

#### **Future Challenges**

The security situation in Yemen is very fragile. The stability of the country has been shaken by the demands of political changes in the region. Such situation could stir the intervention of other players who have their interests in the region such as al-Qaeda, Al Houthy militants, and the Al-Islah movement.

The U.S. is also concerned about the activities of Al-Qaeda in Yemen. The actions taken by the U.S to support Yemen seem too late and inadequate. Al-Qaeda has managed to gain some ground in Yemen.

While the government struggles to end the uprising of the protesters the increase in poverty has worsened the situation. Houthy fighters have seized a number of military bases in the mountains of Samman near Saada. Rebellions supported by Iran constitute a serious threat to the unity of the country particularly the new threats from members of the opposition.<sup>382</sup>

Yemen has been slow to react against al-Qaeda and has not taken necessary steps to face this threat seriously. The American administration encouraged the government to react effectively and to focus more on the rebel separatist movement in the south. In addition, the Houthis uprising in the north, along with Al-Qaeda

---

<sup>381</sup> BBC Net

<sup>382</sup> CIA- The World Fact book

activities, is still considered as a real threat to the unity of the country. The Yemeni government has no authority in the mountainous areas outside the major cities where the rebels move freely and establish training camps.

### **The Al-Houthy**

Saudi Arabia was not happy with the anti-government activities launched by Shiite groups in the Eastern Region of the country. They wanted to eliminate Iranian influence in the region and sent troops to join Yemen forces in launching attacks against Al-Houthy fighters.

The Al-Houthys are a Zaidi Shia insurgent group operating in Yemen. The Zaydi Hashemites, bloodline (descended from the Prophet) has ruled Yemen over 1,000 years. They are also referred as Ash-Shabab Al-Muminin (the young believers). The spiritual leader of the group is Bedridden Al-Houthy, descendant of Hashemite Imams who ruled Yemen for centuries before the 1962 coup that deposed the Imamate. The Al-Houthy main activities are concentrated in Saada and Amran provinces. The Yemeni government has accused Al-Houthis for having ties with the Iranian government. The field leader of the Al-Houthi, Abdul Malik Al-Houthy, announced that his group would support the anti-government protesters.

Yemen has been severely affected by the ongoing demonstrations which are beyond the government's control. The Yemeni government faces four major challenges. The demonstrators demand the end of the current government, the efforts of Houthy Rebellion to topple the President, political unrest, and the inability to provide basic social services to its people. Al-Qaeda is also trying to gain momentum due to the unrest. The jihadist agenda has made the country an ideal haven for Yemeni insurgents and Al-Qaeda members. Tribal divisions have weakened the state. The country's mountainous topography provides subsequent refuge for rebellious Islamic sects. Many members of al-Qaeda, Yemenis and non-Yemenis, are now living in those areas.

Continued protests inspired by the situation in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya have finally succeeded in getting President Ali Abdullah Saleh to resign. However, Yemen will continue to face serious challenges as a result of the factors described above.

