

The New Middle East

Kay Glans (ed.)

This publication builds upon a conference that was held in Stockholm, Sweden on 3 May 2012, initiated by the Per Ahlmark Foundation and realized as a joint venture of The Per Ahlmark Foundation, The Swedish Institute of International Affairs and Glasshouse Forum. Glasshouse Forum has created this booklet based on what was presented at the conference, which aimed to give voice to diverse perspectives on the Middle East.

Glasshouse Forum

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The Glasshouse Forum was active between 2007 and 2011. It was initiated by concerned capitalist Robert Weil and CEO at Proventus Daniel Sachs and it was an endeavour to vitalise the debate on capitalism. Too often, the problems of the market economy were debated by actors who were fundamentally critical of the system and the Glasshouse Forum wanted to offer a platform for a critical analysis from within capitalism with focus on long-term political and social consequences. We initiated projects on short-termism, on consumption (see *Beyond the Consumption Bubble*, eds. Kay Glans and Karin M Ekström, Routledge 2010), and about the middle class in the West.

However, the project that received most international attention was *The Return of the Capitalist-Authoritarian Great Powers*, in which we scrutinised the widespread assumption that capitalism in its advanced stages promotes a democratic political system. The assertion was that countries would democratize over time as a direct result of economic development. It was of course China that was the main topic of the discussion. The tentative conclusion of this project was that even advanced forms of capitalism may very well be compatible with authoritarian regimes. China will most probably try to find its own way, based on its traditions, defining itself with regard to the West as a cultural and political “Other” (see *Is There a China Model?*, Glasshouse Forum, 2009). There are many factors besides a market economy that influence the political system, such as cultural and political traditions, as well as the experience of and relations to the West. In many parts of the world, the West is associated with both democracy and colonialism, which often leads to a rejection of both.

The Glasshouse Forum was initiated in an era of triumphant Anglo-Saxon capitalism, but the financial crisis of 2008 and the following recession made it less interesting to draw people’s attention to the drawbacks of capitalism. (But before 2008 it was hard to get the business community’s attention concerning these questions.) So from 2011 the Forum was put on ice. It was revived however during the spring of 2012, when the idea of arranging a conference about developments in the Middle East was put forward by the Per Ahlmark Foundation. Eventually these plans were realised on 3 May 2012 at

The Swedish Institute of International Affairs in Stockholm as a joint venture between the Per Ahlmark Foundation, The Swedish Institute of International Affairs and Glasshouse Forum. The main organisational input was undoubtedly that of Shulamith Bahat and Déborah Dwork of the Per Ahlmark Foundation. Without their efforts and contacts, the conference – The New Middle East – Challenges and Opportunities – could not have taken place.

The main role of the Glasshouse Forum has been to create a booklet based on the conference. Participation in this project was a logical step from the perspective of the Forum, since the so-called Arab Spring re-vitalised some of the central questions that had occupied us, albeit in a new context. This applies above all to the development of democracy outside the West. A market economy may be a necessary but insufficient precondition for creating a democracy, and in fact even democracy itself may be a necessary but insufficient precondition for democracy. The Indian-American author Fareed Zakaria has pointed out that what we define as democracy is a combination of liberal constitutionalism and participatory politics. Elections without the protection of liberty may create what he calls an “illiberal democracy” that lacks respect for the autonomy of the individual and the minorities. This is a central theme in the contributions to this volume from Abdullah Hamidaddin (Saudi Arabia) and Mbarka Bouaida (Morocco). Hamidaddin points out that the human rights issue is about much more than the relations between the individual and the state. Denial of individual autonomy often starts at home. A person can fight for human rights on the political scene, yet force his daughter into a marriage to which she does not consent. The reasons for this can be the personal world view of the individual and the socio-economic structure of the society. But we should also remember that true autonomy gives the individual much greater responsibility and can be avoided for that reason. Talking from a Moroccan perspective, Bouaida observes that cultural change may be much slower than political change and that women’s empowerment is one of the main issues today. She also welcomes the debate on liberal democracy that has begun in Morocco; for instance, it is very important how you define democracy with respect to the minorities that exist in the Arab world. Also, as Ambassador Aziz Mekouar

(Morocco) emphasises in his contribution, democracy means rule of law, and this also applies to the people, not just the state. Economic growth may be important, but the future of democracy in the Middle East is a question of values.

This booklet builds upon the conference but does not completely mirror it. The new Middle East deserves a dialogue that brings forth new aspects and does not simply follow the established choreography of the debate. The focus is not on Israel, Iran and Iraq, since they are adequately dealt with elsewhere, and we have chosen to give the floor to voices from the region itself, not to Western pundits. The exception is the contribution of Ambassador Daniel Kurtzer (USA), in which he analyses some of the main trends affecting the region. One of them is of course that the USA is no longer as dominant an actor in the region. This has partly to do with developments in Asia, above all the rise of China, but it also reflects a Western fatigue with a region that seems impervious to change. To this you could perhaps add that due to the development of shale gas exploitation in the USA, the nation is becoming less dependent on energy from the Middle East and hence may be inclined to perceive developments there as being of less than vital interest.

This of course gives regional actors greater room for manoeuvre, and as Kurtzer points out, the major regional actors are no longer Arabs: what happens in Ankara, Jerusalem and Teheran is far more important than what happens in Arab states. In his extensive analysis of Turkey and the Middle East, Professor Taner Akçam states that the ruling party in Turkey, the AKP, aims to create a unity superseding the borders created for the peoples in the Middle East and initiate a development for the region along the lines of the European Union. In one aspect, the region has what it takes to do this, Akçam claims, since Islam is capable of moving in a universalistic direction. However, it needs to confront its own history and admit that besides being victims of oppression, Muslims have also been perpetrators of genocide against Christians on Muslim soil. Failure to confront history is a major reason for instability in the region, Akçam concludes.

In the contributions to this booklet, the appraisals of the so-called Arab Spring are tentative – it is simply too early to tell. As

Abdel Monem Said Aly (Egypt) says in his discussion about Egypt, Spring is full of sandstorms. The future is fundamentally uncertain. As regards Egypt, the possible outcomes range from a stable democratic country to a despotic regime in the name of Islam. Even if experts have been aware of the fact that the region was ripe for change, the actual events took them by surprise. There may be other surprises in store, if we are to believe Michael Melchior in his concluding remarks. Religion is not only part of the problem – it can in fact become a major part of the solution to the problems afflicting the region. The world is not becoming more secularised as many predicted; instead the importance of religion is growing all over the world. This will not necessarily lead to aggravated conflicts, according to Melchior, since religions have much in common and may be able to create a climate of mutual understanding that transforms the whole conflict. Religion as a *deus ex machina*, intervening in the tragic plot of the Middle East, locked in what seem to be predictable patterns? That would indeed be a miracle!

Kay Glans

Editorial coordinator of the Glasshouse Forum

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The challenges of the changing Middle East

Daniel Kurtzer

Years ago, the former Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai was asked what he thought about the French Revolution and in a famous reply he said “It may be too early to tell”. Revolutions take a long time to unfold, and it takes a long time to understand the dynamics, the currents and the implications. Similarly, fifteen months after the beginning of what appear to be revolutions in the Middle East, it may still be too early to tell what is going to emerge. There are potentially democratizing countries in the Middle East; Egypt and Tunisia, are the prime examples, perhaps Libya. There are monarchies which are reforming ever so slowly but are not engaged in what we would call revolution; and there are reactive countries, repressors, like Syria, Bahrain and Yemen.

Thus, it is too early to know what direction they will take, these Arab upheavals, the Arab awakenings, the Arab spring. But it's not too early to begin trying to draw some common lessons from the situation in the region that created the environment in which the upheavals took place. Middle East experts were all surprised by the actual onset of the Arab spring, but the factors leading to these upheavals were not new. For years we had all known that this was a region in which authoritarian politics, state-sponsored repression, corruption and crony capitalism, economic inequalities, the repression of women's rights and repression of human rights were rife in almost every country in the region. While the actual eruption of the Arab spring or Arab upheavals may have surprised the experts, the fact is that for quite some time this has been a region ripe for revolution. As these revolutionary factors were developing, there were also a number of other systemic changes which characterized the situation in the Middle East. Let me review some of those before engaging in a short discussion about the immediate challenges ahead and whether these revolutions will lead to a successful outcome.

At least five very important systemic changes have been in evidence in the Middle East for at least the last decade, if not even longer. The first is that the position of the outside powers that play in Middle Eastern waters has been changing. The United States, which maintained a dominant position in this region for many years, most particularly in the aftermath of the Cold War, is no longer as dominant an actor in the region. It has less influence, even among recipi-

ents of American aid. Russia, after some years in relative quietude, has re-emerged as a prominent player, and China is an important economic player. In other words, it is no longer a province in which the United States acts alone.

The second change is that the major regional actors in the Middle East are no longer Arabs. We used to think of what was said in Cairo or Damascus or Baghdad as being the most influential in determining what was happening in the Middle East. Today that is not the case: what happens in Ankara and Tehran and Jerusalem is actually far more important for regional politics than what happens in Arab states. In a sense it has led to a major shift in power away from Arab states to the states on the so-called periphery of the Middle East.

Thirdly, these states' own monopoly over the exercise of power has changed fundamentally; the prime movers in the Middle East have for quite some time been non-state actors. Consider the following: since the 1973 war, there have been at least four major confrontations involving Israel and Arabs, but not one of those confrontations has primarily involved Israel and an Arab state. They have involved Israel and non-state actors, the PLO, Hamas, and Hezbollah. Arab states are often drawn into those conflicts, but they are no longer the catalysts, the primary actors in driving what happens in the Middle East.

A fourth major change is in the defining ideology of this region. For those who have studied Middle East politics of the 1950s, 1960s and even into the 1970s, the idea of secular pan-Arab nationalism promoted by the leader of the Egyptian revolution, Gamal Abdel Nasser, was the defining ideology of the region. It is no longer the case. The defining ideology of the region is now Islamism; the region has moved from Nasser to Nasrallah. The motivating factor in the Middle East is no longer what a pan-Arab secular leader says, but rather what Islamist leaders say, not necessarily fundamentalist leaders, not necessarily from a particular school, but the idea of Islamism is replacing the old idea of secular pan-Arab nationalism.

A fifth change is occurring in the Gulf region where Iran's pretensions to regional power – regional hegemonic power, as some people believe – have now become the prominent talking point. Will Iran, in its quest for nuclear capability, begin to exercise the power of

a regional state and try to extend its influence through the projection of power?

What these factors suggest is that the Arab upheavals of the past fifteen months are taking place as a result not only of problems intrinsic to each Arab country, but also within a context of fundamental change in the region. That makes it both more important to understand those changes and more complicated to predict where things are heading. I would suggest there are at least five challenges which are very high on the agenda of the United States and European countries as well as other outside players.

The first challenge relates to the direction of the Arab upheavals themselves. My former economics professor in graduate school, the late Professor Charles Issawi, once said that revolutions revolve 360 degrees. It is a truism that may also apply to political revolutions. In other words, we may not yet have seen the conclusion of these upheavals. What will happen when the counterrevolution begins to set in? Will the dynamics in play in Egypt and Tunisia in fact be significant enough to withstand the reactions of those who want to see a return to the previous status quo? Will the dynamics of change in places like the Gulf or North Africa be enough to sustain reform movements against the backlash of those who might be involved in what we would call counterrevolutions? So this is challenge number one, and for outside powers like the United States, Europe and countries in Asia, what we do and what we do not do to be supportive of positive change may end up making a critical difference to whether there is success or failure in these Arab upheavals.

Second is the particular challenge of Syria and the question of whether any kind of intervention is called for to stop the bloodshed, but even more broadly whether Syria itself can begin to undergo the kind of change that we have been witnessing elsewhere. There are three kinds of decision matrix among the United Nations members: a) people don't know what to do and therefore they don't make a decision; b) there's a decision not to decide; in other words an affirmative decision that Syria is not Libya, Syria is too hard, it's too challenging and we're not going to decide; and c) there are decisions that are pending as to whether various ideas for intervention may actually carry some promise, whether or nor they involve buffer zones

or humanitarian corridors, or a more active or proactive commitment under the auspices of NATO and/or a UN mandate.

Without such intervention, it is unlikely that the regime will simply go away. The factors of change in Syria are not the same as the factors of change elsewhere. The army remains relatively cohesive and supportive of the Assad regime; the business community, largely Sunni, in the prominent cities of Damascus and Aleppo, has not yet given up on the Assad regime; and prominent Christian communities remain convinced that the Assad regime may be their best hope for protection. The question of intervention must focus on whether any kind of activity can actually have an impact on what happens inside the country. It also raises the question, a much larger question, for those engaged and interested in international law, of whether the principle of the responsibility to protect has legs, whether it is viable. That principle was referred to in Libya to justify the intervention of NATO under the banner of the United Nations, but there are many countries that are now calling this principle into question because they are unsure whether the actual intervention in Libya met the requirements of international law. Whether the responsibility to protect remains a viable principle of international law is very much open to debate.

A third challenge in this region is the question of Iran. We are all very closely following the negotiations between Iran and the five permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany, the so-called P5+1. Another meeting is scheduled in Baghdad later this month, bringing the possibility being that some kind of an arrangement can be negotiated under which Iran will be allowed to continue its enrichment but under much tighter supervision from the international community, consistent with its obligations under the nuclear nonproliferation treaty. Even if – and it is a big ‘if’ – even if this question is resolved, Iran’s power ambitions in the region remain to be debated and therefore there are those who are suggesting a much broader agenda for dialogue and discussion with Iran than one focused completely on the nuclear question. In fact, from a negotiating standpoint, one could make the argument that focusing a negotiating agenda solely on the nuclear issue actually inhibits negotiations, because it does not allow the kind of interaction in which both the

P5+1 and Iran may find benefits in a trade-off of interests. This is not an academic exercise, but rather an exercise in the viability of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty and the security and stability of the Middle East, starting in the Gulf.

A fourth challenge is the future of the Middle East peace process. The journal *The National Interest* recently published my article *Reviving the Peace Process*. The normal thing in Washington when one writes an article about the peace process is that you get some love mail and you get some hate mail. I got no mail at all, which is the most discouraging response that I could have imagined. In fact, in the United States now, no one cares, they have given up. One hears what they call Washington Consensus: it’s too hard, it’s not the right time, let the situation ripen a little bit, we can’t want peace more than the parties themselves, and so on and so on. This is convenient for those who do not want to engage in the hard work of peace making, but it also shows blindness to the reality that there is no alternative to a two-state solution in the Middle East.

Status quos are not static, things either get better because people work to improve them, or they get worse, and the likelihood is, based on everything we know of the Middle East conflict, that it will get worse if people are not actively working to make it better. The United States shares a great deal of responsibility for the failure of the peace process, but not the sole responsibility: it is shared with the parties themselves. Israelis and Palestinians, after all these decades of making war and engaging in violence against each other, have the primary responsibility for deciding whether and how to end this conflict. But the United States is the party that the two protagonists have called the indispensable third party, and it also has an important role to play. Whether or not the United States plays that role could to a large extent determine whether there is progress toward the two-state solution in the period ahead. This is obviously a challenge for the parties themselves, it is a challenge for my government, but it is also a challenge for the rest of the world that sees in the Middle East a crisis that carries tremendous implications for their own security and for the security of the world in general.

The final challenge to note is Western fatigue with this region. Many countries have tired of the Middle East. Asia is now a domi-

nant focus for the United States. The administration in Washington has spent some time reminding us that the United States is not only an Atlantic power but also a Pacific power, and we are re-energizing our diplomacy, our military deployments and our interests in Asia. Part of the driving force behind this re-orientation is the rise of Asia itself, the growing tiger economies, but part of it is also the fatigue that we as a country – and I sense many in Europe – feel about a region that has been impervious to change, characterized by problems that are endemic and do not seem to go away. When we talk about Western fatigue, we are talking about a problem that is not ours alone: it is a challenge that we throw out to the people of the region.

The people of the Middle East need to demonstrate to the rest of us that they are ready to translate the promise of the Arab Spring into an Arab Summer, in which the idea of not just democracy but liberal democracy begins to flourish, in which the human rights that thus far have been denied to so many people in this region, will be recognized and cherished and protected. These rights that are recognized by Arabs themselves, as we have seen in documents produced by the UN Development Program. The challenge we face is to look at these issues and to see whether or not we have ideas and assistance that we can offer to help the Middle East shape its future. The challenge for the Middle East is to warrant our continued interest, involvement and investment.

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Turkey in transition and its role in the Middle East

Taner Akçam

Turkey is undergoing a transition from an authoritarian system to a more open and democratic society. As it does so, it faces major problems related to defining the structures for democracy and freedom of speech, with the added dimension of rectifying historical wrongdoings. All states in a similar situation experience similar issues. We summarize these under the rubric of *transitional justice*; this refers to the way a country deals with its own history and how it sets the parameters for justice for past transgressions in order to shape its future.

Since Turkey is in the middle of a transition, it is very difficult to precisely describe its current state; it neither resembles a true democracy nor is it strictly an authoritarian society. It is floundering somewhere in the middle. In Turkish we use an interesting descriptive word for the animal known as the ostrich, as literally the “Camel Bird”. It’s neither a camel nor a bird. Turkey resembles this in a way and as a result, whenever people try to describe Turkey they betray their own prejudices, reflecting where they come from and their ideological preferences. This is of course a self-revealing statement. By posing some theses regarding Turkey and its role in the Middle East, I too will make clear my own prejudices about my country.

I. How should we understand Turkey?

An assessment of domestic developments.

Since 2002, Turkey has undergone remarkable developments in terms of its ability to embrace change, developments which could be called revolutionary. For the very first time in Turkish republican history, we see the emergence of a new type of elite represented by the Justice and Development Party, AKP, whose origins derive from outside the established political class. This new elite has developed from beyond the perimeter of the state bureaucracy and does not owe its development to the state. Its leaders do not feel dependent on existing political and bureaucratic structures and powers. Along with its Islamic-oriented leadership, this new middle class, which is also known as the “Anatolia Tigers”, has embarked upon a battle for power with the old power elite. As outsiders, they know that their

grasp on power is entirely dependent on how far they can move the old guard away from its source of power. We have been observing for a long time the extent to which this new elite may be willing to compromise, and how far they are prepared to go to exclude the old ruling class from power.

We can explain the conflicts that are shaking up modern Turkey with another paradigm. There have always been two fundamental cultural-political schools on which Turkey rests, whose roots go back to the beginning of the Ottoman modernization in the late 18th century and continuing through the early 20th century. These two schools, like two sides of a personality, have been in almost constant conflict. The first one is best described as the “Western-Secular modernist” school. Its main representative is the civil-military bureaucracy. One of the most important political representatives of this school during the Ottoman period was the Union and Progress Party, which was in power between 1908 and 1922 and organized the “Christian (Armenian) Genocide” that primarily targeted Armenians.

The second major school primarily defines itself around Islamic values and cultural norms. The segment of society identifying with the latter has tried to define itself by way of many differing political parties and movements from Ottoman times until the present, but did not really enter the Turkish political scene in a robust way until the 1970s. Both schools differ from one another on the questions of life-style, cultural values and points of reference. These are attributes that we use to define collective identities. The divergence between these two schools intensified during the era of the Turkish Republic. The “Western-Secular modernist” school became even more radical on the subject of religion by leaning towards a Western life style and cultural norms. Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, was the leading figure of this school and the political movement was named after him, i.e. Kemalism. Today the civilian-military bureaucracy and its political arm, the Republican People’s Party CHP, are representatives of this school and in this sense represent a linear continuity starting from the Union and Progress Party.

During the Republic era the second school, the “Islamic-conservative” found its first political manifestation, especially after 1970s, in the *Milli Nizam Partisi*, the National Order Party; *Milli*

Selamet Partisi, the National Salvation Party, *Refah Partisi*, the Welfare Party and *Fazilet Partisi*, the Virtue Party, almost all led by the late Necmettin Erbakan (he passed away in 2011) in the late 60s and early 70s. The AKP is an offshoot of the Virtue Party and the latest manifestation of this second school.

Today’s Turkish Republic was mainly established by the military and civilian bureaucracy representing the “Western-Secular modernist” cultural school. Up to 2002 they administered Turkey and never relinquished power. For a number of reasons, the military and civil bureaucracy perceived the ethnic-cultural plurality of society at that time as constituting an obstacle to the continuity and security of the state and ran the country as if opposed to the rich ethnic-cultural mosaic of Turkish society. The founding philosophy of the state rested on a belief that the state needed to be protected from certain elements of society. Consequently, founding legends were created and these legends turned into powerful taboos. Questioning these taboos was made punishable under the criminal code.

There are five very important taboos which surround the main principles in the formation of the Turkish Republic. Certain myths were formulated around these taboos. Here they are: a.) There are no Kurds in Turkey; those people who call themselves Kurds are actually Turks who happen to live in the mountains. Articles 125 and 175 of the Turkish Criminal Code were enacted that set out the penalties for anyone who might question this taboo. b) Turkey is an integrated nation, and Turkish society does not contain different social classes. Anyone who discusses different social classes or who speaks of class warfare is a communist and should therefore be punished. Articles 141 and 142 of the Turkish Criminal Code stipulate the punishment for anyone guilty of this. c) Turkey is a secular society where Western values are supreme. Islamic values and lifestyle cannot be praised and are indefensible. Article 13 of the Turkish Criminal Code stipulates the punishment for anyone who disputes this. d) The Armenian Genocide never happened. It is a complete lie. Until the year 2000 there were no specific articles in the criminal code to punish anyone questioning this because, frankly, no one ever did seriously question it. e) The Turkish Armed Forces are entrusted with the guardianship of these five taboos, and no one may ever question their posi-

tion and control over the regime. Until recently the armed forces had their own autonomous status within the state, with a separate justice system and even separate neighbourhoods. Their budget was also exempt from parliamentary control.

Not only did the armed forces and bureaucracy shape the Republic around these founding principles, they also created a system that would not allow the elected parties to even appear to be running the country. This system continued until 2002. This continuity also explains the roots of the Armenian-Turkish Conflict and explains why the Genocide became a taboo in Turkey. Most of the cadres who founded the Republic were members of the Union and Progress Party, which was behind the 1915 Genocide. After organizing several congresses in Anatolia, cadres of the Union and Progress Party formed the “People’s Party” in 1923 and then proclaimed the Turkish Republic in the same year. They ruled the country as a single party until 1945. The so-called multi-party regime that came into being after 1945 was like a continuation of what had prevailed before. During this period, the parties that ruled Turkey were groups that had spun off from the CHP, the sole party in power from 1923–1945.

The parties in power in Turkey until 2002 were either directly from the “Western-Secular modernist” school (CHP- Republican People’s Party) or they emerged from this school with support from the second school. The Democratic Party of the 1950s and Justice Party of the 1960s and 70s, and the ANAP (Motherland Party) of the 1980s and 90s could be considered examples of those. The end result is that all the political jockeying until 2002 basically occurred amongst representatives of various parties that essentially stemmed from the first major school. These groups of parties were culturally “Western-Secular modernists”, and were politically authoritarian and anti-democratic.

Because of the way the civilian-military bureaucracy had set up the system during the period when multi-parties were created, “political” power never actually passed to the hands of the political parties that had been elected, and remained for the most part in the hands of civilian-military bureaucracy – a non-elected body of the state. Whenever it looked like the elected representatives were trying to pull power towards them, the civilian-military bureaucracy would

intervene. The military coups that occurred in 1960, 1971, and 1980 could be interpreted in this way. As a result of the system that was introduced with a new constitution in 1980, the situation was made permanent.

The civilian-military bureaucracy was put in a position to retain power completely independently of the elected representatives, and thereby in practice retains control over everything. The constitutional system put into place could have lasted indefinitely. The role of the office of President gained tremendous importance. The civilian-military bureaucracy managed to exert direct control over the state through a variety of offices, but most fundamentally through the office of the President, and the President had to be appointed by parliament. This was where the system had its weakest link. Ultimately, the Islamic tradition, what I have called the second school, now the Justice and Development Party AKP, managed to gain control of this office, and that ultimately secured it political power in Turkey. The murder of Hrant Dink in 2007 and the arrests of military officers belonging to a semi-covert organization called *Ergenekon* that followed can only be understood through this framework.

Initially, the political representatives of Islamic tradition, which I define as the second school, adopted a political attitude that for all intents and purposes resembled the Western-Secular school. Until the AKP came into power in 2002, “Secular modernism” and “Islamic tradition” stood at opposite ends of the spectrum on the issue of religion or religious values and their use of cultural codes in society. Their understanding of collective identity was divergent and they possessed completely different kinds of self-perception. However, despite all these differences on the issue of “collective identity”, there was no essential difference between them when it came to political culture. Regardless of whether they were Islamic or “Secular modernist” they basically maintained an authoritarian tradition from the West. They were far removed from democratic values and did not possess a political culture or democratic tradition. Hostility towards the West (as a cultural other) and anti-Semitism were its other primary characteristics.

The AKP is a movement to transform and change this second school. It has tried to redefine the relationship between the collec-

tive culture of the Islamic school and political identity. The AKP has been attempting to merge the Western liberal-democratic values such as human rights and freedoms with Islamic cultural values. It is no coincidence that the party refers to itself as “conservative democratic”. For the first time in Turkish history, an elected government with strong support from the second school is trying to push the military and bureaucracy out of the political sphere and diminish their political power over the judicial-administrative system.

The AKP is not only a sign of the changes within the ruling elite. It represents a change from the first-school Western-Secular tradition to the second, Islamic school; but also from an authoritarian to a more truly democratic system. That is why it is engaged in a deep-rooted conflict with the military-civilian bureaucracy over the fundamental character of the regime. This is a short list of areas where this conflict is most evident: weakening the military’s control and guardianship over the regime, which has found expression in the *Ergenekon* and *Sledgehammer* prosecutions; attempting to replace the Republic’s 90-year-old Kurdish policy of “deny and assimilate” with a “Kurdish Initiative”; investigating the “unknown perpetrators” crimes that have been committed by the military-civilian bureaucracy; investigating the military officers who were behind the 12 September and 28 February military coups. The conflict is going to come to a head with the newly envisioned constitution that will symbolize just how much Turkey really has changed.

The AKP’s success is directly related to how radical it is prepared to become when taking these steps forward. Right now the biggest challenge to the country is that the AKP faces an opposition which possesses neither sufficient strength, nor true democratic values. The political parties that exist are either directly comprised of representatives of the first school of Turkish thought, or are defenders of the traditional institutions and ideology that the first school has established. The more the AKP engages in compromise with traditional institutions, the more support it receives from the opposition. The more it attempts to reform, the more its road is blocked. The lack of a true opposition allows the AKP, which has taken over the regime’s most significant institutions, to compromise with the representatives of the first school.

II. Middle East and Turkey: some general observations

How do these domestic developments impact foreign relations for Turkey? In other words, how has this transition away from the Western-Secular school to an Islamic school affected foreign policy today, and how may it continue to do so in the future?

The Middle East is on the threshold of sweeping changes. This is not a mere coincidence. The Middle East was administrated by the Ottomans for practically 500 years, but the last 100 years have been spent speculating over how this Empire was to be dismembered. Both the nations in the region and the powerful colonial powers of the Balkans and the Middle East addressed the question of partition, referred to as the “Eastern Question” as early as 1815. The “Eastern Question” became one of Europe’s most fundamental and central issues and it was not resolved until after mass migrations, massacres and a series of bloodbaths.

This “solution”, which is in fact observable in the form of the state boundaries of today’s Middle East, became concrete after the First World War and the ensuing struggles. Two major powers were in conflict at the time. On the one side were the Allied forces, basically represented by Great Britain and France, supported by some of the ethnic groups in the region (such as the Greeks, Armenians, Arabs and sections of the Kurds). On the other side were mainly Turks (including some Kurds) and Bolsheviks. The boundaries in the Caucasus were determined by the victory of the Bolsheviks, and in the Middle East by the victory of the Allied forces. The first bloc, under the leadership of France and Britain, had during The First World War already signed secret agreements to partition the Ottoman Empire and to create zones of influence. Mandates, later nation-states, were established according to British and French interests, and the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 represents the establishment of new nation-states and their boundaries in the region. This partition of the Middle East remained intact and unassailable until recently.

After the Second World War there was only one deviation from the Sykes-Picot Agreement: the establishment of the state of Israel. Even though the establishment of Israel was mostly a response to the Holocaust, it was also partly related to the Balfour Declaration

of 1917. Throughout the Cold War, the political boundaries of the Sykes-Picot Agreement remained intact and unchallenged, based on the détente policy between the United States and the Soviet Union. Each Cold War power had its satellite states in the Middle East, mostly in the form of authoritarian regimes, and they supported their authoritarian satellite states against the others. Neither side tolerated major changes in the region.

With the end of the Cold War, we are witnessing another significant change in the landscape of the Middle East. The Soviet collapse has upset the social, economic and political balance throughout the Middle East and the Caucasus. Here, the peoples and countries, who generally believed that they had been treated unjustly during the previous partition, have now begun to reassert their former demands, as well as making new ones. In other words, the old “Eastern Question”, which was temporarily resolved between 1918 and 1923, has been revived. The “New Eastern Question” seems to bear two basic characteristics. The first is that all of the nations who believe that they were wronged during the 1918–1923 period, when the (old) Eastern Question was being resolved, want their boundaries redrawn. Secondly, the dictatorships that were the product of détente policies are becoming shakier. Since it was the Soviet regime that fell, those dictatorships that came about as a result of their influence now find themselves in crisis. The uprisings between Chechens and Georgians and the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia can only be understood within this context. The same phenomenon is present in the Middle East and the dictatorships that have been propped up by the Soviets are now the first ones to start to fall. It was no coincidence that Iraq was the first. The Arab Spring is now toppling the dictatorial regimes supported by the United States.

What we are observing in the Middle East now is the end of the Sykes-Picot arrangement that was established during 1918–1923. The cards are being re-shuffled and new alliances and unifications can arise. The borders of the Sykes-Picot Agreement are frail and are open to change. It is generally accepted that nation-states like Iraq, Syria and Jordan are constructs, and over the years they have not been able to develop a collective identity that holds people together within their state boundaries. For example, in Iraq, the Kurds, Sunni

Muslims and Shiite Muslims do not feel a common identity. The same is true for Syria where Alewites, Druze, Sunni Muslims, Kurds and Christians have not developed a unifying sense of community over the years – and both nation-states, Iraq and Syria, are on the verge of collapse.

There are two factors behind the weakening of the Sykes-Picot regime. The first is Turkey and the second is the series of uprisings known as the Arab Spring. It is no coincidence that it is Turkey that has set the wheels of change in motion in the Middle East. While going about changing the internal regime that was established in 1923, the AKP intends also to change the set up of the Middle East of which this regime forms part.

III. AKP and the Middle East

There is a very interesting parallel between the AKP’s rise to power and the ending of the classic balance of power in the Middle East. The AKP is parting ways with traditional foreign policies. The Western-Secular school that governed Turkey for almost 80 years followed a foreign policy based for the most part on the “Sèvres Syndrome”. You could also call it the “partition syndrome”, i.e. the “fear of being partitioned by great powers”. The formation of the nation-state of Turkey was like pulling a handbrake to prevent the nation from forever being wiped off the face of the earth, after an empire that had begun to fall apart and disintegrate after 1876. This fear of partition and disintegration constituted the basis for its foreign policy. Because of this syndrome, in foreign relations the representatives of the Western-Secular school were timid, defensive and for the most part introverted. They became involved in foreign affairs only insofar as was demanded by Turkey’s allies and only to the extent that involvement caused no harm to the interests of Turkey itself. Turkey never questioned the borders that were drawn up after the First World War. Quite the contrary, it maintained a mindset that was fixated on defending them. The country was conservative and protective.

As a grouping that derives from the second school, the AKP takes a dim view of accepting the present nation-states and bounda-

ries of the Middle East as fact and a starting point. Its position is that the current boundaries in the Middle East were forcibly imposed by colonialist states and that they are not what the regional peoples demanded. Of course the party does not pursue a policy specifically geared towards changing the current boundaries. The AKP is much closer to a policy and a perspective that aims to create a unity superseding the borders created for the peoples of the Middle East in 1923. For that reason, they are far more flexible than the old conservative rulers as regards the fall of dictatorships in the region, the changing of borders or the increasing irrelevance of the borders. Under the leadership of the AKP, Turkey is again playing a leadership role in the Middle East. We can easily say that as far as Turkey is concerned, the regime that was established in 1923, domestically and throughout the Middle East, has come to an end.

In a speech to the Turkish Parliament on 24 April, 2012, the Turkish Foreign Minister declared the main lines of this policy in this way: “Just as we may have a vision for a new Turkey, we have a new vision for the region too”. According to Ahmet Davutoglu, freedom, justice and pluralism have been sacrificed in the name of maintaining the status quo in the Middle East region. “The price that’s been paid for the errors of a minority’s dictates was that a political view has come about, based on ethnicity and sectarianism, where one side views the other as its antagonist.” According to the Minister, “The foundation for a vision for the new Middle East will be based not on ethnic or religious differences but on a new order of peace based upon brotherhood”. Turkey claims to be the “spokesperson and leader for this order of peace”. According to the Minister, Turkey is going to be a leader of this wave of change and is going to be the main policymaker. The basis for this leadership will be to take a stand against dictate-driven regimes and to be on the side of “freedom, justice and rights in the name of humanitarian values” in a way that aligns with national interests. Some of the cornerstones of the Minister’s speech are as follows: “The flow of history is clear. There is no substitute for the search for freedom, justice and equality”; “We oppose dictatorships”; “We are not on the side of the dictates of a few: we are on the side of peoples who want to take charge of their future”; “We operate to a philosophy that hinges on a basis of

“AKP openly criticizes the nation-state boundaries and considers them forced upon the Middle East in line with the West’s colonial motives. The AKP tries to develop policies of economic and political integration, which would reunite the fates of all the peoples in the region.”

universal values such as justice, rights and logic and we are trying to stake a claim in the future of this topography”; “to seek justice for the death of an innocent victim and to shout out ‘Enough, stop’ in an unwavering voice against cruelty is an absolute requirement of the human conscience and the values we believe in. Shouting out against cruelty is the badge of the AK Party and AK Party power and it will continue to be so”; “Our fundamental goal is to push forward our policies which rely upon the optimum balance between human conscience and universal values and our national interests”. The primary question is, will and can Turkey follow that policy?

Based on its tradition and ideology, I would formulate the main thread of the AKP’s policy as follows: to end the victimization of Islamic society, a group that is viewed as having been oppressed and victimized for centuries, through the adoption of international universal norms. Another way of stating this could be to call it a fight to protect the rights of the Muslim world, which views itself as having been despised and oppressed by the West, and to raise its status to one of equality with the West, again through direct adoption of Western norms. In other words, using the Hegelian German term, “aufheben” [to repeal, abrogate] the “master-slave” relationship and to change the status of the “slaves” into “masters”. If necessary, they would achieve this by defying the West. This back-story was instrumental in Erdogan’s tough stance with Israel and in his “one minute” insistence at Davos.¹ The great wave of sympathy that was unleashed in Turkey and the region by that tough stance shows that the AKP has pressed its finger upon a very deep wound.

AKP openly criticizes the nation-state boundaries and considers them forced upon the Middle East in line with the West’s colonial motives. The AKP tries to develop policies of economic and political integration, which would reunite the fates of all the peoples in the region. In other words, the basis for the AKP’s policies in the region is to take the Middle East and reconfigure it as a kind of “common home” for all its inhabitants. “Zero problems with neighbours”² has been a reflection of this thinking. It would be extremely shallow and shortsighted to conclude that Turkey’s new policies in the region are expansionist and imperialist schemes. One needs to take a wider perspective when examining them. One could argue that a very positive

goal would be the creation of processes founded upon humanitarian universal, democratic (i.e. Western) values in the Middle East and on economic, political and cultural integration that ignores state boundaries, along the lines of the European Union. The real question however is, does Turkey have what it takes, ideologically, politically and economically, to create such a union in its region? The answer is both “yes” and “no.”

Why “yes”? Because it is not difficult to move from Islamic-based values to universalistic values. For this I would like to point out an interesting and somewhat unknown fact. “Crimes against Humanity” is a very important international legal norm. As a legal term, it was used for the first time on May 24, 1915 in connection with the Armenian Genocide and it comprised the moral and legal background for the Nuremberg trials and the more recent Yugoslavian, Rwandan and other international prosecutions for war crimes. This is common knowledge, but what is not so commonly known is that when Great Britain, Russia and France were preparing the ultimatum in question which was to be presented to the Ottoman state, they had initially defined the crimes committed by the Union and Progress Party as “Crimes against Christianity” but later replaced the word “Christianity” with “humanity” after considering the misinterpretation that it could lead to and especially the negative reaction it would engender amongst the Muslim peoples who were under the Allies’ own sovereignty at the time. It is as if all of the secrets of the subject being discussed here lay within that word. Both the revision of the word Christianity to humanity, and those against whom it was used (the Unionists and the Ottoman Turks) seem to summarize all the difficulties faced by the AKP and Turkey today.

The substitution of the word Christianity for humanity is actually like a short history of the values for what we accept as universal humanitarian norms. Universal values such as human rights, democ-

1) Refers to a heated verbal exchange with Shimon Peres of Israel in the Davos summit of 2009, wherein Erdogan insisted on having the last word.

2) A brief statement by the AKP of its foreign policy.

racy, and so on are actually the products of the Christian political and cultural world. This world, based on its Greco-Roman roots and the experience of the Enlightenment, has managed to take many of its own norms and sensitivities and turn them into universal, humanitarian values. You could view the history of humankind, to some extent, as a journey from Christian-specific values (or as often referred to, Judaeo-Christian values) towards the creation of values that are universal to humanity. Nevertheless, it is completely understandable why this journey has been perceived by the Muslim world as marked by hypocrisy and deceit, since Muslims perceive this history as the history of colonialism.

What the AKP is trying to do is to move the Islamic cultural world towards universality. Just as the Christian cultural world moved away from its own particularity towards universality, why cannot the Islamic world and its new leaders, such as the the AKP, do the same? One can interpret Erdoğan's address to the nation through this approach. On June 12, 2011, Erdoğan told the thousands who had gathered to celebrate the AKP's landslide victory, "Sarajevo today won as much as Istanbul; Beirut won as much as Izmir; Damascus won as much as Ankara. Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin, the West Bank, and Jerusalem won as much as Diyarbakir."

Actually, one needs to concede that the AKP, in this sense, rests upon an Islamic tradition that extends back to the 18th and 19th centuries. The "newly awakening" Islamic movements of those centuries declared the universal norms of the West to be in fact values that were specific to Christianity, and that they were really hypocritical statements meant to disguise the West's imperialist policies. This tradition viewed the Islamic world as the "oppressed nations" and defined the fight against the West as the "challenge by the oppressed to their colonizing masters". Nevertheless, it was far from being able to define its own struggle in universal terms. Still, it represented the first steps that Islamic thought had taken towards universality. By resurrecting this powerful Islamic tradition and combining Western values with the Islamic cultural tradition, the AKP seems to be setting itself up for the last leg of this journey.

In this way, just as the West managed to take "crimes committed against Christianity" and turn them into "crimes commit-

ted against humanity," under a leadership like that of the AKP, it is possible for the Islamic world to turn "crimes committed against Muslims" into a more comprehensive category of crimes committed against humanity. So the strong Islamic cultural emphasis on Islamic sensitivity found in Erdoğan's statements is not so essential, or more precisely, is not a necessity. In fact one could say that the main reason for Erdoğan's popularity in both the Middle East and in the world is the way he manages to merge this emphasis on Islamic sensitivity with the West's own values, which we call universal.

We can now look more closely at the "Why no?" The main problem hinges on whether the AKP can actually succeed in taking Islamic cultural values and traditions and moving them towards universal humanitarian values. The key terms here are "oppression" and "victimhood." As is known from the human rights organization that Muslim activist circles close to the AKP have created in Turkey, the Islamic sector sees itself as the truly oppressed. What the West is facing, besides the civilian-military bureaucratic elite, i.e. the West's representatives in Turkey, is a population that believes itself to be the truly oppressed and victimized, and which conceives its current fight as one for the equality and freedom of the oppressed. This is why Palestine holds such a special place within this fight; Palestinians constitute the most oppressed group in our region.

In truth, defining oneself as "oppressed and victimized" is a method used by just about every group. The problem is that the Islamic population has not experienced its recent past as "oppressed and victimized". Very serious mass murders, for which Muslims are in one way or another responsible, took place against Christians on this very soil. If the AKP enters Syria without either mentioning this history or honestly confronting those crimes, all the crimes that were committed against other religions in recent history will surely remind them of it, challenging the notion of the freedom fight that Islam, history's oppressed and victimized, has been waging for centuries. If the AKP, which seems to be the answer to the Muslim majority's demands for "freedom and democracy" through a Muslim sensitivity, does not bring this fight to a level where it becomes a critique also of the crimes that Muslim populations committed in recent history, it will not be able to complete the journey towards humanitarian

universal values. It will never be able to comprehend the successful transition the West made from Christian values to universal humanitarian values and it will get bogged down in a limited pre-defined space outlined by the sensitivities of Sunni-Muslim populations.

To all appearances, there are two main issues that plague the region. One is freedom and democracy; the other is security. It is not by chance, thus, that the Christians and other minorities support the Ba'ath regime in Syria. In order to gain security, they are willing to give up their freedoms. While Turkey seems to provide answers to the Sunni-Muslim majority's demands for freedom in Syria, it cannot do the same for the Christians' demands for security: quite the opposite. Since it reminds them of what happened in 1915, Turkey looks very much like a security threat to them. It is very important to note that the Ba'ath regime appointed a Christian as Minister of Defence.

In order to change this perception, the AKP has to take a clear position regarding the crimes that were committed against Christians. The AKP, however, is very far from being capable of doing this and for this reason will continue to be perceived as potentially a repeat perpetrator of the actions of 1915 against the Christians in the region. Therein lays the irony. Turkey, which wants to get involved in the region as an intervener on behalf of "freedom and democracy", is going to be a reminder of its past "crimes against humanity." We need to add two other important factors to this. The first is the close ties between Iran and the Syrian Alewites (Shia). Even if these ties rest upon a defence of the authoritarian regimes of Syria and Iran, since the intervention that Turkey claims it will make in the name of "freedom and democracy" will be shying from an honest accounting of history, it can easily turn into a sectarian fight – one between the Sunni-Hanefi's and the Shia (Alewite). Secondly, it is a fact that in 1915 and 1916, under Kemal Pasha's leadership, the Union and Progress Party hanged the leaders of the Arab nationalist movement all along the main roads from Beirut to Damascus. There is a known connection between the suppression of the Arab nationalist movement and the Genocide of 1915. Each was in line with the policies of the Union and Progress Party to shape Anatolia around a Turkish-Muslim identity. Whether it be the Syrian Ba'ath regime or Arab nationalist circles in the region, no one will hesitate to remind

Turkey of the reality behind the hangings of its own nationalist leaders.

The bottom line is that the AKP can say whatever it wants about whatever powerful Islamic cultural back-story it is using to further its new policies in the Middle East. If it does not confront history, it will appear as nothing less than a new Union and Progress Party. If the AKP wants to defend freedom and democracy in the region and wants to walk a path towards universal humanitarian values by way of Islamic sensitivities, it needs to learn how to look at Islam's recent past with a more critical eye. A statement about freedom and democracy must be defined in a way that responds to Christians' demands for security – a way that includes them in the equation. To get there, the road must pass through an honest reckoning with the crimes that have been committed in the past, not least of which was the Armenian Genocide.

There is in the Middle East a strong interconnection between security, democracy and facing history. Even a passing glance at the region makes it clear that historical injustices and the persistent denial of these injustices by one or another state or ethnic-religious group are major stumbling blocks, not only for the democratization of the region, but also for the establishment of stable relations between the different ethnic and religious groups and states. My central argument is that a failure to confront history in an honest way is one of the major reasons for insecurity and instability in the region. You cannot solve problems and establish democratic relations in the Middle East today without addressing historical wrongdoings, because history is not something in the past; the PAST is the PRESENT in the Middle East. To put it in another way, one of the main problems in the region is the insecurity felt by different groups and states towards each other as a result of events that have occurred in history. When you make the persistent denial of this painful history part of your security policy, this brings with it insecurity towards other groups. This is what I call the security dilemma: what one does to enhance one's own security causes a reaction that, in the end, can make one even less secure. For this reason, any policy for the region that ignores and forgets to address historical wrongdoings is ultimately doomed to fail.

3

In Egypt, the spring is full of sandstorms

Abdel Monem Said Aly

Change, said Leo Strauss, is the essence of politics. The question is whether the change takes us forwards or backwards. However, predictions and speculations are the nightmare of scholars and analysts alike. The case is doubly horrifying when events are in motion and nothing seems to stand still for a snapshot. Measuring transformation is as futile as the attempt of a blind man to measure the dimensions of a cube of ice while it is melting in his hand. However, the sum total of what is happening in Egypt can be summarized in two sentences: 1. The country will never return what it was; and 2. The change is so tectonic that the future direction for Egypt is forever uncertain. The range of possibilities goes from a stable democratic country to a state where the “Pharaoh” is gone but the despotic nature of “Pharaonism” governs a totalitarian polity, this time in the name of Islam.

As every experience is always unique, the transformation in Egypt is not disengaged from the changes in the region. The Middle East is currently going through such a dynamic phase and there is no indication that the situation will stabilize any time soon. The summation of what is happening in the Middle East is that the prevailing notion of the “Arab Exception” is finally over. In the West the Arabs were considered a very singular people, untouched by waves of globalization, democratization, and the sense of longing for freedom that other, “normal” people in the universe experience. Among Arabs themselves, rulers and a good part of the elite, the Arabs were considered a “particular” people with a culture that should not be sullied by exposure to corrupting Western ideas, or tainted by having others chart its history. Now, the Arabs are joining others on the planet in an endeavour that has never been considered easy or linear.

The fall of the Pharaoh

Former President Hosni Mubarak ruled Egypt for 30 years. Yet the man was toppled in 18 days. Such kinds of tectonic change are not customary in Egyptian politics. It could not have happened without a long list of factors that finally led him from the highest post in the

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land to standing trial for wrongs he is alleged to have committed. Many reasons were mentioned to explain how such a strong man could fall in such a dramatic way. The point I want to make is that Mubarak stayed in power for three decades because he was capable of using his office to keep a critical mass of Egyptians on his side. Well before January 25, 2011, when he was planning to run for a sixth term in office despite being ageing and sick, he had lost that capability. The deterioration of his qualities made it impossible for him to understand the structural changes that were happening in the country, some of them of his own making.

He certainly failed to see the “youth bulge” that had appeared in the country since the 1990s as a result of the sharp decline in the infant mortality rate in Egypt. The outcome is that 25 per cent of Egyptians are aged between 18 and 30. The baby boomers came onto the Egyptian stage while the country was moving towards a market economy. A new middle class was born, numerous and searching for a place in the economic and political life of the state. These two structural developments were accompanied by a media explosion that called the entire system into question. 22.6 million Egyptians, mostly youths, had access to the internet as of 2010. By June 2009, there were 3,211 IT companies in the country, all run by the new young generation who were later in the forefront of the revolution. To this we should add 21 daily newspapers, 523 other forms of publication, and 700 Arab-speaking TV channels featuring ferocious political debate programmes. This meant that the media in Egypt and the Arab world could revolt against any governmental control. In Egypt alone, there were 54 TV channels as of June 2010, 31 of them privately owned.

This vast and rapid growth of the media, uncontrolled by the government, opened the floodgates to criticism of public authorities, from the President to the most minor bureaucrat in the country. The themes of corruption, maldistribution of wealth, responsibility for the economic plight of the country and for the Palestinian plight, were all daily topics for talk shows, bloggers, the electronic press, the opposition press, and the media in general. The media succeeded in the total delegitimization of the regime. This became particularly true as the issue of succession became a major theme of Egyptian politics.

The assertion that the son of the President, Gamal Mubarak, would inherit his father's position as the President of Egypt accelerated this process of delegitimization and made it a conventional wisdom, interpreted as a sign of a regime that was not only corrupt but also trying to replace the republic with a monarchy. It was treason in the making.

Put all of the above in an ossified political system monopolized by the National Democratic Party (NDP) that allows little room for a progressive political agenda, and the stage will be set for a revolution. Both the regime and the opposition failed to absorb the new and growing political opposition from more youthful political movements, and this widened the gap between the strategic political elite and the people. However, the phenomenon of Gamal Mubarak was linked to a much larger one which associated political power with wealth, and the widespread corruption in the country. Reports from the World Bank, Freedom House, Transparency International, and other international governmental and non-governmental institutions that focus on good governance and the fight against corruption have ranked Egypt low in their different indicators of combating corruption, the integrity of public officials, and the perception of corruption.

Much more importantly than all of the above, the regime lost the opportunity in 2006/2007 to make major and fundamental constitutional reforms, despite major political and legal efforts to do so through the amendment of Article 76 for electing the President, Article 77 for limiting the terms of the Presidency to two terms only, and Article 88 for limiting the powers of the President during the implementation of emergency law. The continuous implementation of emergency law for 30 years widened the powers of the police and other security institutions in the country.

The ageing of the President played a greater role in widening the gap between the regime and the rest of the Egyptians. On the one hand Mubarak was a strong President with massive constitutional and political powers. On the other hand, he was a weak President since he had no close advisors, nor a national security or economic councils to rely on or to get advice from. Despite his powers therefore, he had to rely on the heads of security and executive organs of the

state. As he was growing older and suffering from a variety of illnesses, his stamina and ability to follow the affairs of the state were declining. A political vacuum emerged and was filled by others who were not only less popular, but also corrupt. Major issues of state, both foreign and domestic, were postponed because of the inability of the system to take decisions.

In short, Mubarak was becoming increasingly unable to face the gathering storm that was approaching the country, probably since the return of Mohammed Al Bradie to Egypt in February 2010. The failure to arrange fair and free elections in the autumn of 2010 was an opportunity missed by Mubarak to disunite the opposition. The bombing of the Church of the Two Saints in Alexandria on the eve of 2011 was regarded as a sign that the regime lacked the ability to lead and provide security, and the Copts withdrew their support for the regime. When the storm finally came, Mubarak was baffled and bewildered and incapable of managing a crisis that was brewing in the country, and was unprepared to take Egypt in another direction.

The rise of pharaonism

The transformation of a country is not easy, and in Egypt spring is full of sandstorms. In Egypt, where the revolution has passed the point of overthrowing the regime, the post-revolutionary transition period reflected the enormity of the difficulties. The departure of President Hosni Mubarak from power launched a new era for the Egyptian revolution and for Egypt. But by surrendering his powers to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), Mubarak assured the continuity of the state as represented by three major institutions. Firstly, SCAF represents the sovereign rights of the President and his executive and legislative powers. Secondly, the judiciary has been in many ways part of the revolution, as the revolutionaries have declared their intent to introduce a democratic system based on the rule of law. Thirdly, bureaucracy is historically the backbone of the Egyptian state and is ready to continue its mission under new leadership.

On the other side are the revolutionaries. Firstly we have the

youth, who launched the revolution but soon lost its leadership. The youth have evolved into a large number of coalitions and new political parties. Whatever their numbers, they reflect a highly fragmented arena. Secondly, the traditional political parties that worked as the formal and informal opposition to the Mubarak regime have reasserted themselves. Thirdly, a group in the traditional political opposition, the Muslim Brotherhood, has been reinforced by new “Islamic” parties. On the more liberal side of the Brotherhood is the “Wasat” or Middle Party and on the more conservative side are the long imprisoned “Gama’at Islamia” and “Jihad” groups. Then there is the new power of the “Salafis” who advocate a strict implementation of Shari’a. Fourth are all the non-party movements and NGOs that opposed Mubarak and his regime.

The organs of state and the revolutionary forces developed a formula that was summarized by the slogan: “The people and the army are ‘one hand’”. Diverse revolutionary groups defined the situation as follows: the people made the revolution but the army protected it. In many ways this definition of what took place in Egypt recognized the continuity of the Egyptian state, and simultaneously the necessity for Egypt to go through a process of massive change. Yet the basis for political change in the country has become a state issue under the watchful eyes of the revolution. Given this marriage between the continuity of the state and the continuity of the revolution, it was inevitable that tensions would grow over a variety of issues. Local forces have started to take public affairs into their own hands, while minorities have worked to assert their rights and the protests from the pre-revolutionary period continue to drag the economy to a halt.

Three clusters of tension have grown over time. The first is related to what the country should do with the former regime and the crimes it committed during the revolution, particularly Mubarak and his family. After considerable discord, the ex-President and his two sons were put on trial, along with 48 senior members of his regime and their families. In a sign of instability, no fewer than four government cabinets were formed between January and July – ironically all containing ex-members of the now-dissolved National Democratic Party.

The second cluster of tensions has focused on the road to be taken during the transition period to civilian rule. These tensions were between different factions of the revolution, and between some of those factions and SCAF. While a section of the revolutionaries, particularly liberals and those on the left of the Egyptian political spectrum, pushed for a programme to create a kind of steering committee or presidential council made up of civilians and military personnel to run the affairs of the country, others – all the Islamic organizations plus the nationalists – opted for the continuation of SCAF to run the affairs of the country.

Linked to this division, the first group opted to elect a constitutional assembly to draft a new constitution for the country as a basis for legislative and presidential elections. The second group opted for a counterprocess that would begin by electing the chambers of the legislative branch, who would be empowered to appoint a constitutional council to draft the new constitution. SCAF took the initiative to form a committee to amend eight articles of the 1971 constitution and put them to a referendum, in which the amendments were approved on March 19, 2011, by a majority of 77.8 per cent. These amendments basically reduced presidential powers and limited the President to two terms of four years each. Then the 1971 constitution was replaced by a constitutional declaration to cover the transition period. The referendum also confirmed the proposal to launch the transition by first electing the two legislative councils. In many ways, the results of the referendum codified the split in the revolutionary camp.

This led to the third cluster of tensions about how to deal with SCAF. Is it the political leadership of the country, and as such, is it subject to criticism and accountable to the public? Or is it part of the army that should be honoured for protecting the country and the revolution and as such constitutes a “red line” that revolutionaries may not cross? Again, while liberals and leftists took the first view and accused SCAF of favouring the Islamists, the Islamists adopted the second view. A new configuration in Egyptian politics began to emerge and create its own dynamic, alternating between confrontation and accommodation. The roadmap for transition was finally accepted, as was an al-Azhar document based on a

consensus regarding guidelines for a constitutional council that will maintain the characteristics of a civil state. It was followed by a similar document signed by 52 political parties, movements, and organizations – including Islamists – representing the “democratic alliance” – led by the Muslim Brotherhood, which favoured a civic and modern democratic state.

Transformations

History often unfolds in strange ways. This certainly applies in the case of Egypt. The consensus regarding the road map, the Azhar and the Democratic Alliance documents was not enough to clear the air of confusion, suspicion, and lack of trust. The revolutionary youth were gradually losing their status, as much better organized and better financed forces readied themselves to take over the country. Youth asserted itself through a series of Friday demonstrations and sit-ins which led to confrontations with police and the army. The atmosphere was scary enough to make ordinary Egyptians stand by the only organized forces in the legislative elections. The Muslim Brotherhood and its Salafi allies won just over 68 per cent of the seats of the People’s Assembly. Added to other Islamic factions, the total share amounts to 77 per cent. Another National Democratic Party was in the making. In the elections to the Shura Council – the upper chamber of Parliament – Islamists won 83 per cent. It seemed that the revolution was being passed on to the most reactionary and ultra-conservative forces in the country. What remains on the Egyptian revolutionary, and Islamic, agenda has been the drafting of the new constitution and the election of a President to be handed the sovereign powers of the state by the SCAF, after which the army will return to barracks.

Getting to this point was not as easy as it may have seemed. Nothing can illustrate the strange way Egyptian history is unfolding better than the story of Omar Suleiman’s return to national politics. Omar Suleiman, the former Egyptian Vice President and head of General Intelligence, decided to register his candidacy for President 48 hours before deadline, after 14 months of silence. Within 24

hours of his bowing to the “will of the people” to run, he had obtained 60,000 legally-certified nomination signatures from the general public. He took the lead, with over 30 per cent support, in the Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies weekly poll of support for the presidential candidates. He ranked the same in the Al Masry Al-Youm opinion poll during the same period. The response was the return of the Muslim Brotherhood and a throng of their allies to Tahrir Square on Friday, April 13. Other revolutionary forces made plans to come to the square the following Friday. The Islamist-dominated parliament amended the election law to prevent the top leadership of the former regime from participating in national elections. Faced with the unconstitutionality of this new ruling, the Islamist response was that “revolutionary legitimacy is supreme over legalistic legitimacy”.

The Egyptian revolution has now come full circle, after it was thought that the Egyptian spring had reached its zenith and was moving toward institutionalization. The revolutionary forces of youth, Islamists, opposition parties, and lesser but similarly angry groups once more confront the regime of Hosni Mubarak – even though the ex-President is in medical custody awaiting his verdict while his close associates are in prison in the company of his sons. This new round of confrontation was totally unexpected. Revolutionary fever had gradually been leaving Egypt, yielding to the slow but steady return and re-establishment of its lost institutions, the legislative branch and security system. After 28 separate million-person demonstrations in the streets and squares of big cities and urban areas, all involving clashes with the army and the police, the general public was no longer prepared to tolerate this pace. The millions were soon to dwindle into hundreds or a few thousands protesting low wages or making sectorial demands. The revolution was technically over when the revolutionaries failed to commemorate the key anniversary of Mubarak’s resignation on February 11 of this year by staging a manifestation of civil disobedience to embarrass the SCAF and to demonstrate to the Islamists their power.

In many ways, the country has been changing. For one thing, in the revolutionary year, Egyptians produced two million more babies that took the country’s population to the 90-million mark.

Demographic change has proved resilient in posing a challenge to whoever is going to rule the country. In terms of economic statistics, the country is going to ruin: according to all indicators, Egypt should have declared bankruptcy in 2011. In terms of poverty indicators, the country is returning to where it was in 1990. Yet despite apparent economic decline, Egypt has proven capable of keeping itself together, partly because of the reserves left from the Mubarak regime, partly because of its large informal economic sector – constituting about 35 per cent of the economy – and foremost due to the legendary Egyptian capacity for patience and waiting for better days to come. Politically, Egypt has known a number of changes unthinkable under the former regime. The constitutional amendments of March 19, 2011 curtailed the President's powers and limited him to two four-year terms. For the first time since the revolution of July 23, 1952, Egypt witnessed free elections to the lower and upper chambers of parliament. What seemingly remains to do in order for Egypt to become a democratic country is to put in place a democratic constitution and hold similarly free and democratic elections to the Presidency. As many as 23 candidates for the Presidency registered with the High Election Commission, a legal body that was established to run the process, and 13 contested in May 23 after 10 were excluded for different reasons, including Omar Suleiman.

But history, as it was said, unfolds in strange ways, and dreams usually do not come true. The sum-total of the changes in Egypt is the dominance of Islam led by the Muslim Brotherhood. The Islamists control more than two-thirds of parliament and are better organized and financed than any of the other political forces on the right or the left. Egypt has become a classic case of the tyranny of the majority, as soon reflected in elections to the Constitutional Assembly and the Presidency.

On the first count, the constitution, the Islamists were prepared to dictate terms for its creation. Secular members of the Assembly withdrew, refusing to participate in the drafting of an Islamic constitution. The Administrative Court then ruled that the formation of the Assembly was unconstitutional. On the second count, the Presidency, the Islamists changed their minds and submitted a candidate, Kheirat Ashatter. The Salafists did the

same, their candidate being Hazem Abu Ismail. Both candidacies seriously violated constitutional presidential requirements. Although both were excluded later, the Muslim Brotherhood was prepared to register a back up candidate – Mohamed Morsi, the head of the Justice and Freedom Party, the political vanguard of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Adding that up, the fielding of a strong candidate from the former regime, the relative change in the Egyptian general mood, the failure of the Constitutional Assembly, and the failure of two Islamist candidates – all brought the Islamists back onto the streets to achieve what they had failed to achieve through legal means. The revolutionaries – Islamists and non-Islamists – were waking up to a new situation. History is still unfolding; this time less colourful and less romantic than it was before.

Aftermath

The aftermath of the previous phase led in the same direction of uncertainty. Nevertheless, after a long legal battle, Egypt elected its first civilian President, Mohamed Morsi. For the first time, the President came from the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood, and had a narrow majority of 51.7 per cent. Although the military has surrendered power to the President, the decision of the High Constitutional Court on the unconstitutionality of the election law gives SCAF the opportunity to restore the legislative powers of the dissolved Parliament. In a way, Egypt started a second transitional period led by the new President but in association with the SCAF. The roadmap calls for the second Constitutional Assembly to adopt a new Constitution, follow this up with legislative elections and restore legislative powers from the SCAF, who should then return to their barracks. Will that be the case? Only time will tell.

4

Humans Rights – A tool for power sharing or a project for re-distributing authority?

Abdullah Hamidaddin

Individual autonomy is the essence of the Human Rights Charter of the United Nations. Throughout it, there is an insistence that all authority that is predatory on individuals' needs should be limited in all its forms, and that privileges leading to unfair control of some over the lives of others should be denied. To condemn slavery, torture and arbitrary arrests is to reject some of – but not all – the ways in which humans exercise predatory authority over others, denying them vital aspects of their humanness as well as limiting their potential for a rich life. Freedom of speech, thought, religion and movement are other ways in which the autonomy of the individual is enabled.

However, that spirit of the Human Rights Charter seems to be absent in the media or in the public debate in the Arab world. There, human rights are more about a political struggle against a government and less about promoting the autonomy of the individual and limiting all forms of predatory authority over the individual. This is not to say that political struggle is negative or unnecessary, but rather that human rights are about much more than the state and its relation to its citizens. Denial of autonomy usually starts in the home, in the relations involving the father, husband, mother or employee. Actually the self is the first stage of denial of autonomy and acceptance of predatory authority. There are many reasons for that; some at the microlevel, such as the personal worldview of the individual, and some at the macrolevel, such as the social culture and the socio-economic structure of the society.

Whatever the reasons – when autonomy is denied, human rights are also fundamentally denied. Human rights represent an ongoing project that seeks to assert the autonomy of the individual in a society. It is a project which starts with a public debate addressing all the ways in which authority is exerted, which results in public negotiations with the aim of redistributing authority in a way that increases autonomy and decreases predatory authority. The state is but one participant among many others in these negotiations. Without doubt, the state is a fundamental participant, and in some cases the most important actor with which to negotiate – or dispute – but it is important to realize that it is not the only one. In many cases, focusing on the state makes human rights another way to contest the power of the state, but not a way to promote human rights.

For example, let us imagine “Amro”, an average Saudi man. He is able to count the times the state has acted as a direct and clear abuser of rights. Yet at the same time Amro is living in ongoing abuse from people immediately around him. As a child he may have been slapped frequently for no reason, as a man he may have been coerced into unfairly paid labour. But he does not register this as an abuse of his humanity, because human rights are basically conceived as “the individual against the state”. And in his specific experience, he has not been a victim of consistent or systemic abuse from the state. The same situation exists in other countries in the world and of course in the Middle East, but it varies from country to country, depending on the aggressiveness and violence of the state.

So in the case of Amro, and the millions in the same situation, should I not consider them to be a target for my human rights activities? Human rights as a project to re-distribute authority across the whole spectrum of society means that the first actor whom I will be contesting is the person I am seeking to defend. This is because human rights in that sense not only give a person more autonomy, they also make more demands on him or her. For obvious reasons, responsibility and accountability are paramount, and conditions for individual success change. In a hierarchical authoritarian structure, what may matter most is whom you know. You do not need to think for yourself, you need others to consider that helping you is in their interest. In an autonomous structure, my own skills matter the most, my creativeness and imagination are my assets. Another difference is the nature of communication. Expressing your needs in an authoritarian structure is about speaking to one real actor, while in an autonomous structure you are speaking to millions of actors. A life that truly upholds human rights is complex and demanding.

Facing such a situation; what am I to do? One option is to reject my freedom and sustain the authority that carries all those burdens. Another option is to demand my autonomy and live with the consequences. A third option, however, is to go halfway. I become selective, I seek a domain for a specific human rights agenda. Human rights are a currency, and I have a quest for survival that requires more access to resources and more authority over their distribution. So I drop the idea of human rights as a way of life,

“What this means is that the societies in the Arab world are not talking about autonomy and authority as much as they are talking about power and government. The consequence is that we have many institutions to limit violent aggression and to facilitate power sharing, but few that question the culture surrounding the establishment of a norm or frame of mind that fuels and sustains all of this.”

and I take a utilitarian approach to them: when “human rights” are about opposing the government, then I support them. But when human rights are about giving me and everyone else autonomy and setting limitations on predatory authority, then I am indifferent to them, or even against them. Thus, human rights become a purely political project, a means to achieve power sharing rather than a diffusion of authority amongst the various actors in a society. I think this is the situation we have in most Arab countries. For me, this was a way to explain the coexistence of conservative and authoritarian individuals and societies ardently active in the human rights field. Sharing authority is a domain-specific activity. I want it only against the government, and I am keen for it to stop at my doorstep and my financial institution.

Why is this? I don’t really know. Sometimes I imagine that a worldview which does not put humans in second place in the scheme of things is one important factor. It does not lead to such a negative attitude to autonomy, but neither does it make it easier to see the inherent value of it. Such a worldview covers our eyes so to speak from looking deep into who we really are. Being a mere tool in a grand cosmic scheme may not necessarily make me think that I am a tool in a human society, but it may make it more difficult for me to see myself differently. Connected to this is how we imagine God as the ultimate authority who demands of us an ultimate negation of self. Naturally we cannot uphold a moral standard higher than the one we assume God to have. However, it is not all about culture or worldview. Much of the resistance to autonomy has structural reasons. State and societies which have at their disposal measures to protect the individual create a space for nurturing autonomy. It is very natural to want to stay in an unfavourable situation when there are limited options ahead of you. The example of women in abusive relations provides many classic and well-studied cases of that kind of behaviour.

What this means is that the societies in the Arab world are not talking about autonomy and authority as much as they are talking about power and government. The consequence is that we have many institutions to limit violent aggression and to facilitate power sharing, but few that question the culture surrounding the establishment of

a norm or frame of mind that fuels and sustains all of this. What we have today in the Arab world is a major window of opportunity for changing this. We are still focusing on the power sharing paradigm, but there is more awareness of, and more willingness to listen to, the project to redistribute authority. In Yemen and Egypt there is an outcry over the fact that what is happening tends to be more of a reshuffling of power than a revolution. In the Gulf States, there are pressing questions about the reasons behind such a low preparedness for putting popular pressure on the governments. Today more than ever it is possible and important to open a public debate on predatory authority and autonomy.

The dichotomy between human rights as a means to redistribute and diffuse authority or as a means to share power has to be made clear. There is a need to accentuate the inconsistency of me raising the human rights banner in the street while forcing my daughter into a marriage to which she does not consent. There is a need to amplify the dissonance between me saying that I believe in human rights and at the same time that I believe in a God who punishes people for simply not believing in Him. Moreover, we need to go deep into the cultural foundations that shape our perspectives on what it is to be a human being in this universe. For it is only when we realize the value of actualizing potentials and experiencing life beyond mere sustenance and basic needs that we really touch the essence of our humanity and that we can speak of “human” rights.

5

Morocco – An exception?

Aziz Mekouar

If you look what happened in Morocco last year when the Arab Spring started in Tunisia and then spread to Egypt and other countries, you will notice that it was much quieter in Morocco, probably because the situation in Morocco was quite different from that in the other Arab countries. A trend of reforms had started in 1998 with an opening up of the political arena and political life in the country. King Hassan II called upon the Leader of the Opposition, who was also the leader of the Socialist Party, to lead the government, and we had a coalition government. When King Hassan II passed away, his son King Mohammed VI decided to continue the reforms in the country, and many things have happened. We have had a real opening in terms of political life, in terms of free and fair elections, and in the approach to human rights issues. We had the Commission of Equity and Reconciliation, led by human rights activists, which examined what had happened in the past in the field of human rights. We have a new culture of human rights, with considerable freedom of expression and freedom of speech.

What happened in 2010 in other countries did not spread to Morocco to any major extent. Why not? The first reason was that most of the political parties did not join the Arab Spring movement. The 20 February Movement, which called for demonstrations, was mainly organized by young people, and was comparable to the May 1968 events in France. That largely explains why the main political parties, and the main non-political movements, such as the trade unions, did not join the movement.

The second reason was that the reactions of the institutions and the government were wise. The 20 February Movement called for a demonstration on February 20, 2011 and there was a huge demonstration in Casablanca and in most cities in the country. Some claimed that a total of about 65,000 people marched in various parts of the country. The police were not present, and it was more a case of rallies than demonstrations. All kinds of people participated in the 20 February manifestation. There were young people who called for demonstrations, there were members of left-wing political parties, as well as businesspeople, notaries, lawyers, businessmen and women, because of course the general situation was not exactly what people wanted and it was an opportunity to demonstrate and ex-

press the discontent that people felt. All kinds of people, even the brother-in-law of the King, even very well-known people, marched in the streets, but there was no reaction from the government in terms of police actions against the demonstrators. The reform trend guaranteed freedom of speech, although some people were still saying that there was not enough freedom of speech in the country. But by reading the newspapers you could see that people were expressing themselves freely and all the taboos had been broken, including those against talking about religion, criticizing the monarchy and discussing Western Sahara, that is the part of Western Sahara under Moroccan control. This is what sells media and this is what the first topics of debate were. So the second reason why the situation was different in Morocco was that the government reacted wisely.

The third reason was the very quick response of the King. We had the 20 February demonstration and immediately after it, the King gave a major speech announcing changes in the constitution and also the creation of a committee to work on the constitution. The committee was very broadly composed, there were members from all camps, and its work was successful. At the end of June the committee came up with the constitution which I believe is well suited to Morocco, and then we had elections in November where the Islamist party, which had been in opposition since it was created, won the elections relatively easily. Today the leader of the Islamist party, the BJB, is the Prime Minister, the head of government in Morocco. What happened was basically a kind of gradual, positive evolution and this is why we avoided revolution.

That is the good side of it, but considerable work needs to be done for Morocco to avoid problems in the near future. Some people have been saying that perhaps we avoided a revolution because we have had steady economic growth in the last 5 or 6 years. Well, Egypt too had had very steady economical growth, amounting to 8–9 per cent in the last few years, so economic development does not explain the fact that there was no revolution in Morocco. What did not happen in 2011 might still happen. The challenges are the same for every country.

The first challenge is to make sure that the people, everybody but especially the young people, feel that they are stakeholders.

“Political parties and all the other organizations should really look at the young people, organize them, find a way to make them part of the society. There are no instruments to pass on values; families today are no longer as they used to be: it is difficult for working fathers and mothers to pass on values, and of course schools are not adequate for that.”

The second challenge is to make people understand that democracy mainly means rule of law, and this applies not only to the government but also to the people. In Morocco in 2011, people were not respecting the law as much as they once did, and the government was very cautious to react. If you look at people today, how they drive, how merchants are sitting in the roads and selling things and so on, you will also notice that the police do not react, because they do not want to provoke the start of something bigger. These street merchants were not acting simply as individuals: the mafia started to organize itself and little by little different kinds of criminality started to spread in Morocco. We have to return to respect for the law and I do think that we are moving in that direction.

The third challenge is of course the youth. You have to make sure that they feel that they are the citizens of the country and they are not marginalized. In education in Morocco, we follow the European way – more precisely the French way – which is to say we offer university education to everyone, not merely to train people to work – it is considered an intellectual right for everybody. That brings a big problem, because then you create a lot of expectations that are not met later in life, and this is what is happening in Morocco today. We have around 100,000 unemployed graduates, young people who have university degrees but cannot find jobs. Morocco spends around 30 per cent of its budget on education and it is a total failure in terms of return on investments. My personal view is that we should move on to vocational training, because this is where you can equip people for jobs. Another problem is that the population of Morocco, and especially the young people, are not organized. They are left to make their own way in life, and there is no mechanism that passes on values to these young people, the value of being a citizen of the country, the feeling that they belong to a community, that they have to respect the law, have a sense of what the country is and be part of that country. Political parties and all the other organizations should really look at the young people, organize them, find a way to make them part of the society. There are no instruments to pass on values; families today are no longer as they used to be: it is difficult for working fathers and mothers to pass on values, and of course schools are not adequate for that.

“In our countries – Morocco in particular – we are witnessing a growing interest in religion and a decline in values which is quite amazing. What is the explanation? Probably because religion today – Islam in particular, which is basically, like every religion, about values and ethics – has become more a question of how you dress than the values you have.”

In our countries – Morocco in particular – we are witnessing a growing interest in religion and a decline in values which is quite amazing. What is the explanation? Probably because religion today – Islam in particular, which is basically, like every religion, about values and ethics – has become more a question of how you dress than the values you have. To be an Islamist probably means more of a return towards an inward look at one's own identity but with very wrong values. People often talk about the change in the Arab world when it moved from secular nationalism and Arabism toward Islamism, but actually the fight for independence against colonialism in most countries had an Islam/ Muslim side to it, and especially so in Morocco, I can testify to that. But it was absolutely not the same Islam as we have today.

Those are the challenges that every country in the Middle East has to face. Of course economic growth is very important, but it is mainly a question of values, of people feeling that they are a part of the game and that they have a stake in it. When you talk to people about democracy in Morocco, people will tell you they do not believe in the system. We have a monarchy, and one of the reasons we did not go through a revolution was probably the legitimacy of the monarchy in Morocco, and it is a true legitimacy. If you ask people, they will tell you:

“Well, we do not trust these people sitting in parliament, they are there for their own interests. Thank goodness we have the King and we do not need all these people to be sitting in parliament, managing and belonging to the government. The King is doing a good job and he is the right man in the right place.”

That shows that people do not believe in the parliamentary system, and one of the big fears before the elections in November was the turnout. Thankfully the turnout was higher than in 2007 where we had 37 per cent and now in November it was approximately 45 per cent, which is a big improvement. People were anxious there might be a very low turnout.

This is what I wanted to tell you about what is going on today in Morocco. I think that the situation is calm in the sense that we are not going to see a revolution similar to those in other countries in the region, but we have challenges. Today political movements tend to

be socially driven. We have social unrest all over the country, but it is under control. And I think that we have to keep it under control, but the only way to do so is to address the main issues, which are education, organizing the youth, and making sure that people feel that they are stakeholders in the system.

6

Political change may come easily, but social change takes time

Mbarka Bouaida

I concur with what Ambassador Kurtzer said earlier, that social change in the Middle East region started two or three decades ago, but came to the surface now with the Arab revolution. I will talk about my own experience in Morocco. Yes, we had the 20 February Movement and I did participate in it, not with my political profile so to speak, but as a citizen of Morocco and as a part of the Youth of Morocco. We have had a quiet revolution, which we used to call an evolution, because the demands of protesters were based on the acceleration of reforms and work that was already in progress. We had a very quick and efficient response and reaction from the King through his historic speech of 9 March 2011. In his speech, the King outlined the expected evolution of the Moroccan political system, based on a modern constitutional monarchy, separation of powers and the strengthening of the role of government and the Prime Minister. He also expressed total and absolute respect for human rights, even though we had had freedom of speech and independent media since the end of the 90s. The new constitution which we adopted on 1 July 2011 incorporated principles such as parity and gender equality, freedom of speech, creation of the National Council of Human Rights, redefining the role of the King as an educator and substituting the sacrality of the King with respect for the person of the King. Since that day we have been through very interesting changes, because we had held legislative elections and the Islamist Party is now leading the government.

What we can see is that political change can come easily, but social change takes much longer. I just want to give one example. We had a 78 per cent turnout in the referendum over the new constitution. All these people voted for parity and gender equality, but when it came to implementing this principle, we encountered a number of problems. The election led to only 15 per cent female representation in the new parliament. Women's empowerment is probably one of the biggest challenges of the Arab revolution. We have seen setbacks for women's empowerment, at least in Morocco. Of course we are lucky to have a fairly strong civil society and we will probably see a strengthening of the role of the opposition in the new constitution. As power is now balanced between the government and the opposition, and as the Islamist Party is no longer in opposition

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but in office, we have let us say liberal parties who are now trying to be stronger within the opposition, and they are striving to improve the situation of women.

I think we have fewer human rights problems than other countries around us. The new constitution gave official status to the National Council of Human Rights and we have seen positive signs since the new Islamist Party came into power, with the release of some political prisoners who were Islamists, and with the release of a certain journalist that all Moroccans know. He spent 2011 in prison, accused of endangering state security. So yes we have positive signs. But women's empowerment is a great challenge and in my opinion the main issue of what's happening now. Another great challenge is how we define democracy. Democracy means having Islamist parties in response to the will of the majority. But how can we respect the will of the minorities that also exist in the Arab world in general? Mr Kurtzer, I like the term you used before, 'liberal democracy'. We have to talk much more about liberal democracy and this is now being openly debated.

The final point I would like to make is the economic side of the Arab revolution. Ambassador Mekouar talked about unemployment, which is one of the challenges. I think we are facing a huge economic crisis in the Arab world. In Morocco we won in terms of political stability, because we have a stable and very popular monarchy and because we successfully handled the 20 February protests, but economic growth in the country has stopped, at least for the year 2012. It is not only an international economic crisis originating in Europe or in the US, it is also an economic crisis in the Arab world itself. Perhaps we can also benefit from the Arab revolution to start thinking about integration in the Arab world or at least in some regions of the Arab world.

7

God is back in history **Michael Melchior**

I think that there is one grouping which has been missing here among all the honoured speakers – the Islamic Brotherhoods. I would have liked to represent them here but I have not been authorized to do so. I will therefore speak from a religious perspective, and like them, I also feel that “Allahu-Akbar”. I can identify with that principle from a Jewish perspective. When I was Chief Rabbi in Norway – which I still have as a hobby, as it is always good as a politician to have something to fall back on – the Muslim communities of Norway said that I could represent them on certain issues with respect to the authorities. Even in the Middle East we have established such close relations with the Islamists that we jokingly say that we are, on some issues, interchangeable.

I think, in the context of everything we have heard today, it is important to say that one of the big changes is the importance of not only the religious element, but also of political Islam. Islamic parties have been voted into power in many of the important countries of the Middle East, and when we talk about the new Middle East, it is an element which we have to take into account, whether we like it or not. This is true for the influence of religion as such, all over the world. The Americans like to believe that they have a strict separation of Church and State, which might formally be true, but in practice the dominance of religion in the public sphere in American life, even in the American presidential debate, is overwhelming and constantly growing. This is certainly true in the East and the new Middle East. I would like to quote a graffiti message I saw in Jerusalem recently, which can very much characterize what is going on in the whole world today, and definitely in the Middle East. The message said ‘Nietzsche is dead’, signed ‘God’. It characterized a lot of what is going on today. God is back in history, and those who want to look the other way and act as if it is not happening, hoping there will be a counterrevolution and things will go back to being as they were in the good old days – well, it is not going to happen, at least not in the foreseeable future. The question is not how we analyze it, but what do we do about it. I am not here to be another expert analyzer. I’m here to pose the question: what do we do about it? Or, to ask a different question: is religion only the core of the problem? I mean the wide range of problems which have been on our agenda

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today, the issues of democracy, of liberalism, of gender equality, of which we heard such encouraging things today from Morocco. Greater problems include peace and war, and very threatening issues which can come to a head over the next years, which are not going to disappear, even if there is fatigue. I agree with Ambassador Kurtzer that there is fatigue. Even we in the Middle East can sometimes feel fatigued with ourselves.

But God is back in history all over the world, and this is affecting the lives of everybody. Religion is the strongest NGO in the world, and its has effect for the good and/or for the bad. The question and the challenge is this: is religion the core of the problem and can it also be the key to the solution? Is religion only the slippery slope down to hell, or can religion possibly open the gates to heaven?

I want to put this also in the context of the Middle East conflict, although it goes far beyond that. It is part of a much more sophisticated debate going on between the different worlds, between the regions, but also within regions and countries. If you look at the Israeli Palestinian conflict, the developments are not all negative. In 1993, most people in Israel – Palestine were against a two-state solution, but believed that it was going to be the solution. Today most people are for it, and nobody believes it is going to happen. We know where we have to go, we know where we are, but we don't have a clue how to narrow the gap. What we need to do is to restore belief and confidence in the process. What we do not need is another Oslo, Camp David, Annapolis, another roadmap. We need a transformation of the conflict – a paradigm shift. I propose that religion has to come into this equation, but not in the way religion has come in up till now, being used in order to avoid any solution, religion has to come in as part of the solution. Different factors, radical developments have to take place for that to become true, but these are absolutely within reach.

For a start, it will demand of the Western world to think outside the box, which means not to think in terms of dichotomy when it comes to the relationship between Church and State. Both inside and outside the Western world there are different models for the separation of Church and State. In many countries, religious thinking is part of the nation-state construct. The question is: which part, and

is this a religious dictate which is enforced on citizens? Is it part of a totalitarian religious thinking, with no room for any alternative thinking? How does fundamentalism fit in with this? Here I need to ask: am I a fundamentalist because I'm an Orthodox Jew?

Does fundamentalism mean believing in fundamental dogmas which cannot be questioned? I think that in all religions there are such beliefs, such dogmas, but they are few, they are the basis of religion. In Judaism it is discussed whether there are 13 such principles, whether there are 3, or maybe just one basic dogma. But then what about the rest? The rest are also basic beliefs, but beliefs which need to be confronted with other beliefs in what becomes the essence of all religious dialectic thinking. This occurs in legal, ethical and philosophical terms. In legal terms, we need to pass a ruling, because the law or the practice has to be established. But that is not always the case in other areas. In other areas, different opinions can often legitimately live side by side. In many ways, similar thinking has developed within Islam. The legal decisions of the "Khadit" and of responsa literature reflect such debates of values, an ability to be relevant to society and at the same time loyal to legal traditions and what is perceived as the essence of the Word of God.

A very good example is the issue debated as part of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. The question highlighted is the value of land. Land is very much perceived as sacred, both in Islam and Judaism. Therefore it is legally problematic to give away sacred land. However, is this an absolute? Is it a principle which stands above any other principle? Or are there other values such as the value of peace, which is one of the names of God Himself. Or the value of saving human life and human dignity, which are equally important.

Just imagine the vision that we in all the monotheistic religions might work out a partnership in Jerusalem. What would be in it for Israel and the Jewish people if we could achieve a real peace, a full peace, not just a peace between leaders but a peace with our Palestinian neighbours, with all the Arab nations, not simply a photo-opportunity in Oslo or in Washington, but something which would touch the soul of the conflict and just maybe would have a real chance of creating what so many of us can only dream about? This would demand some immensely courageous decisions from

both sides. It would demand some thinking out of the box. But it really is not beyond possibility.

I have been working during the last couple of years with very courageous religious Jewish leaders and very courageous Palestinian Islamists, up to now very quietly, who agree with me on this issue and who are today creating coalitions, and I have been moving in the Arab world, talking to some of the Islamist parties which I have mentioned here.

We are not going public yet, we are not ready, but we are talking to very radical groups. This is not the first time they have been confronted with this thinking, but the first time they are confronted with it together with the other side – and they are willing to open up and think in these dialectic terms. If we are willing to go the whole way to find a peaceful solution, knowing that the whole world is watching us and thinking if we can work this out through dialectic religious thinking, then we can really serve God. We know that the consequence if it does not happen is a worsening and hatred which will create a spiral of violence and of de-legitimization where we cannot tell what kind of bloodshed will ensue; to what kind of hatred and demonizing of the enemy, and Islamophobia in the whole world and anti-Semitism in the Arab world – which is already rapidly growing. These Islamic leaders see the danger, not to the Jews but to Islam, of this growing anti-Semitism and spiral of racism.

We see the dangers of the ongoing Islamophobia all over the world. We see the dangers to civilization in Europe from what is happening with this kind of growing hatred of Islam. Nobody is going to win this battle of hatred; there is no symmetry in it, so I mention both together; nobody is going to win this battle. But if we can create within our civilizations these coalitions along the interface between our civilizations, if we can create something appealing and we build up trust, we build up friendships. If we can do this, the sky is the limit for the potential, for the hope we can build up for the future, also between the religious and secular spheres, realizing the possibilities and potential for the future of humankind.

8

Biographies



Taner Akçam

Sociologist and historian Taner Akçam was born in the province of Ardahan, Turkey, in 1953. He became interested in Turkish politics at an early age. As the editor-in-chief of a student political journal, he was arrested in 1976 and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. A year later, he escaped to Germany, where he received political asylum. In 1988 he started working as Research Scientist in Sociology at the Hamburg Institute for Social Research. His first research topic was the history of political violence and torture in the late Ottoman Empire and early Republic of Turkey. In 1995 he received his doctorate from the University of Hanover with a dissertation on *The Turkish National Movement and the Armenian Genocide Against the Background of the Military Tribunals in Istanbul Between 1919 and 1922*. Between 2000 and 2002 he was Visiting Professor of History at University of Michigan and between 2002–2008 at University of Minnesota. Since 2008 he is a member of History Department at Clark University and holding the Kaloosdian Mugar chair in Armenian Genocide Studies. *Armenien und der Völkermord*, Hamburg: Verlag Hamburger Edition, 2005; *Dialogue Across an International Divide: Essays Towards a Turkish-Armenian Dialogue* (Zoryan Institute, 2001) has been translated into Hebrew. *From Empire to Republic: Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide* appeared in 2004, has been translated in Italian and Polish. *A Shameful Act: the Armenian Genocide and Turkish Responsibility* is published by Metropolitan Books in October 2006. His book on the Ottoman Archives and Armenian Genocide is published in January 2008 in Istanbul, with the title *The Armenian Question is solved' The policies towards Armenians during the war years based on Ottoman documents*. In 2009 he published a book, *Deportation and Massacres, Protocols of Military Tribunal, Trial of Union and Progress Party (1919–1922)* with Vahakn N. Dadrian published by Bilgi University Publication, Istanbul 2009 (in Turkish). The English translation is published under the title *Judgment at Istanbul: The Armenian Genocide Trials*, with Vahakn Dadrian, Berghahn Books, New York 2011. Akçam's last Turkish book *1915 Yazıları* (Essays on 1915, Istanbul: İletisim 2010) is already in its third printing. Akçam's latest book is *Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire*, Princeton University Press, March 2012.



Mbarka Bouiada

VP of Parliamentarian Forum for Democracy, Former Member of Parliament in Morocco, Ms Bouaida is a member of the National Council of the political party “National Rally for Independents” (RNI), which forms the first party in the Opposition against the current Government led by the Islamists. Former Chair of the Committee of Foreign Affairs in the Moroccan House of Representatives, Ms Bouaida was in charge of relationships between Moroccan and European Parliaments as a Co Chair of the Mixed Committee created between both parliaments. She is now in charge of Foreign Affairs within her political party, and is freshly elected as a Vice President of the Parliamentarian Forum for Democracy. She is also a member of the Think Tank of the North South Center within the Council of Europe. Mbarka dedicates her community life to local associations in her native region in the Southern Sahara, acting as a General Secretary of the MOUSTAQBAL Association for Education (Guelmim, South of Morocco).



Abdullah Hamidaddin

Researcher and author currently focusing on religious reformation and its implication for social transformation and individual wellbeing. Commentator on the politics and society of Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Has an MA in International Relations and currently pursuing a PhD in Middle Eastern Studies at King’s College London.



Daniel Kurtzer

S. Daniel Abraham Professor in Middle Eastern Policy Studies, Princeton University, Former U.S. Ambassador to Egypt and Israel, USA. Daniel Charles Kurtzer served as the United States ambassador to Egypt from 1997 to 2001, and as the United States ambassador to Israel from 2001 to 2005. He received his Ph.D. from Columbia University, and served for two years as the dean of Yeshiva College. Kurtzer joined the U.S. Foreign Service and served as a political officer at the American Embassy in Cairo (1979–82) and in Tel Aviv (1982–86). He later served on the State Department’s Policy Planning staff, as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, and as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research. In 2006, he retired from the U.S. Foreign Service with the rank of Career-Minister and assumed a chair in Middle East policy studies at The Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. In 2007, Kurtzer served as the commissioner of the professional Israel Baseball League. He is the co-author of *Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace* (2008) and the forthcoming *The Peace Puzzle*.



Michael Melchior

A renowned Jewish leader, thinker and activist, Rabbi Michael Melchior is a leading advocate for social justice in Israel, quality education for all, Jewish-Arab reconciliation and co-existence, protection of the environment, Israel-Diaspora relations and the strengthening of Civic Society as a catalyst for social change. A descendant of seven generations of Rabbis in Denmark, Rabbi Michael Melchior

was born in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1954. He was ordained as an Orthodox Rabbi, amongst others, by Rabbi Ovadia Yosef and Rabbi Simcha HaCohen Kook at Yeshivat Hakotel of Jerusalem in 1980. Soon afterwards he returned to Scandinavia to serve as Chief Rabbi of Norway, renewing the Jewish community which was shattered during the Holocaust. In 1986, he immigrated to Israel and settled down with his family in Jerusalem, where he serves until present day as the Rabbi of a dynamic Orthodox Synagogue, while still holding the title of Chief Rabbi of Norway. It was after the assassination of Israel's Prime-Minister, the late Yitzhak Rabin, by a religious extremist (November 1995) that Rabbi Melchior decided to extend his drive for high ethical standards from the Synagogue to national politics. In 1999 he was elected to The Knesset (Israel's Parliament) as representative of Meimad Party, after serving as International Director of The Eli Wiesel Foundation For Humanity during the 1990s. For the following 10 years, Rabbi Melchior served as a very productive legislator and a government minister. Among his government positions, he served as first ever cabinet minister for social affairs and World Jewry, Deputy Minister of Education & Culture and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, under the honorable Shimon Peres. In 2002, Rabbi Melchior initiated – together with his Palestinian counterpart Sheikh Talal Sider – the first ever inter-religious summit in Alexandria, Egypt. The summit, which launched The Alexandria Process, brought together religious leaders from the Middle-East to adopt common principles aimed at preventing the region's religious sensibilities being exploited during conflicts, and declaring the need to work together towards peaceful solutions of the conflicts. Rabbi Melchior is intensively involved in the Mosaica Center for Interreligious Cooperation and has established an ongoing comprehensive dialogue with leading religious, educational and political figures in the Muslim communities of the region. Rabbi Melchior believes that such a cooperation is a most vital condition for any future progress of the peace process in the Middle-East.



Aziz Merkour

Aziz Mekouar became ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United States on June 19, 2002. Before his current assignment, Ambassador Mekouar served as Moroccan ambassador to Italy, Malta and Albania, and permanent representative to the FAO (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization) (1999–2002), Portugal (1993–1999), and Angola (1986–1993). Ambassador Mekouar has also served as first counselor and deputy chief of mission at the Embassy of Morocco in Rome (1977–1985), and permanent representative of Morocco to the International Bureau for Information Technology (1978–1985). He was elected chairman of the United Nations FAO Council from November 2001 to November 2005. Ambassador Mekouar has published numerous papers on world economic issues. He holds a baccalaureate degree from the French Lycée Charles Lepierre in Lisbon, Portugal, and graduated from the HEC Graduate Business School in France in 1974. Born on November 13, 1950 in Fez, Morocco, Ambassador Mekouar is fluent in Arabic, English, French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. During his tenure as ambassador in Washington, Mr. Mekouar has overseen the negotiation and signing of a Free Trade Agreement between Morocco and the United States, and has worked to foster understanding between the American and the Moroccan peoples.



Abdel Monem Said Aly

Dr. Abdel Monem Said Aly is the President of Al Ahrum Center for Political & Strategic Studies in Cairo since 2009 and the Chairman of the Board of Al Ahrum

Newspaper and Publishing House from 2009 to 2011. He has been a member of the Board at Al Ahrām Institutions since 1999 to 2005 and the Director of Al Ahrām Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo from 1994 to 2009. He obtained his B.A. from Cairo University (1970) and his M.A. and Ph.D. in Political Science from Northern Illinois University, USA (1979 and 1982). He worked at the Ahrām Center since 1975 as a researcher, senior researcher, head of the international relations research unit, and deputy director. He was a research fellow at the Brookings Institute, Washington DC in 1987 and summer of 2004 and a research fellow at the Belfer Center For Science and International Affairs – Harvard University in 2003. He is a Senior Fellow in the Crown Center for Middle East Studies at Brandeis University- USA. He worked as a political advisor in the Amiri Diwan of the State of Qatar between August 1990 and June 1993. He was a Senator in the Egyptian Shura Council – Consultative Assembly-starting from June 2007 to 2011. In Arabic, he published books, articles and chapters in the world systems, Arab relations with the regional and global orders, European Integration, and the Arab Israeli conflict. In English, he contributed papers, published articles and chapters in the US, France, Sweden, Japan and Singapore on the Middle East Regional Security, Egypt's political system, National Security and Arms Control Policies. He contributes opinions and commentaries regularly in main Arabic newspapers and other media forums in Arabic and in English. Since 1997 he was the anchor for the Egyptian TV weekly program Wara Al Ahdath, Behind Events, from 1997 until 2011, the political analyst of Orbit program Ala Alhawa, On Air, since 2002, and an anchor for the program “Maa Al Mu'aradda”, With the Opposition, in the On TV season of 2008/2009. His last publication is *State and Revolution in Egypt: The Paradox of Change and Politics*, Brandeis University, Crown Center for Middle East Studies, January 2012.